Sociology

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Institutionalised Islamophobia in British Universities

Abstract

This thesis is a conceptual study of institutionalised Islamophobia in British universities. My analysis is illustrated, although not driven, by exemplars drawn from fieldwork undertaken in four case study universities.

The thesis is situated in the paradoxical context of increasing provisions for Muslim students that occurred throughout the 1990s while simultaneously fears of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' on campus were also on the increase and resulted in targeted action by the National Union of Students, the Committee for Vice-Chancellors and Principals, and a number of individual universities concerned about the possible threat to campus harmony posed by Muslim students.

Employing a conceptual vocabulary influenced by anti-foundationalism and psychoanlysis, I explore the ways in which racialised governmentality is exercised over Muslim students. This analysis includes consideration of the functions of formal multiculturalist practices as strategies for the governance of bodies, and through which racialised exercise of disciplinary power over Muslim students can be exercised. The thesis begins with a general consideration of the reasons why perceived distinct changes to the ways in which Muslims articulate their identities should so often be seen as potentially transgressive or disruptive. It then proceeds to an analysis of the ways in which Muslim students are constructed through institutional practices, paying particular attention to strategies for stabilising representations of Muslims, whiteness and the west which range from Islamophobic hoaxing to Islamophobic violence.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated with all love and duahs to my sister Jehan.

Glossary of terms

al Muhajiroun – An Islamist group which emerged in Britain in the mid-1990s following a split within the leadership of the group Hizb ut-Tahrir. Omar Bakri is the head of al Muhajiroun in Britain. al Muhajiroun's main aim is the re-establishment of the institution of Khalifah.

Azan – The Muslim call to prayer.

BNP – British National Party, a far-right white racist political party which has experienced some success in council elections in Britain in recent years. The BNP has attempted to distance itself from claims of white racism and justifies its emphasis on Islamophobia through unsubstantiated claims of support from Hindu and Sikh communities.

BOSS – British Organisation of Sikh Students.

Discourse – By discourse, I mean a discrete system of sentences or practices which offer us a particular conceptual vocabulary through which to construct specific forms of knowledge, construct identities by delineating possibilities and exclusions, and constituting social relations. The exercise of power is central to all discursive operations.

Dislocation – A dislocation of the social is an event that cannot be adequately symbolised within the logics of the existing symbolic order.

Epistemic violence – Epistemic violence is a figurative violence carried out through the production of knowledge, and is frequently associated with an attempt to read one discourse through the logics of another.

Essentialism – the logic that the signifiers we use are immutably tied to underlying *a priori* truths and that, as a consequence, human identities can be understood in terms of essences or inherent traits to which they are assumed to be immutably bound and which shape them.

Hijab – Literally means 'curtain', although commonly deployed as a reference to the headscarf worn by many Muslim women.

Hizb ut-Tahrir – an Islamist group formed in the West Bank in 1953. Hizb ut-Tahrir is active in Britain and takes as its central aim the re-establishment of a global system of Islamic states under the leadership of the institution of Khalifah.

Ideology – In a strictly Althusseran sense, ideology would signify the imaginary relations between an individual and her/his 'real' conditions of existence, tying in with Marxian notions of false consciousness. However, ideology is deployed in this thesis in recognition of the ways in which it influences actions and behaviours and is implicated in the ways in which conditions can be understood as being in some way 'real', influencing perceptions and experiences of the world and responses to it.

HVK – Hindu Vivak Kendra (a Hindu Nationalist organisation).

Muslim News – A weekly Muslim printed and internet newspaper in Britain.

NUS – National Union of Students.

Q News – A Muslim news magazine.

Salafi – Salafi is an Arabic term derived from the term 'Salaf', which literally means one following a path of righteousness and is often used as a reference to the companions of the Prophet Mohammed. Adherents of Wahhabbism tend to call themselves 'Salafi' rather than 'Wahhabi', possibly because the latter term is frequently employed in a derogatory sense by some Muslims in Britain.

Salah – Prayer.

Symbolic order – the social world of intersubjective relations and epistemic conventions made possible in Lacanian terms by acceptance of the conventions and protocols governing both desire and communication, through which it is possible to gain entry to, and symbolise, a world of others.

UJS – Union of Jewish Students.

Wahhabbism – A 'reform' movement which emerged in the Arabian peninsula during the eighteenth century aimed at eradicating the corruption that was felt to be spreading among Muslims. Wahhabbism tends to emphasise more literal interpretations of the canonical texts of Islam than other strands of Islam.

Wudhu – The ritual ablutions Muslims perform prior to prayer. Wudhu involves making supplication to Allah and washing the head, face, insides of mouth and nose, neck, ears, hands, forearms up to elbow, and feet including ankles.

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Part One – Setting The Scene

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1 Pulp fiction

Conventional discussions of Islam are often rather like airport news stand murder novels. The narrator gathers us around the fireplace in order to introduce us one-by-one to the usual range of suspects and reveal once and for all their motives, failings, and moral proclivities. Among them we have the 'modernisers' (usually rendered as the typically Christie-esque vulgar oriental, bulging out of his imitation Savile Row suit and never quite able to leave the spirit of the bazaar behind) the orientalists (the entirely commodious holidaying couple from Islington or Idaho) and the 'fundamentalists' (the villains in black up to their 'turbans' in subterfuge and betrayal). In such tales, the narrator retroactively reads Muslims through her/his own logics in order to pluck from nowhere one of those *'and-now-for-what-I've-brought-you-all-here-for'* moments and reveal once and for all who-done-what: those charming tourists from Idaho (who, in their harmless, bumbling way, helped solve the mystery); the suited orientals (whose greed and inept readings of their modernising functions in this tale made them complicit in various acts of villainry); the villains in black (who overturned the natural order of things, attempted to foil the narrator at every turn, and bullied their paths across the globe from university campuses to federal buildings).

There will be no such dramatic moments in my thesis; no great revelation of the 'true order' of things; no shocking tales of Muslim student brutality on campus. Instead, I ask only that you remain mindful this is but a story, and ask yourself whether my tale is, to borrow the words of Sayyid & Zac (1998), "convincing". Beginning a tale such as this is not easy: what can I possibly add to such a fruitful area of contemporary research? Realising that my tale is as punctuated by other narratives as the cheap

airport murder mysteries are, I find it useful to turn to the rightly reviled Islamophobe and racist Michel Houellebecq, who opens his novel *Atomised* (1999: 3) thus:

"This book is principally the story of a man who lived out the greater part of his life in Western Europe, in the latter half of the twentieth century. Though alone for much of his life, he was nonetheless closely in touch with other men. He lived through an age that was miserable and troubled. The country into which he was born was sliding slowly, ineluctably, into the ranks of the less developed countries..."

Houellebecq's opening passage is laden with what I shall rather lazily term 'superstitions': the residual traces of older myths and hegemonic operations through which his protagonist's notion of the west as superior to its racialised non-western others had been constructed. Such superstitions are central to western discursive representations of Muslims. We are endlessly told of the abu Zayd affair as though it is a direct throwback to the Callas case and as though there had never been a John Walker Lindh, tortured, threatened with ritual punishment and symbolically cast out of a western community for transgressing its own final sacred bounds based on the most scant of evidence. We are treated to discussions of the black country's Taleban three and endless ruminations on British Muslim treachery as though there is a more direct link between Muslims in the west and the persecution of Cathars or the thirty years war than there is between such tales and the Dreyfuss affair. We are asked endlessly to believe the rumours of Muslim students engaging in ritual crime as though such tales bear no traces of the Orleans rumour; as we all know, rumour frequently has inescapably racist dimensions and tells us more of those repeating the rumour than of its victim. Opposition to Muslim schools is often more marked by *Candide* than by candid recognition of the racialised dynamics of British society. We are asked to conceive of Islamists as absolutist, knowing that this signifier is laden both with references to medieval and early modern European kingship and with references to the truth claims of papal inquisitors. Somehow discussions of Islam

have the uncanny ability to conjure up the detritus of western pasts: sedimented assumptions about the natural order of things that tell us it is only possible to read Muslims within the logics of the west.

We know, of course, that while rumours of ritual crime by Muslim students owe more to, say, the Beilis case than they do to the expulsion of the Huguenots by Catholics, contemporary Islamophobia is still quite different to earlier forms of racism and anti-Semitism, and quite distinct from older orientalist narratives on Muslims. After all, we are given prayer rooms in universities, told by world leaders that the west is not at war with Islam, and we even appear to have a friend in Highgrove. Colonial discourses always maintained their racialised non-western others in such a radical form of alterity that they were always instantly recognisable for who they were, even when, like Charlie Chan, they managed to penetrate the western metropole, or like Gunga Din they were 'loyal servants of Empire'. This something-and-nothing we often hear called Islamophobia seems much more subtle, and the alterity in which we are maintained in hegemonic discourses appears far less radical, far more relativistic. Not only are we (when 'good' Muslims) somehow *similar* to westerners while remaining different, but as a result we are also difficult to discern and recognise. This leads me to the second important point that emerges from Houellebecq's introduction. Somehow, the dissolution of overt western supremacy is implicated. The tortured mental state of Houellebecq's protagonist is inextricably bound up in this; with the end of the radical, racial alterity in which colonial discourses held the non-western other it is difficult for Houellebecq to discern any difference between the west and the non-west. The idea that the other must now at least formally be an equal both globally and domestically is bound up in crises of western identity. The dramatic changes following the 1939-1945 imperial wars cannot be reconciled within the existing dominant vocabulary with which the protagonist is familiar. Houellebecq's own racism and Islamophobia are somehow related to this, to the story of how the west was lost. Indeed it is worth bearing in mind that 'fundamentalism', the choice epithet of Islamophobes, is often said to reflect an

immutable link to the past, and yet it is a term that only ever emerged to describe Muslims following the decentring of the west.

2 How the west was lost

President George W Bush is said to have experienced some inner turbulence following the demise of the cold war, reputedly telling an audience at Iowa Western Community College that "when I was coming up, it was a dangerous world, and you knew exactly who 'they' were. It was us versus them, and it was clear who them was. Today, we are not so sure who the they are, but we know they're there". That was in January 2000; by May of that year the North American press were reporting that the same drawling southern right-winger who would later become President had elaborated on the difficulties this uncertainty posed to American identities, having finally identified the 'them' as evil: "in the past we were certain, we were certain it was us versus the Russians in the past. We were certain, and therefore we had huge nuclear arsenals aimed at each other to keep the peace. That's what we were certain of...You see, even though it's an uncertain world, we're certain of some things. We're certain that even though the 'evil empire' may have passed, evil still remains. We're certain there are people that can't stand what America stands for..." This truculent manicheanism was, of course, later to be central to a military campaign heralded more than once by George W Bush as a 'crusade'. Among those who subscribed to Bush's logics was that iconic right-ist and ferric Dame, Thatcher, who emerged to unsuccessfully file off the patina of the age of Powellian racism and cold war rhetoric in which her politics had taken shape. Notwithstanding the ease with which one could find Muslims willing to condemn the WTC attack – in contrast with the difficulty with which one could find western leaders willing to condemn innocent civilian deaths in Afghanistan – Thatcher proceeded to excoriate Muslims for refusing to criticise the attack and then announced that Islamism was the new enemy at the gates following the demise of the communist threat. By making this argument she bought into an idea popular around a decade ago among a leftist fringe – and reputedly originating

with a former British foreign secretary – that Islam only emerged as a new enemy following the demise of communism. This argument does, of course, rely for its coherence on our ability to read each subsequent chapter in the twentieth century tale of the western project – murder in the trenches, the high point of modernism, the 1939-45 imperial wars, decolonisation, cold war, post-cold war... – as each being an entire story in its own right, temporally marked from the previous episode. But in a world in which previous superstitions can so vicariously surface, such a notion is clearly problematic.

In fact, it is clear that Thatcher missed what George W Bush had – probably unconsciously – acknowledged: that identities are negatively relational. These logics are reflected in many ways, with the construction of various categories of alterity central to the construction of one's own identity. In this light Edward W Said's *Orientalism* (1985) is an illuminating work and one which no discussion of Islam can overlook. Orientalism is to Said not only an academic discipline but a complete conceptual vocabulary invoked to construct the orient as part of a western project of constructing the occident. It certainly appears that people only begin to refer to what McLelland (2001) describes as a "curious", "new" orientalism – what I term 'eurocentrism' after Sayyid (1997) – following the end of the cold war. It was also in this period that discussions came to increasingly reflect upon the emergence of 'Islamophobia' as being somehow distinct from racism. The explanation for this lies in Brennan's (2001) recognition that North Atlantic cold war rhetoric had been marked by the repackaging of older orientalist binarisms in which the wogs and savages were now soviets and reds under the bed. The end of the cold war – a conflict born well before decolonisation – marked the end of a mode of constructing the identity of the western project by maintaining its others in radical alterity. In keeping with these post-colonial, post-modern, post-cold war times, the 'other' would be increasingly identified through the logics of sameness and differentiated through appeals to the inadequacy of this sameness. Thus it is that Muslims can be symbolised as defective westerners, given to bouts of what Tariq Modood (1992) has

described as 'pre-enlightenment religious enthusiasm'. Thus it is that even the 'fundamentalists' have recourse to no language other than to intone the western vocabulary of modernity itself; that they manage to simultaneously remain 'anti-modern' is a testament to just how incomplete we are as westerners.

3 Back to fundamentals

By turning to Houellebecq I have managed to begin setting the scene for my own thesis on Muslim students in British universities. It is in this context that my study is situated. Of course, this approach means that you have still not glimpsed some of the characters that I invited you here to meet, or caught even the slightest whisper of the tales I led you to believe you could expect. Forgive me my oversight, and allow me introduce you very briefly to some of those characters – the 'fundamentalists' – and tales:

Here's one:

> Picture the scene: A bright, spring morning sullied only by a university lecturer calling his student (who has recently experienced a serious car crash) a race traitor and telling him to go and ask his Muslim friends for coursework extensions now he's "gone over to *them*".

> Or this: it is 1992 and a Muslim student has spent part of his summer holiday engaged in voluntary aid work in the former Yugoslavia. He finds himself hounded by a local journalist for a period of about two weeks. Having somehow heard of the student's unusual vacation, the journalist is convinced that he has found a respondent able to offer inside information on how concerned Muslims in Britain may go about obtaining military training in order to fight in support of the Bosnians. The student is left with the strong impression that *somehow* one

cannot even engage in voluntary work overseas without being spuriously linked with the art of war.

And what about this: a warm, summer afternoon, and a PhD researcher sitting in a university refectory – who knows, perhaps *you* were on the next table – is hearing reports of female Muslim students having their *hijabs* ripped off and being sprayed with alcohol for having the audacity to enter the Students' Union, is being informed that attempts to engage in principled, democratic debate about Palestine often result in racist heckling and cat-calling, and is being told that the final taboo of our liberal institutions is Islamophobia.

By introducing you to these characters and fragmented moments from human lives I have introduced you to two things: firstly to the idea that all is not what it may seem and that the strategies we use to interpolate the real and construct notions of truth are ultimately contingent; secondly I have introduced myself to you. For *I* am that 'race traitor', potential *mujahid*, researcher. I am that person who, on converting to Islam over a decade ago, suddenly found that for the first time since enrolling at university, I actually *knew* a significant number of people who were failing examinations, and wondered why it was that so many students with Muslim names were being given referrals and deferrals. *I* was that person who, having transgressed the assumed boundaries of whiteness, found that even beloved members of my family were – indeed, often still are – completely incapable of enunciating the word 'Muslim' in the context of close family. When people ask me to describe conversion to Islam, I am always tempted to suggest that it was akin to waking up; I was suddenly confronted by issues I had never previously even been aware of...

4 The fugitive

Following conversion, my new-found status as a fugitive[1] from the policing of whiteness meant that I found new spaces within which I could articulate my resistance and transgression of these racialised bounds. We Muslim students also found other spaces in the home of an inspirational Muslim lecturer who, recognising the exclusion we faced in mainstream structures, went way beyond the call of duty, inviting groups of us to his house and to discussions that regularly went on to the early hours. Another important space was the office of a Muslim administrator who regularly went against university wishes to offer counselling and advice to Muslim students in recognition of the prevailing sense that mainstream university structures simply could not even begin to comprehend our existence let alone meet our needs without being racist. The most important space was the prayer room; one of the few areas in the university where Muslim identities could be freely articulated, even if it often did leave us open to racist accusations that, by needing such a space, we were dangerously isolationist and unwilling to mix. But in that prayer room, everything was different: we would pray side-by-side as brothers and sisters and in equality...

The prayer room offered a means of resisting the racialised dynamics of university life, since it was one of the few spaces in which respect would be accorded to us on the basis of how we earned it rather than simply on skin colour or the willingness to adopt racialised norms of ideal studenthood (white, male, middle-class, nights out on the grog, smoking dope...). One night during *ramadhan* a group of us gathered for an *iftaar* meal and *tarawih* prayer, Muslims from France, North Africa, the Middle East, from Britain's South Asian communities, and even a disabled Muslim. That night we broke down those barriers as never before, even joking about how it was that the only two people in the room eating with fingers in the manner of either *sunnah* or South Asian tradition depending on one's perspective, were white converts. As cramped as it was, we loved our prayer room, because it didn't just meet some fringe religious need (from the university's perspective) or one of our

most basic requirements (from our point of view); it allowed us a space within which to challenge and reject the institutionalised racism that surrounded us.

On a personal level the prayer room offered a space in which I could reject the racialised struggles being played out in other arenas across campus, where on the one hand white peers were happy to brand me as a 'fundamentalist' race traitor and on the other hand a number of non-practising Muslims with no knowledge of me were responding to the racialised campus environment by disseminating untrue rumours about me based entirely on assumptions about the sort of things that white people do.

And so, the prayer room figured large in our resistance of institutionalised racism. Despite the unending support of staff managing the prayer room, it was always inevitable that the broader racialised struggles of our campus would eventually spill over into the prayer room. The first time we were aware of this was when a Muslim was racially abused in the prayer room by an intruder. Later, as our presence became more noticeable, a clique of white Christian students using the shared multi-faith space next door would increasingly voice offensive or abusive remarks whenever Muslim students – and, in particular, Muslim women – ventured out from the prayer room in ones and twos to sit and chat over a coffee in the lounge next door. As Islamophobia became more widespread we even started seeing new figures in and around the prayer room. 'Mo', as he liked to be called, was one, a tall and lanky member of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* who occasionally ventured into the prayer room but was mainly to be seen wandering around campus in his rapper-style clothes and a Malcolm X baseball cap that somehow seemed extremely symbolic. Mo's unstructured ramblings about Islamophobia may have struck a chord with all of us but his broader views never really appealed to the Islamic Society. Nevertheless, the union became convinced that somehow, we had been infiltrated.

Whenever a member of the society needed something from the union, the request would be scrutinised and interrogated to ensure no support was offered to the 'fundamentalists'. Day after day we would be subjected to the same banal demonisation by a bunch of largely middle-class white 'student leaders' who had never sought to speak with us, had no empirical basis for their claims of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* infiltration, and somehow seemed to think that protecting the university from extremists meant disenfranchising Muslim students and refusing to protect *us* against racism and Islamophobia. So, we had our problems – the hassle, the attempted banning of our society, the suspicion, the abuse...

Eventually I left the university and watched as my Muslim peers pursued their own careers, the magnificently lucky few making it into law, accounting, IT, social work, or teaching, others finding Local Authority work on administrative grades, and the less lucky working in takeaways or private hire driving, or even remaining unemployed for significant periods. My own career took me into education where it became increasingly clear that the problems I had been exposed to as a student still existed. While teaching in further education I found myself in a college that was well over 90% white. Once it was discovered I was a Muslim, the old questions began again. Every so often a colleague would brandish some newspaper article or other on the NUS' seemingly valiant attempts to combat Islamic 'fundamentalism' as if to say "look what *your lot* are up to now", and expect me to justify and qualify my Muslimness as somehow non-threatening. A colleague even took me to one side in the staff room one Friday afternoon and asked me the ridiculous question "are you into violence?" I tried to stifle my laughter as he fumbled around with some half-baked explanation of the links between Muslims, violence, and holy war, before replying "no, I'm not naturally disposed to violence, other than when confronted by racists". On another occasion I announced to a group of NVQ students halfway through a three-hour session that it was time for them to take their break and I to go for a cigarette. Since I had not made my students aware of my beliefs, I was utterly shocked to hear a student suggesting that it was probably forbidden for a Muslim to smoke. Exploring

the comment I found that the group had been warned by a colleague to be "careful" of me on the grounds that I was a "fundamentalist" and therefore likely to attempt forced conversion of them or other such extremist acts. Experiencing Islamophobic harassment in the liberal workplace made me realise once and for all that my long held intention of carrying out PhD research into the experiences of Muslim students could be deferred no longer. Without the slightest inclination or motivation to work in such a racist environment, I quit and began preparing for my postgraduate studies in the hope that I would be able to further explore the sort of experiences I had gained as a Muslim student and pedagogue.

5 Tales from the other side...

And so, via this circuitous route, I ended up carrying out research I had wanted to undertake since about 1994, when the NUS witch-hunts against radical Islamists were in full swing. I found myself hopping from one fugitive space to another, encountering countless spurious allegations of radical Islamist transgressions as well as witnessing the aftermath of one university's encounter with *al Muhajiroun*. I met members of one *al Muhajiroun*-free Islamic Society who recalled having their wrists slapped by Special Branch for having criticised the human rights record of an overseas state in a *Khutba*, and interviewed a staff member from another university who raised and frankly discussed Special Branch activity in his own university before noting, in an almost perfect but probably unintended impression of Peter Sellars, "I've said too much already, I can't say any more than that". I met victims of Islamophobic harassment and assault, on one occasion within hours of a violent attack in a union building by members of union staff. I was personally attacked at an academic conference on the grounds of my Muslimness, and had other unpleasant personal experiences in which Islamophobia was implicated during the 2000-2001 session. I also met a number of inspirational and deeply committed university staff whose interventions have gone a long way towards challenging Islamophobia in their

respective institutions, including one who shattered racist myths of the inescapability of essential Muslim-Jew hostility by noting that, as a woman and a wearer of the Star of David, she could empathise with the experiences of Muslims as minorities. And, of course, I must also add that among the Muslim students I met were some truly remarkable and inspirational characters.

Conventions dictate that I refrain from anecdotalisms. But this detour is no confessional sociology; it is a signal of my recognition of the need to "bear witness"[2] and research reflexively. My detour enables me to best begin opening my own tale of the experiences of Muslim students in British universities; they are tales in which I can speak for myself as myself without fetishising ethnographic subjects as a commodified component to be capitalised on in my pursuit of truth and knowledge. You could say that they are tales within a tale: always present but never quite showing themselves. Rather like we Muslims, one could argue: always there but nobody is quite sure we exist.

The story I seek to tell, then, works on several levels. On a very personal level it is the story of my own personal development, as I came increasingly to realise that the scars I gained from experiencing extensive Islamophobia as a student, in the workplace, and in the family could only be healed by tearing down the natural defensive barriers and apologisms I had come to rely upon and instead having the confidence to assert myself for what I am: a Muslim and a believer in an Islamic political order. I make no apologies for this personal investment in my work. On an academic level I am concerned primarily with theoretical questions. What is it that leads so many commentators to concur on a 'revival' in or distinct changes to (depending on one's position) the ways in which Muslim identities are expressed? What does this have to do with Islamophobia? Indeed, how does contemporary Islamophobia emerge? What is the relationship between Islamophobia and eurocentrism? How can we account for the differences between eurocentrism and prior discourses of western supremacism? What is the relationship between

dominant conceptual vocabularies and institutionalised Islamophobia? For reasons that will become obvious as my thesis progresses, this is not a traditional ethnographic study. Rather, it is a conceptual study. I do, however, illustrate my argument through reference to fieldwork I undertook in four case study universities.

I shall call these universities Greenstone, Finchton, Fowlerstone, and Swanton; renamed not to protect the culpable but rather that you can see this is a tale without any arbitrary notions of innocence and guilt, recognising instead the contingent ways in which we arrive at such notions. Finchton University is a campus-based 'new' university with a significant number of Muslim students. Finchton University's Islamic Society is not particularly active and successive Islamic Society Executive Committees have often been dominated by *Tablighi*-oriented students more concerned with establishing regular prayer than with political engagements. In the town of Finchton, 10,678 people identified themselves as Muslim in the 2001 census. This constitutes 8.2% of the town's declared population of 129,633. The total population of the County in which Finchton is situated is 1,134,974, of whom 38,967 (3.4%) are Muslim. The majority of Finchton's Muslims are of Gujarati Indian heritage followed by a significant number of Muslims of Pakistani heritage. Finchton has numerous mosques ranging from a converted two-up, two-down terraced house to large purpose-built facilities capable of accommodating well over one thousand worshippers.

Fowlerstone University is a non-campus based former Polytechnic with a comparatively small and largely inactive Islamic Society. In the 2001 census 5,945 people in the city of Fowlerstone identified themselves as Muslim out of a total declared population of 439,473. Thus, a little over 1% of the city's declared population identified themselves as Muslim. For the whole of the surrounding conurbation the figures are 8,344 Muslims out of a total population of 1,352,026, or 0.6%. The city's main mosque is frequented by Muslims from a range of backgrounds. In contrast to Greenstone, where Pakistanis constitute the majority of

the Muslim community, most Muslims in Fowlerstone are of Arab or North African heritage.

Greenstone University is a campus-based 'red-brick' university with a significant number of Muslim students and an extremely active Islamic Society. In the 2001 census 35,806 residents in the city of Greenstone identified themselves as Muslim, making it a major centre of Muslim population in Britain. This constitutes roughly 9% of the city's declared population of 392,819. It is also worth noting that, within a ten mile radius of the conurbation within which Greenstone is situated can be found a number of other local authority areas with sizeable Muslim communities. Thus, the immediate local catchment area surrounding Greenstone University contains approximately 125,000 Muslims according to figures from the 2001 national census, or around 5% of the total declared population of the conurbation. Greenstone's Muslim community is dominated by those of Pakistani heritage.

Swanton University is a non-campus based 'red-brick' university with a moderate number of Muslim students – probably around one thousand at best estimate. There are a number of mosques in Swanton. In the 2001 national census, 23,819 residents of Swanton described themselves as Muslims, or 4.6% of the city's total declared population of 513,234 – described themselves as Muslim. Swanton is situated in a large Metropolitan County with a population of 1,266,388, of whom 31,851 (2.5%) are Muslim. Swanton's Muslim community is very diverse, comprising Muslims of various Arab, North African, and South Asian heritages.

These institutions were selected for a number of reasons. Firstly, while I contend that rumours of widespread Islamic transgressions across the British higher education sector are grossly exaggerated, in both Greenstone and Finchton there have been verified political conflicts involving Islamists. Secondly, just as untypical levels of conflict emerged in Greenstone and Finchton, both Fowerstone and Swanton universities offered untypically good levels of provision for Muslim students,

catering for a wide range of needs. Thirdly, the institutions selected represented a fairly good cross section – 'red brick' (Swanton and Greenstone) and 'new' (Finchton and Fowlerstone) universities; campus based (Finchton and Greenstone) and more dispersed (Swanton and Fowlerstone) universities; significant Muslim student communities (Finchton and Greenstone) and smaller Muslim student groups (Fowlerstone and Swanton). Fourthly, as I will reveal later in my thesis, a range of strategies were invoked by these institutions in order to deal with the challenges of dialogue with subjects whose final vocabularies were centred around Islamic rather than western liberal metaphors.

The title of this thesis is, perhaps, somewhat disingenuous, since all of the fieldwork was conducted in English universities. Indeed, during pilot research prior to the fieldwork proper, I recall contacts from two Muslim students in particular – one in a Welsh and one in a Scottish university. While both acknowledged that they had experienced racism and Islamophobia during student life, both explained to me independently of each other that they found the racism in Wales and Scotland easier to understand and deal with than that they had experienced in urban England. This was, both felt, because the racism they had come into contact with as students was more overt and visible than the 'subtle' and 'clever' racism they had become used to in England, and was additionally more likely to be informed by genuine ignorance which, once overcome, could give way to more fruitful relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. One of the two students also opined that this perceived difference could also be partly attributable to the fact that some white Welsh and white Scots already felt sensitive to the racism directed at them by white English and had some experience as being colonised. These responses were extremely interesting, although during the pilot stage of my fieldwork it swiftly became clear that it would not be possible to explore the tensions they raised within the scope of this thesis, and that it would be easier to maintain the difficult balance of a cross section of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by settling upon the four English universities that stood out as ideal exemplar and comparator institutions. However, noting this qualifier, the

title of this thesis still refers to British rather than English universities because my pilot research gave me reason to believe that many of the issues raised by Muslim students' experiences in these English universities – mobilising for improved provisions and being demonised by complaints of 'fundamentalism', for example – are as relevant to universities across Britain as they are to universities in England alone.

It is also necessary to further note at this stage that my analysis has its limits. I have already noted that this is not a 'traditional' ethnography, but rather a conceptual study illustrated by exemplars drawn from my fieldwork. This is because I discovered throughout my fieldwork that Muslim students in many universities are already subjected to a great deal of voyeuristic attention related to the Islamophobia they experience through repeated campaigns to root out Islamic 'fundamentalists' on campus. From respect for my research respondents, and from my own concern about the dangers of fetishising members of ethnicised minorities any further, I decided against a conventional ethnography.

This is not the only limit on my study. Other limits of my analysis include key issues relating to teaching and learning (including curriculum), research, employment, and external relations. These remain key gaps in academic research that deserve further study. However, due to the twin needs to keep my thesis to a manageable size and focus on what emerged from the fieldwork as particularly pressing foci for Islamophobia, I was unable to explore issues such as these for fear of not being able to do them, or other areas of concern, justice. Neither do I focus extensively on the types of provision offered to Muslim students in the case study universities. This is partly because Sophie Gilliat-Ray has already carried out extensive and invaluable work identifying patterns of provision for members of faith groups on campus (Gilliat-Ray 1999; Gilliat-Ray 2000), including provisions for Muslim students and staff. While this great work goes some way towards filling the huge void in academic research relating to Muslim students in Britain, its focus precludes any noteworthy

consideration of the single issue that has dominated discussions of Muslim students over the past ten years – the question of 'fundamentalist' threat to British universities – or the Islamophobia which has accompanied this. My decision not to focus extensively on patterns of provision available to Muslim students is also partly a result of the dawning realisation throughout my fieldwork that while provision of adequate praying facilities or examination exemptions on 'Eid, for example, are to some extent signifiers for the extent to which a university is willing to challenge institutionalised Islamophobia and meet the legitimate needs of Muslim students, the availability of provisions such as these cannot be decisive in determining that a given university is not Islamophobic. For example, all of the case study universities covered in this thesis offered Muslim students a space (or spaces) in which to pray, irrespective of how well-appointed (or ramshackle) were these prayer rooms, or how permanent (or temporary) their provision. However, gradual improvements in universities' willingness to improve provisions for Muslim students (including curricular innovations) have not been matched by improvements in universities' abilities to recognise and challenge the Islamophobic hate crimes which have gone hand-in-hand with the NUS-led campaigns to root out Islamic 'fundamentalism' on campus. Consequently it is with this largely un-researched dimension of institutionalised Islamophobia that I am primarily concerned with in this thesis. Finally, this thesis is also limited by the lack of scope to extend a gendered reading of Islamophobia on campus. This is particularly significant since campaigns against Islamic 'fundamentalism' on campus have emphasised alleged Muslim crimes against women, and in doing so completely ignored the fact that Islamist groups count politically active women among their membership. This difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that, throughout my fieldwork, I received more reports of Islamophobic attacks against Muslim women than against Muslim men. Clearly, important questions around how gender impacts on the political activities of Muslim men and women are paralleled by questions around the different ways in which Muslim men and women experience Islamophobia, although it is to be welcomed that

research into the political mobilisation of Muslim women on campus is now being undertaken[3].

So, if you are sitting comfortably, I shall begin with a story I have yearned to tell since 1994, although I never quite had the vocabulary to express it...

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[1] See, for example, Giroux (1996: 8), "The term, fugitive culture, designates less a rigid cultural formation than it does a conflicting and dynamic set of experiences rooted in a working-class youth culture marked by flows and uncertain interventions into daily life. Such experiences were often both oppressive and resisting, scorned and feared, constrained by the dictates of poverty but unafraid of risk-taking inventiveness." I see Giroux's 'fugitive culture' as analogous to the experiences I described because we Muslims are, I argue, a generally scorned and feared presence in British universities, and (as I also attempt to show throughout this thesis), Muslim student resistance also shows risk-taking inventiveness.

[2] Again, see Giroux (1996: 9), "Bearing witness always implicates one in the past and gives rise to conditions that govern how youth act and are acted upon within a myriad of public sites, cultures, and institutions...witnessing and testimony, translated here, mean listening to the stories of others as part of a broader responsibility to engage the present as an ethical response to the narratives of the past."

[3] Shaida Nabi is currently undertaking PhD research in the University of Manchester into the political mobilisation of Muslim women students.

Chapter Two: The Rushdie affair and the emergence of Muslim identities in Britain

Hail to Thee, Logos,

Thou Vast Almighty Title,

In Whose name we conjure –

....

May we give true voice

To the statements of Thy creatures.

May our spoken words speak for them,

With accuracy

   - Kenneth Burke (cited in McKoski 1993)

1 Introduction

Before we finally arrive at the universities I spent so much time researching I would like to make what has now become a traditional detour in writings on Islam in Britain. It is time, I think, to revisit Bradford where, as they say, "it all began..." Of course, I know you've made this journey many times before, but I hope to introduce you to a whole new way of viewing things around these parts, and hopefully to offer a means of correcting the parallax distortion we tend to get from viewing things, as it were, from the positions of privilege we in the west are so often asked to assume at the pinnacle of teleology...

The Rushdie affair is, of course, more than just a traditional detour we must make for sake of convention. It is the means of best testing the usefulness of our conceptual vocabularies for three main reasons. Firstly, the Rushdie affair is often seen as a metaphor for the transgressive nature of a 'fundamentalist' presence in Britain. Hence it becomes an acid test for any attempt to extend a convincing, anti-

essentialist reading of Muslims in Britain without recourse to the term 'fundamentalism'. Secondly, the Rushdie affair is frequently invested with great significance in debates on liberal multiculturalism since the ability of Muslims to engage in these protests bring both racists on the political right and left-leaning multiculturalists such as Yuval-Davis (1992) together in condemnation of a multicultural arrangement that they claim has primarily benefited "the fundamentalists". Since this puzzling aspect of debates is so marked, it is necessary to make a detour to the Rushdie affair in order to further explore this paradox.

Thirdly, it emerges from these points that the Rushdie affair is frequently seen as a major turning point in race and ethnic relations in Britain, in that is often assumed to mark the transgression of the birth that should never have been – the emergence of specifically Muslim identities. At the same time, the debate marked the death that could never happen. Rushdie the writer captures many of the paradoxes and contradictions of contemporary readings of Muslim identities: anti-racist critic of colonialism turned defender par excellence of the European enlightenment and American foreign policy and, more to the point, one whose views are lent a certain credence by his own very publicly played out story of Islamist excesses. 'Rushdie' is more than just the name of another postcolonial writer. 'Rushdie' is the name that dares to speak itself as a signifier for all that is threatening and medieval about Muslims, in spite of – in fact, because of – the ultimate finality with which Rushdie the man was threatened. Having been coded into a struggle between freedom of speech against terrorism, nor merely "domesticated into a possible "Western" (why?) "martyrship" for literature" as Spivak (1993: 237) argues, Rushdie is also coded into a more fundamental question about the survival of western modernity itself. During the tumultuous debates surrounding the *fatwa*, Rushdie died a thousand times, and yet he *could not* die, so heavily invested was Rushdie with the imperatives of western liberal survival against the 'fundamentalist' menace.

As a consequence, I find it extremely useful to begin my story with an exploration of the Rushdie affair in order to simultaneously begin exploring the emergence of Muslim identities and the reasons why the increasing willingness of a large number of people to articulate themselves as Muslim should so often be seen as inherently transgressive.

2 The emergence of Muslim identities

One of the great paradoxes about writings on Muslims is that, while we are well known through the media as Muslim 'fundamentalists', we are also largely unrecognised and frequently unknown as Muslims. In fact, until the Rushdie affair, very little was known about Muslims in Britain[1]. It was known that, in foreign parts, people describing themselves as Muslims had overthrown the Shah and assassinated Sadat, and that Muslims were also proving useful allies against the communist threat in Afghanistan. But nobody was really sure whether we existed in Britain. The expanding network of Mosques across the country was, after all, the work of Pakistanis, Arabs, foreign seamen, and Bangladeshis, but rarely the work of Muslims. The idea that being Muslim existed only to impart a new inflection to (usually) South Asian identities allowed policy makers to pass race relations legislation that covered everybody but Muslims, forcing Muslim women facing discrimination to take action under the Race Relations Act on the grounds that their discrimination ensued from their being *Pakistani* hijab wearers.

Writers also noted that the modifications brought by Islam to pre-existing South Asian ethnic determinants meant that Pakistanis enforced stricter sexual segregation than did Indians (Bhatnagar 1970: 25). Since being Muslim was simply a function of being Pakistani, writers were also able to concern themselves with issues such as the plight of Pakistani school girls in mixed-sex classes (Shaikh and Kelly 1989). Elsewhere, arguments between Muslims and the possibility of convivial relations and

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ethnic similarities with Hindus demonstrated that Muslims were simply a social group within a broader South Asian community (Hahlo 1998: 70) and demonstrated the limits of the possibility of Muslim identities (Bhatt 1998).

All this began to change as Muslims were forced to increasingly campaign for provisions in a country that had tended not to recognise our existence. After the 1988 Education Reform Act made (usually Christian) assemblies compulsory for all schools, intensified campaigns for state funding of Muslim schools forced the authorities to sit up and listen as both feminists and journalists questioned the idea that training centres for 'fundamentalists' should win state support. A year later, the Rushdie affair led to campaigns for Muslims to be protected under new blasphemy legislation while the media accused us of being 'fundamentalists' and Douglas Hurd called for us to accept the laws of the land. Confronted with a Muslim presence they had never adequately recognised nor explained, British liberals were forced now to come to terms with what they saw as a growing 'fundamentalist' presence that threatened to drown the sound of octegenarian ladies cycling to communion under the call to prayer[2]. As the 1990s wore on, 'fundamentalist' rallies became frighteningly regular, and the rapid spread of the problem led to police raids on Birmingham bookshops and bungled Imaam recruitments by MI5. Who were these people? Where had they suddenly sprung from? How could they be stopped?

Answers to these questions have generally been sought in terms commensurate with the general tenor of denials that Muslims ever really existed before the Rushdie affair. Thus, we are asked to believe that resolution can be found by divining the essential nature of Muslim identities. As a consequence, the idea common to both left and right was that "the fundamentalists" had somehow managed to effectively capitalise on the great strides made by liberal multiculturalism, and that they did so by forcibly changing qualities of certain primordial identities. We are left with an approach that unites left and right, breaking down previous political and social boundaries around a single and fairly common view of Islam and Muslims in Britain.

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Thus it is argued that the increasing visibility of Muslims in Britain is increasingly the product of a trend that disrupts the articulation of essential South Asian identities through the intervention of essentially authoritarian Muslimness. This concern is shared by Hindu nationalists in India, by the far-right British National Party, and by slightly leftist writers concerned with 'race' and identities such as Chetan Bhatt (1997) and Nira Yuval-Davis (1992), as well as by the National Union of Students, as we shall see in subsequent chapters. Thus, assertions about the transgressive nature of the Rushdie affair are related both to the emergence of Muslim identities that hitherto had been frequently denied, to critiques of multiculturalism made by the far right and some slightly leftist academics, as well as to the idea that the 'fundamentalists' had imposed a monolithic version of Islam onto people who had previously been largely South Asian in their range of essential values, attitudes, and behaviour. What emerges from these discussions is a focus on the relationship between Muslims and multiculturalism that is worth further exploring, as well as a focus on the ways in which Muslims are. In other words, we are asked to find it conceivable that there exists a truth called Muslimness that is reflected in these analyses.

2.1 Reading Muslim identities and the Rushdie affair

Dominant readings of the anti-*Satanic Verses* campaigns tend to suggest that the Rushdie affair was a turning point in the articulation of Muslim identities in Britain. However, it is clear that such arguments also demonstrate a preoccupation with the truths and essences said to underlie Muslimness. There are those who express some surprise and consternation at the Rushdie affair on the grounds that it reflects an authoritarian attempt (Bhatt 1997) to impose a return to basic tenets of faith (Modood 1992) which, within the context of "a general sense of despair and disorientation" as a result of "the crisis of modernity...in which there is no clear societal moral order" (Yuval-Davis 1992: 280) fundamentalism has emerged.

Such arguments are deeply problematic, demonstrating a preoccupation with logocentrism which leaves them incapable of adequately conceptualising Muslim identities. Among these, Chetan Bhatt's (1997) account emerges as particularly interesting. Writing from within the logics of critical realism, Bhatt is primarily concerned with defending the intellectual legacy of the European Enlightenment tradition and explaining things as they really are, according to universal truths that he feels underpin all experience. Bhatt attempts to defend this ageing intellectual tradition by extending an analysis of what he terms 'religious authoritarianism'. Bhatt's arguments are well worth considering in greater depth for three reasons. First, Bhatt's argument is very strongly influenced by the broader literature on social movements and therefore also by much of the Women Against Fundamentalism literature that in many ways dominated debates on Muslims in Britain during the early 1990s. Secondly, there are marked similarities between Bhatt's argument and NUS documents on radical Islamist activity in universities that I discuss in subsequent chapters. Thirdly, Bhatt shares with many others an emphasis on the idea that Muslims in Britain are first and foremost South Asians who have rejected their essential, primordial identities as a result of authoritarian 'fundamentalist' interventions, and he employs an approach clearly riven with assumptions concerning the essential nature of identities that is common to dominant discussions of Muslims. As a consequence, it is worth considering the usefulness of Bhatt's reading of the emergence of explicitly Muslim identities in Britain in the wake of the Rushdie affair.

2.2 Essential Identities and Muslim Authoritarianism

Firstly, there are clear difficulties with Bhatt's attempt to explore the singular truth of Muslim identities. These are reflected most obviously in his implicit assumption that the articulation of universalist Muslim subjectivities is a moment of inauthenticity which disrupts pre-existing secular ethnic determinants ('South Asian') by using authoritarian means to encourage allegiance to an inauthentic singular Muslim

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subjectivity. This argument is worthy of further consideration for it enjoys considerable appeal. For example, Yuval-Davis (1992; 2001) conceptualises Islamism as a normative project that affects people's affiliations and self-identifications.

These discussions emerge from a context in which 'race' and 'racism' as traditionally deployed are seen as having become increasingly difficult to discern (for example, Gilroy 1987; Miles 1993), even to the point that anti-racists can be charged with racism (Wievorka 1997: 141). Emerging from studies of social movements and transnational identities, critical concerns have included the ways in which the pursuit of narrow, particularistic identity politics agendas and the abandonment of more established, broader ethnic determinants challenge and require changes to dominant models of multicultural citizenship (for example, Kymlicka 1995). A common emphasis in writings emerging from this context is on the normative tendencies of Muslim ideologues, exhorting and coercing people to abandon assumed primordial markers of ethnic identity (such as 'South Asian') in favour of the particularism of 'Muslim'. Chetan Bhatt (1997) shares this concern in an argument basically predicated around the assumption that the authentic essential truth underlying Muslim identities in Britain is defined by the realities of being South Asian broadly.

This argument is interesting for it is clear that normative stratagem are at stake, although not in the sense that writers such as Bhatt and Yuval-Davis (1992; 2001) suggest. Although Bhatt fails to tell us the origins of this trope, it is clear that hegemonic concerns are at stake. Notions of a unified South Asia emerge from the colonial discourse of Indology (see, for example, Inden 1992) and are buttressed by the western discourse of nationhood which supposes an essential link between geo-political determinants and group ethnie (see, for example, Anderson 1983). Clearly, no convincing explanation is provided as to why we should give any credence to the idea that the essential truth underlying Muslim identities in Britain is an essential truth of South Asian-ness. We are thus left to fall back on sedimented residual traces of

prior hegemonic operations as the underpinnings of this argument rather than on any empirically reliable indicator that Muslimness is always underpinned by other essential, secular ethnic truths.

The normative slant of Bhatt's argument is further demonstrated by his weddedness to the logics of essentialism by arguing that appeals to universalist Muslim identities are not only inauthentic, but moreover that they are positively delusionary. Bhatt (1997: 148-149) deploys the 1992 Blackburn riots in order to exemplify his argument that there is no such thing as a unitary Muslim identity, arguing that the possibility of differences and conflicts between Muslims demonstrates that appeals to Muslim identities are at best illusory. This argument is clearly disingenuous; for example, one never hears of localised rivalries or incidents of violence among whites being cited as evidence of the impossibility of articulating English identities, say, or the fierce factional rivalries within the *maquis* deployed as evidence that there was no such thing as the French resistance. In fact, it is only by embarking on a quest for a single essential truth of Muslimness that Bhatt is able to point to differentiation and conflict between Muslims as grounds for believing that appeals to Muslim identities are inauthentic and logically impossible.

The difficulties in Bhatt's essentialised reading of Muslim identities is thus illustrated by his inability to grasp the ways in which Muslims can articulate their identities in different ways and even engage in disputes with other Muslims[3]. A further sign of this incoherence can be found in the epistemological tangle Bhatt finds himself in. Thus, after concluding that Muslimness as such does not exist – largely because, it must be noted, Bhatt seeks a single essential truth of Muslimness – Bhatt then argues that his failure to find the essential truth of Muslimness is evidence that the Muslimness espoused by Islamists and even anti-*Satanic Verses* campaigners is not at all real: rather, it is an imagined Muslimness. Quite why appeals to Muslimness and the *Ummah* should be in any way more imagined than appeals to South Asia, Britain, Europe, or the west for example, is not explored in Bhatt's argument, and

presumably because implicit to his argument is the assumption that these are, in fact, real and authentic. Thus, Bhatt ends up arguing that Khomeinism is inauthentic because it is (he argues) articulated through the essentially *western* language of modernity, and that appeals to Islamic identities during the Rushdie affair were inauthentic because they sought to use authoritarian means to transform essential pre-existing secular South Asian identities. Clearly, Bhatt's recourse to strategies of essentialism produces an analysis that cannot be entirely convincing. The normative thrust of this argument is also clear, for the failure of the analysis of what Muslims *really are* gives way to implicit assumptions governing what Muslims *really should be*.

2.3 Contextualising discussions of Muslim identities in Britain

There is also a huge contextual difficulty with Bhatt's argument. Of course, he has a point when arguing that we must be mindful of patterns of racism in Britain when discussing Muslims, although his point is to argue that this is necessary because Muslims in Britain are really misguided South Asians (1997: 239). If this is the case, one could reasonably expect that Bhatt's examination of the emergence of Islamism would be primarily also predicated around a consideration of the ways in which Islam was implicated in resistance against racist colonial subjugation in South Asia. However, the incoherence of Bhatt's argument is underlined by the way in which he instead seeks to make Islamism analogous with Nazism, far right fascism, and even with the French revolution which, with the exception of far right racism, have very little direct relevance to the experiences of South Asian Muslims as South Asians. The disingenuousness of Bhatt's reading of Muslim identities is exacerbated by this contradictory approach to the question of how one can most usefully contextualise a study of Muslim identities in Britain.

2.4 Multiculturalism and the emergence of Muslim identities

Thirdly, Bhatt's account of Muslim identities founders because his decontextualisation enables him to ignore the broader context from which explicitly Muslim identities emerged during the anti-*Satanic Verses* campaigns. Bhatt finds himself in extremely mixed company by asserting that expressions of specifically Muslim identities – such as those articulated during the anti-*Satanic Verses* campaigning – were made possible by the way in which multiculturalism pandered to authoritarian religious leaders or, in everyday speak, 'fundamentalists'. In fact, this argument is clearly on very weak ground. For the reasoning behind the Muslim protests of the Rushdie affair was that multiculturalism had failed to provide Muslims with the same range of rights as members of other groups. Muslim protestors were not gathered on the steps of Bradford Town hall in the rather vain hope that some ineptly disguised Rushdie would appear to meet his maker. Their demands were extremely specific: ban the book and offer Muslims protection under blasphemy laws. That there may have been something of value in campaigners' claims was illustrated when, as Snethen (2000) reminds us, the European Commission of Human Rights rejected claims that *The Satanic Verses* violated Articles 9 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, while still finding itself able to rule that Austrian authorities could seize a film that depicted "God the Father as a senile and impotent fool, Christ as a cretin, and his [sic] mother, Mary, as a lascivious lady, and ridiculed the Eucharistic ceremony". Mir (1997) also reminds us that of the great differences between the British government's defence of free speech during the Rushdie affair and its attitudes towards Peter Wright's *Spycatcher* memoirs. It is for this reason that the publication of *The Satanic Verses* has been identified as a turning point for Islam in Britain, occurring at a time of improved political lobbying by Muslims but limited access to goods and services, high levels of unemployment, and growing calls for state funded Muslim schools (Kepel 1997: 126). Thus, as Werbner (1994: 114) notes, "the publication of *The Satanic Verses* marked a watershed...it revealed the need for broader organizational frameworks, as well as setting new agendas for common action, required in order to challenge the state and its current laws".

In this light it is also worth noting that the context within which the Rushdie affair took place was marked by increasing anger at the failures of dominant models of multiculturalism to adequately account for the articulation of Muslims or meet even the most basic needs of Muslims. For example, it is well known that considerable difficulties have been caused to Muslims as a consequence of the failure of the 1976 Race Relations Act to recognise discrimination against people as Muslims, notwithstanding the protection offered under the act to Sikhs and Jews. At the same time, campaigns for Muslim schools throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s often met with hostility and opposition that Muslim campaigners were forced on at least one occasion to form a strategic alliance with Conservative local politicians who supported Muslim schools from hostility at the idea of white children sharing classrooms with Pakis (see, for example, Kepel 1997: 124).

In Bradford – frequently seen as the focus of the anti-*Satanic Verses* campaigning – Muslims experienced severe problems as a consequence of racism. The Rushdie affair hit the Yorkshire city in the wake of entrenched racism that had affected people as Muslims as much as members of secular ethnicities. One of the clearest examples of this was presented by the 'Honeyford affair', an incident involving serious instances of racism on the part of a local headteacher (see Halstead 1988 for a good exploration of the case). Another incident of note involved the so-called 'Bradford Twelve', involving the trial of young Bradford males (including Muslims) who had been forced to stockpile firebombs for community protection as a consequence of police refusals to take appropriate action against racist attacks[4].

According to orthodox readings, the Rushdie affair centred around a simple protest against the blasphemy of an apostate. In fact, as far as Khomeini was concerned, the Rushdie affair was implicitly linked to broader questions about *postcoloniality,* with most of his statements on *The Satanic Verses* beginning and ending with condemnations of imperialism and colonialism (Spivak 1993: 233) while, as Troyna

and Carrington note (1990: 103) note, for Muslims in Britain, "closely associated with fundamentalist demands for the banning of this book, there was a more forceful insistence...for separate schools". Indeed, only months before the Rushdie affair hit the headlines, Muslim concerns about marginalisation within liberal structures were highlighted by the Muslim Educational Trust's complaint that the structure of the Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) would mean that "the bureaucrats could get the upper hand and we would be forced *again* [my emphasis] to provide religious education for our children outside school and at our own expense" (Guardian 28th February 1989 cited in Troyna & Carrington 1990: 103). Muslims across the country were facing discrimination and a government attitude described by Rath et al (1999) as "uncompromising and dismissive" in its refusals to offer legislative protection to Muslims, often unsupportive or even hostile (particularly in the case of Muslim schools), and offering provisions that "proceed implicitly from the Christian faith or Christian ethics, and hence sometimes prevent the free practice of their religion by Muslims".

In the context of these difficulties, it is difficult to support the assertion that incidents such as the Rushdie affair offer evidence of the extent to which Islamic 'fundamentalists' have capitalised on the gains made by multiculturalists. In fact, it is clear that another issue is implicated in such arguments. For, as Ball and Solomos note (1990: 13), the Rushdie affair was invested with broader significance in relation to immigration, integration and public order, even highlighting to some (ibid.: 14) the "difficulty of integrating Moslem communities into British life". Such concerns were generally articulated through claims to multiculturalism, in order to implicitly suggest that it was necessary for multiculturalism to take note of the need to constrain free and public expressions of Muslim identities. It is only in this context that we can possibly understand a rather puzzling feature of debates surrounding Muslims in the west. For we are faced with a number of rather curious assertions made by writers who would often describe themselves either as liberals or as being committed to the pursuit of equality and the challenging of discrimination. Among these, Marie Macey

(1999) expresses apparent shock at the Rushdie affair's status as the first time that Muslims dared peer above the parapet without forming strategic alliances with members of other groups, being struck most by the lack of white interlocutors in the Muslim protests. Others to have expressed similar views include Snethen (2000), who suggests that Muslim 'migrants' wishing to retain their cultural identity should be sensitive to the 50% of EU citizens who fear losing theirs. Such views are only explicable if we reject simplistic, unproblematised accounts of the relations of Muslims and multiculturalism, and instead remain mindful of the extent to which Muslims have not only been failed by dominant models of multiculturalism, but also been the focus of attempts to restrict Muslim access to a range of basic rights and to restrict possibilities for the public expression of Muslim identities.

3 The Rushdie affair and Muslim transgression

One of the enduring legacies of the Rushdie affair is the idea of Muslim transgression. As recently as 26th December 2001 *The Wall Street Journal* ran an article under the headline 'The Voice of Treason an Islamic fifth column' which argued that the Rushdie affair "uncovered a fifth column" in the west. Racist claims about Muslims such as this appeared with increasing frequency in the wake of the visible expression of Muslim political identities during the Rushdie affair, increasing in their ferocity during the first Gulf War, and eventually finding their way into discussions of Islamic 'fundamentalism' in British universities as we shall see presently. If Rushdie represents the man who could not be allowed to die, so coded was each invocation of his name with assertions about the survival of western democracy itself, then the Rushdie affair remains an incident that could not be forgotten, as was illustrated on a number of occasions during my fieldwork by Muslim students who cited references to Rushdie as a popular Islamophobic insult and shorthand for Muslim backwardness. Indeed, as I write this thesis in 2002, old writings about the Rushdie affair are still in circulation, including this offering from a prominent member of the National Secular Society:

"Whereas the American immigration ideal has historically been the metaphorical 'melting-pot' – immigrant families to the United States being only too anxious that their children should learn the English language and integrate with their neighbours – the immigration ideal in Britain is that of 'pluralism,' multi-culture, and multi-lingualism. It is this misguided, mythic ideal that...[is] generally promulgated by many 'progressive' British people...[who] fail to realize that what they are advocating is appeasement of the patriarchal fundamentalists of these communities, leaving those under their thumbs to their oppression – the effect being to deny to their young people brought up in Britain the chance to become truly British and to deny to their women the normal civil rights enjoyed by British women... Fundamentalist Moslems in Britain are carrying out acts of violence and inciting one another to murder in pursuit of their demands for "blasphemy" protection, for the banning of a work of fiction that refers disrespectfully to Moslem history, for the public funding of separate Moslem schools, and for the legal recognition of the Islamic personal law."[5]

What is perhaps most interesting about these perceptions of Muslim transgression during the Rushdie affair is that, while they ostensibly focus on what was seen as a series of very direct threats to democracy in western countries – through violence, oppression, and so on – they actually offer us a perception of threat to national identity that is coded in clearly racialised terms. Thus, Muslim respondents noted 'Rushdie' being used as a term of Islamophobic abuse because the Rushdie affair itself was configured around notions of the threat posed to national harmony and identity by people of immigrant stock who, having been pandered to by naïve multiculturalists, were refusing to integrate into some racialised notion of Britishness. As a consequence of this, racist articles such as The Wall Street Journal piece still have an appeal to those seeking to explain the increasing emergence of visible, publicly expressed Muslim identities, and the Rushdie affair has effectively become "a stick with which to beat the immigrants in a variety of political arenas" (Assad

1993: 303), even surfacing alongside other traditional Islamophobic assumptions and tropes (female genital mutilation...) when Muslim schoolgirls in Quebec requested the right to wear *hijab* to school (Kymlicka 2001: 175). Having made it clear that I seek to reject the logics of essentialism in my exploration of Muslim identities during the Rushdie affair, I am now faced with the challenge of explaining quite how it was that such perceptions of an essential Muslim threat arose. For, not only do these notions of threat dominate public responses to the Rushdie affair, but they are also untenable within the terms of a de-essentialised account of the emergence of visibly Muslim forms of political activity in Britain.

3.1 The Rushdie affair and Muslim transgression

During the Rushdie affair, a number of incidents were reported which were assumed to underline the supposed essentially transgressive nature of the protests. These incidents included a murder on the continent, the arson of a bookshop in Britain, instances of vandalism in Bradford, public death threats against Rushdie, and reports of bystanders being injured when a bomb was thrown at a London bookshop. Clearly, under almost any definition of reasonable behaviour, there can be few difficulties in establishing the transgressive nature of these particular incidents. However, it is important not to overstate the role of such incidents in broader Muslim campaigns during the Rushdie affair. It is clear that these incidents were isolated cases that cannot convincingly been seen as characteristic of the nature of the Muslim campaigns in Britain.

In fact, campaign leaders were very clear about their mobilisation around a highly symbolic request for legal protection from blasphemy in the context of widespread institutionalised racism and Islamophobia and the failure of multiculturalism in Britain to extend equal rights and legislative protection to Britain's Muslims. By far the bulk of Muslim campaigns involved nothing more threatening than burning copies of *The Satanic Verses*. This cannot itself be viewed as being an inherently transgressive

act. In fact, the formative years I spent living with my grandmother were marked by a daily routine that began with screwing up and igniting newspapers in order to light the coal fire and generate heat and warm water, a task I particularly relished on those occasions when the only newspaper to hand happened to be the *Daily Telegraph*.

Further afield, popular media representations of Muslim protest against imperialism and colonialism often include images of the stars and stripes being burnt by Palestinians, Iranians, or Iraqis. However, far more common have been protests involving the incineration of everything from Darwinian text books to Iron Maiden records in parts of the United States, and the numerous burnings of the *Qur'an* in India. Clearly, the decision of Muslim protestors to burn Rushdie's novel was no more transgressive than any of these acts, although it did clearly buy into a mode of publicly and symbolically expressing strong political feelings. Muslim campaigners did not set fire to themselves as Buddhist and Kurdish protestors have done, they did not harass doctors in the mistaken belief that paediatrics is another name for paedophilia, and (aside from a few isolated acts of vandalism and arson) they did not completely ravage parts of the urban landscape as anti-Poll tax and anti-globalisation campaigners have done. Moreover, in requesting that *The Satanic Verses* be banned, Muslim protestors' actions had a great deal in common with those of the state which has been involved in endless bannings since long before the time of DH Lawrence and long after the making of *The Clockwork Orange*, as former 'spook' David Shayler can no doubt testify. Clearly, the endless comparisons between the Bradford protestors and Nazism were neither useful nor credible. In fact, there was nothing inherently transgressive about Muslim campaigns for legislative protection during the Rushdie affair.

3.2 De-essentialising notions of Muslim transgression

If it is clear that there was nothing inherently transgressive about Muslim campaigns during the Rushdie affair, then notions of transgression are linked to essentialised

readings of Muslim identities. For example, Barbieri (1999) notes that the affair provided "the basis for the widespread – if rarely argued – claim, attractive to both right and left, that Islam is opposed, in spirit, to the traditions, mores, and democratic culture of the West"[6]. In other words, claims of Muslim transgression cannot be understood outside the context of essentialised readings of Muslim identities as fundamentally alien and threatening. This difficulty is even reflected in Tariq Modood's rather apologetic defence of Muslims (1992). Modood bases his reading of the affair on the idea that the protests were largely a function of essential Muslim backwardness, involving questions of simple "devotionalism" (Modood 1992: 271) and "pre-enlightenment religious enthusiasm" (Modood 1992: 274). What emerges from Modood's argument is that not only was the Rushdie affair a question of essential Islamic religiosity rather than a politically motivated protest for equal rights, but modern, democratic forms of protest also had an essential identity derived from the European enlightenment. Thus Modood seeks to rehabilitate Muslims by claiming that a Muslim enlightenment considerably predated that of Europe. As a consequence, we are left to assume that the transgression of Muslim protestors was largely derived from their rejection of both the enlightenment bases of Western liberal democracy, but also older, presumably authentic, versions of essential Muslim identities. Thus, even Modood's rather anaemic rhetorical defence of Muslims is configured around notions of underlying essences and a priori truths, and effectively fails to engage with broader racialised assumptions of Muslim transgression.

The difficulty of these dominant accounts of Muslim identities and transgression in the Rushdie affair can best be illustrated by countering their essentialised readings of Muslim identities with the Derridean notion of undecidability. I choose Derrida for reasons that I will expand on in due course. According to Derrida, undecidability is a condition that emerges from the absence of underlying foundations. This can be illustrated by turning to dominant readings of Muslim identities in Britain. I argued earlier that these are often largely incoherent as a consequence of attempts to divine the essential truths that are said to be immutably tied to the signifier Muslim. Derrida

(1976) terms this strategy *logocentrism*, a technique based on the belief in the *logos* as being immutably connected to underlying truths or essences. Rather, Derrida argues that a signifier can only ever direct us to other signifiers.

The usefulness of Derrida's argument is easy to see. For example, if I were to describe an unoccupied bed surrounded by the detritus of life and still unmade at six o'clock in the evening, what signifiers would spring to mind as an apt description for this image? Would we settle on 'laziness' or 'slovenliness', perhaps, or would we simply settle on a range of assumptions concerning the bed's owner? Even if we were to simply settle on a rather non-controversial answer and assert that this is, indeed, just an unmade bed, then things would not necessarily be as simple as one may presume. Both signifiers ('unmade' and 'bed') are only comprehensible within the terms of a discourse that has already established a particular understanding of conventions governing hygiene and use of furniture – that is, a bed is something to sleep on (usually during the night) and which should correctly be arranged in a particular way so that an unmade bed at six o'clock in the evening is something that can be understood either as unusual or as a sign of laziness or poor general hygiene. However, if I was to then announce that the owner of the bed was Tracy Emin, our understanding of the bed would change. 'Unmade bed' would no longer suffice as a signifier for the image. Instead we would have to decide whether the bed was, in fact, a metaphor for Emin's life, or even for her love life, as well as deciding on whether or not this unmade bed was an artwork or simply a piece of furniture in regular use by Emin. How we would reach these decisions on the correct way of signifying the bed would be entirely dependent on our familiarity with the prior workings of a discourse of modern 'Brit art' through which we can establish that the unmade bed is no longer a mark of slovenliness or overwork but rather of artistic endeavour, and which would also establish the conventions through which we would be able to arrive at a particular set of meanings and signifiers for the bed.

The logics of this suggest that the signifiers we use do not only direct us to a chain of other signifiers but are also central to the ways in which we construct meanings rather than reflect underlying truths. Derrida uses undecidability as a reference to the way in which signifiers do not direct us to logocentric truths but rather to a complex play of other signifiers. The relevance of this detour to our understanding of the Rushdie affair is clear. On one level, we all know what the phrase "the Rushdie affair" means. In the everyday vernacular of the west it has come to refer to the inauthentic emergence of Muslim identities from assumed primordial secular ethnic determinants, it refers to notions of essential Muslim transgression, and it refers us to ideas surrounding the way in which multiculturalism unleashed a demon identifiable from European pasts. Yet we know simultaneously that there is no means of fixing once and for all the meanings of "the Rushdie affair" and generating a single indisputable meaning. What does Rushdie mean? Is Rushdie a person? Or is Rushdie a metaphor for the survival of western histories at a time of decentred white western subjectivities?

In the same way, it is only possible to understand the racially coded assumptions of Muslim transgression that emerged from the Rushdie affair by being aware of their contingency and the workings of racialised discourse. For example, Marie Macey (1999) expresses in apparent dismay the idea that the Rushdie affair represented the first major example of large scale political activity by Muslims in Britain without recourse to white interlocutors. This view is only comprehensible within the logics of the racialised aesthetics of political protest that were unbalanced by Muslim protests and within the terms of a dominant model of multiculturalism in which power of self-representation is largely kept out of Muslim hands in order to prevent the 'fundamentalists' from overly benefiting from multiculturalist work. Likewise, Tariq Modood's apologia is only coherent when read within the terms of a particular discourse which establishes the universality of identities constructed with reference to the collective social imaginary of the European enlightenment project, and the associated techniques of logocentrism on which this project is based.

3.3 It's all a fix...

It is a widely held assumption that abandoning the logics of essentialism will profoundly affect our ability to understand the world, removing at a stroke our ability to understand 'reality', reducing everything to relativism, and generally causing the sky to metaphorically cave in on the world around us. In fact, such assumptions rely on a dangerous simplicisation of the issues at stake in abandoning essentialism. Abandoning essentialism does not involve denying the possibility of reality, but rather seeking to understand the ways in which particular notions of reality are constructed. Thus, the 'real' exists beyond our capacities for adequate symbolisation, and our attempts to symbolise or interpolate the real are discursive operations that give rise to our own notions of reality. Thus, a world without foundations need not be understood as a world without meanings, but rather a world in which we are better placed to recognise the way in which meanings are retroactively constructed and fixed.

The strategy through which Muslim protests in the Rushdie affair were constructed as essentially transgressive first involved the disaggregation of key markers of assumed essential Muslimness and their reinvocation as markers of inherent difference in often seemingly disjointed or stream-of-consciousness sequences that all directed us back to the prior workings of other racialised discourses on relations between immigrants, Muslims, and western democratic states. This collage of motifs included narratives of *hijab* (to signify oppressive exercise of Muslim male power), clenched fists (to signify the threat to white bodies posed by Muslims), Khomeini's turban and Iranian death squads (signifying the alien and hostile nature of Islam and Muslims), the Muslim Parliament (to signify the apparent unquenchable thirst of Muslims in Britain to gain power and reject state authority), massed protestors in Tehran and

books in flames (signifying throwbacks to earlier threats to democracy posed by Nazism), and Kalim Siddiqui (signifying the Ayatollah's stooge within).

Each of these images directed us back to other patterns of signification through which their meanings were established. As discussions of the Rushdie affair became more and more laden with metaphors for the difference of the Muslims who had disrupted multicultural space by emerging against all expectation and symbolisation. This had two effects. First, by disrupting dominant logocentrisms, Muslims occupied a space of undecidability that made it increasingly difficult to decide what the whole affair was about. There were Muslim claims concerning the need for equality and legislative protection, which were widely overlooked in reports concerning the Rushdie affair. Second, a signifier can only relate to so many metaphors before its significations come under strain and are destabilised. The processes through which any hegemonic meanings could be constructed were also disrupted by the loading of the name Rushdie with so many signifieds: was the problem that Muslims were expressing their grievances without recourse to white interlocutors? Was it a problem of multiculturalism appeasing the 'fundamentalists'? Could it really be the case that these Muslims who were protesting against discrimination really were in receipt of too many rights? Was the problem caused by cultural pluralism or by the way Muslims are? Or was it instead an international problem caused by these alien foreigners? These differing versions of events were all thoroughly contradictory and incapable of providing stable meanings for the Rushdie affair.

At this point we can say, drawing from Zizek, that an overdetermination occurred. Muslim protests, having occupied spaces of undecidability, demonstrated the impossibility of closure in the hegemonic discourse. Accepting that all meaning is contingent, Zizek expands on the possible ranges of interventions that can be made in order to stabilise meanings and create the illusion that there is no space of undecidability, but rather that what is being constructed as truth by a particular discourse really appears to be so when read within a particular set of logics. In

particular, Zizek has contributed to the way in which we understand the functioning of master signifiers in attempting to stabilise and fix meanings in this way. According to Zizek (1989: 102), a transferrance in meaning occurs retroactively when the ideological space is filled with a complex arrangement of signifiers which are then surmounted by a master-signifier that fixes their meaning. Using the example of Communism, Zizek illustrates his argument thus (*ibid.*):

"...in the ideological space float signifiers like 'freedom', 'state', 'justice', 'peace'...and then their chain is supplemented with some master-signifier ('Communism') which retroactively determines their (Communist) meaning: 'freedom' is effective only through surmounting the bourgeois formal freedom, which is merely a form of slavery; the 'state' is the means by which the ruling class guarantees the conditions of its rule; market exchange cannot be 'just and equitable' because the very form of equivalent exchange between labour and capital implies exploitation....."

Zizek further argues that the illusion of transference occurs at the point when we believe "that the meaning of a certain element (which was retroactively fixed by the intervention of the master-signifier) was present in it from the very beginning as its immanent essence". The Rushdie affair had disrupted dominant patterns of symbolisation to such an extent that the cacophony of largely incoherent responses that ensued overdetermined the protests so that they no longer represented a Muslim political mobilisation over the ways in which the multicultural was articulated to symbolise a Muslim presence, but rather to signify absolutely everything that somehow threatened harmony and yet at the same time which told us absolutely nothing insightful about the affair. It was at this point that a retroactive fixing of meanings took place which centred around invoking the master signifier 'fundamentalism' to fix both the boundaries of acceptable conduct/transgression within the broader logics of the hegemonic liberal discourse and the symbolisation of the Muslim protestors as defective westerners. This mode of fixity was achieved

through the inscription of a binary opposition between 'the fundamentalists' and 'modernity'; modernity was what the west had achieved but 'the fundamentalists' were some way off reaching, thanks to their temeritous appeals to "pre-enlightenment" "devotionalism" and religious "enthusiasm".

3.4 Muslim protestors and the symbolic order of Britishness

Following these conceptual clarifications, I find it useful to turn to questions of symbolism. When I speak of a symbolic order I refer, in Lacanian terms, to attempts mediate between libidinal analysis and linguistic categories by producing a transcoding scheme which makes it possible to speak of both within the framework of a common schema for conceptualisation (see, for example, Sarup's useful introduction to postmodernism, Sarup 1993). A symbolic order works through a series of registers that invoke what cannot be symbolised by any discursive formation (the real) and respond to this failure of symbolisation by producing a web of other symbolisations. What a symbolic order does, then, is to generate a bloc of norms and patterns of significations that can be experienced as such, mediating and interpolating for us our understanding and experience of 'the real'. In the case of debates on the emergence of Muslim protests in the Rushdie affair, ideas of Muslim transgression were successfully constructed as a result of the construction through hegemonic discourse of a range of relationships (between 'the west' and 'progress', between 'the west' and 'reason'...) and to elide the possibility of a rather different range of relationships (between 'Muslims' and 'progress'...). These symbolisations have been manifested in various ways in debates on Muslims. Among the less cogent and more crude versions we have, for example, the work of Shaikh and Kelly (1989), who discuss the triumphs of *Western* education without even mentioning it as such, by deploying liberal education in opposition to Muslim education in a clearly racialised discussion. Slightly more sophisticated analyses are produced by writers such as Bernard Lewis, who is wont to describe modernity itself as inherently western, while contradictorily asserting that he would never dream of suggesting

western pasts be grafted onto the Muslim world's present although suggesting that we can nevertheless gauge how modern Muslim societies are by discerning their positioning vis-à-vis certain moments in the history of the west (Lewis 1996, for example). More naively, we also have Tariq Modood's apologetic defence of Muslims, which is clearly based on the idea that Muslims can only be rehabilitated by demonstrating that authentic Muslimness is markedly similar to key symbolic moments in western histories such as the European enlightenment.

These means of symbolising Muslims all play their part in the emergence of the Islamophobic narratives in the wake of the Rushdie affair. Chetan Bhatt (1997) refers to these as the replacement of traditional markers of racialised difference with radically relativistic markers of otherness so that the assumed essential irrationality, fundamentalism, and backwardness of Muslims becomes a shorthand for the essential otherness and non-westernness of Muslims[7]. These arguments appeal to a field of discursive intelligibility constructed through the conceptual vocabularies of the European enlightenment. In appealing to the collective social imaginary of the enlightenment, they attempt to fix the nature of reason, progress, and modernity as essentially western. They also attempt to fix meanings as a series of *a priori* truths that are given and realised rather than constructed, and that represented Muslim protestors as harking back to a previous age of western excesses. As Kepel (1997: 81) notes, "television viewers saw scenes differently [to the campaigners]: they recalled engravings of Inquisition bonfires or black-and-white images of Nazis burning books". The othering of Muslim protestors was not simply based on fixing them as inherently non-western but actually by positing a single thread of history and human nature and fixing this relative to the west itself. Thus, the otherness of Muslims was related to their defectiveness as westerners or Britons. As Chetan Bhatt (1997: 33) notes during a discussion of an *Independent* editorial on the Rushdie affair (16th January 1989):

"An important transformation was occurring in this liberal attempt to grapple with the tensions between multiculturalism and British national belonging. In the case of the *Independent*'s editorial, it was not simply a racist response, a reworking of Powellism, or even of the "new racism" that it informed. It was a representation of the symbols of Britishness in which the British tradition was identified with freedom and democracy, both a real and an invented tradition from which Muslims, by virtue of their protests, had deliberately excluded themselves, not because of their "cultural difference" – the *Independent* generally fell on the side of the need to respect Muslim spiritual and cultural values – but by their *irrational* political discourse. This liberal response attempted to construct a difference between Muslims and Britishness that was not explained by the cultural difference thesis of "new racism", though cultural difference was an important marker, but neither was it explicitly maintained by "racial" difference. Difference and exclusion from national identity rested on non-adherence to Western reason and Enlightenment. Muslim "race formation" appeared to be occurring somewhere between the poles of Western superior reason and Muslim subaltern superstition".

As a consequence of these discursive moves, it is clear that the scandal of Muslim political activity during the Rushdie affair involves transgression of the hegemonic symbolic order of Britishness. The emergence of Muslim campaigners who could not be adequately symbolised within the existing order was necessarily transgressive, not because of the essential transgressiveness of Muslims *per se*, but rather as a necessary consequence of both the ways in which Muslims were positioned vis-à-vis the existing order (for example, Macey's scandal of Muslims protesting without recourse to white interlocution), and the ways in which the visible public expression of Muslim identities demonstrated a complete rejection of the essentialised caricature of Muslimness constructed through hegemonic discourse.

Muslim protestors during the Rushdie affair did not simply burn a book on the steps of Bradford Town Hall; they symbolically burned a mode of representing Muslims that had given rise to continued exclusions even from the benefits and rights of multiculturalism. The obvious parallel to draw with the Muslim protestors does not involve allusions to Nazism, but rather to the confident self-identification and adoption by Blacks of the category 'black' to replace imposed categories such as 'Negro' during the 1960s. As Goldberg (1993: 230) notes, "investing positive content in a category so long carrying racist connotation was especially subversive, emphasizing self-assertion and self-representation, the power to name and to do". When Muslim campaigners reclaimed the power of self-representation in order to mobilise against ongoing institutionalised Islamophobia their act was especially subversive because they disrupted the processes of symbolisation through which hegemonic notions of a natural order were constructed.

The burning of *The Satanic Verses* did not emerge from the fragmentation of previously conclusive ethnic certainties but rather from the failure of these attempts to interpolate the multicultural for us as a stable play of essential identities. Muslim protestors did not burn a book in order to defend a superstitious truth; they burned the *logos* as the basis of the problematic inscription of modernist, essential truths. In doing so, the protestors occupied a space of undecidability in the construction of the essential truths central to liberalism (western rationality, western progress, secular truths, an essential natural order...) and, in doing so, exploded the myths of truth that had for so long served to keep explicitly Muslim identities out of public spaces. It is only by understanding that the Rushdie affair struck at the very heart of liberalism by showing the contingency of its own truth orders that we can understand why it was that such a harmless act as setting fire to a few sheets of paper could be re-presented as such a transgressive encounter and be met with a such a level of epistemic violence that the Rushdie affair is still invoked as a term of Islamophobic abuse over a decade later. For the Rushdie protestors did not just burn a book, they burnt the *logos* itself.

4 Rushdie and the emergence of Muslim identities

This re-reading of the Rushdie affair does not, however, account for how it is that the Rushdie affair has come to be viewed as such a pivotal moment in the history of race and ethnic relations involving Muslims in Britain. I have made it clear that I reject as incoherent the notion that the protests emerged as a moment of inauthenticity in which Muslims began increasingly turning their backs on their primordial essential secular ethnic identities. In fact, I think it is clear that what Muslim protestors were rejecting – and would do so with increasing frequency in succeeding years – was the idea that there were any primordial essential traits that underpinned their identities. To illustrate this argument, it is worth noting that it is not only dominant models of multiculturalism that have often failed to provide Muslims with equal and unfettered access to the same range of rights and protection already accorded to members of other groups.

4.1 Muslims in Britain

Of course, Britain has long enjoyed – though not always in a literal sense – a Muslim presence. During the 19th century, migration patterns informed by relations of racist colonial subjugation and trade with the Middle East and South Asia gave rise to migration of labourers, seamen, and members of the aspiring classes such as lawyers and civil servants, as well as a surprising number of conversions to Islam among white Britons who had gained contact with Islam and Muslims by participating in racist colonial subjugation. By far the majority of Muslim settlement in Britain occurred in the post-war years, and approximately 80% of Britain's Muslims are of South Asian heritage. Primary reasons for migration were often economic, although Britain does have significant numbers of Muslims displaced from Kashmir as a result of war or such developments as the building of the Mangla Dam, in addition to

considerable numbers of East African Muslims who arrived during the 1960s and 1970s. Following primary immigration Muslim communities in Britain underwent processes of consolidation, developing a basic economic infrastructure, a network of Mosques and *madrasahs*, and other structures through which Muslims could provide for needs that would otherwise not be met. At the same time, a series of projects emerged which all attempted to improve conditions within multicultural, multiracial Britain. Having already problematised the relationship between Muslims and multiculturalism, I now seek to expand on my de-essentialised account of the emergence of Muslim political mobilisation in Britain by also exploring what I mean by multiculturalism.

4.2 The multicultural and the decentring of whiteness

For much of the post-war period, government approaches were marked by a singular inability to adequately symbolise the presence as equals of any minority ethnic group, let alone Muslims. In order to explore this it is necessary to reconsider what we mean by multiculturalism. Before doing so, I find it useful to introduce the notion of dislocation. A dislocation is an experience or incident that cannot be adequately symbolised within the terms of the hegemonic discourse. The Rushdie affair can be said to have dislocationary effects because large-scale protests by Muslims involving the articulation of explicitly Muslim identities and without recourse to interlocution by whites could not, as I have already argued, be coherently symbolised within the terms of the hegemonic liberal discourse. It is for this reason that meanings were stabilised around an assumed zero-sum face-off between the backwardness of 'the fundamentalists' and the democracy of the liberal west. In the history of post-war Britain, it is also clear that official 'race' relations work has also been largely generated in the context of an earlier dislocation stemming from the winning of independence by countries formerly subjected to racist colonial subjugation and by primary migrations. These events constitute what Sayyid (1997) has termed the decentring of the west, and what Sayyid (*ibid.*) and Hesse (1997) both conceptualise

as a dislocation; events that could not be adequately symbolised within hegemonic discourse. As Barnor Hesse (1997) notes, one of the corollaries of this dislocation was a move from 'race' as empire to 'race' as nation. This move gave rise to a range of different attempts to stabilise the disruptive effects of the dislocation by interpolating the empirical fact of Britain's diversity in a number of ways.

Multiculturalism is often described in rather simple and benign terms, as though some non-threatening fudge about 'saris, steel bands and samosas' can adequately express the aims of the dominant multicultural project. In fact, such an approach is not entirely helpful, for it is clear that multiculturalism emerged as the last of three dominant overlapping *official* projects of assimilationism, integrationism, and cultural pluralism (Taylor & Hegarty 1985: 480). In other words, multiculturalism did not emerge as a straightforward reflection of underlying a *priori* truths of diversity, but rather from a far longer context of racialised politics in Britain, some of which dated back to the age and ideas of racist colonial subjugation. It is also important to note that multiculturalism did not emerge as a natural manifestation of the empirical fact of Britain's diversity, but rather as a way of interpolating this diversity by articulating figurative spaces within which a range of social and political identifications could be made by members of diverse groups, constructing those identities themselves, and mediating the encroachment of these spaces into the public sphere. I prefer to term these figurative spaces the multicultural.

For a considerable time during the post-war period, the figurative space I term the multicultural was largely restricted to those spaces articulated by members of minority ethnic groups themselves. Official race relations provisions were first predicated around colonial concerns and involved attempting to control and reduce the migration of Black people (Hesse 1997), and later came to reflect concerns of assimilationism, with the education system in particular a bastion in the struggle to ensure that Blacks grew up to assimilate an essentialised notion of whiteness. This racism was compounded by the persistence of other forms of white racism including

white flight. For a considerable period, Britain was therefore a multicultural and multiracial society on a formal level although, in practice, it was a country criss-crossed with ethnicised and racialised boundaries, and plagued with racism commissioned as much by various arms of state and local authority provision as much as by individual racists. Multiculturalism emerged as the latest in a series of different projects that aimed to interpolate the empirical fact of diversity into patterns of provision through the exercise of governmentality.

4.3 Multiculturalism and Muslims

One of the interesting points Chetan Bhatt (1997: 127) makes in his reading of the emergence of what he terms authoritarian religious movements is that while 'fundamentalists' have benefited from multiculturalism, it is still worth lamenting the decline of youth groups and projects in which Muslims would participate alongside members of other ethnicised minorities. Unfortunately, Bhatt fails to explore the possible relationship between multiculturalism and the decline of such groups and projects. This is a shame for it is clear that, while Muslims have enjoyed an often uneasy relationship with multiculturalism, Muslim participation in such youth groups was often facilitated by the Antiracist alignment of these projects.

With the emergence of Antiracism, there was at last a project that enjoyed considerable success in a number of 'mainstream' institutions (despite obvious obstructionism) in articulating the multicultural as a space with which Muslims could forge a meaningful range of identifications. Antiracists did not only campaign on a range of issues important to Muslims (racism, Palestinian rights...) but they also articulated Blackness as a universal and political identity that did not preclude the possibility of Muslim identifications. Muslims were able to participate in and benefit from Antiracist activities and initiatives. In particular, Antiracism offered a mode of resistance against institutionalised racism experienced by Muslims in a range of

ways. These included programmes for and mobilisation of youth, and their effect was even felt in higher education: Antiracist initiatives in Finchton University during the 1980s was directly implicated in increasing access to higher education for Muslim students, and a committed Antiracist staff member was directly involved on a developmental level in the provision of the Muslim prayer room, while on another occasion two committed Antiracist staff members championed the ultimately unsuccessful cause of *halal* food provision. On the other hand, as we shall see later, the emergence of a multiculturalist dominance in Finchton University saw retreats in provision for Muslims and a failure to tackle the institutionalised racism they faced.

The gains made under the auspices of the loose and often leftist politics of Antiracism were never consolidated upon under the dominance of mainstream multiculturalism projects. The range of meaningful identifications that Muslims could make with multiculturalism was often extremely restricted, Muslim requests for rights under multiculturalism were routinely denied, and legislative protection would not be granted to Muslims because, under the essentialist terms of mainstream multiculturalism, Muslimness was an inauthentic and incoherent identity that was threatening to the dominant order because of its incapacity to adequately symbolise Muslims. The Rushdie affair emerged from this context not as an example of the essential backwardness of 'fundamentalism' of Muslims as we were often asked to assume, but rather as the locus of specifically Muslim forms of contestation over the articulation of the multicultural. Muslim protestors were primarily motivated by aims of improving the range of identifications Muslims could make and breaking down barriers to the further encroachment of the multicultural on public spaces in order to challenge institutionalised inequalities.

5 Conclusion

The Rushdie protests were certainly distinct from earlier forms of Muslim political protest for a range of reasons. The effects of and possibilities opened by the Iranian revolution, the use of various technologies in appealing to a political constituency of Muslims, increasing levels of educational attainment among Muslims in Britain, the consolidation of Muslim community structures in Britain, changing patterns of literacy and accessibility to a range of Islamic texts, experiences of racism and the ineffectiveness of dominant models of multiculturalism have all played their parts in making the Rushdie protests qualitatively different from earlier forms of political mobilisation by Muslims. However, none of this makes the protests any the less authentic or coherent, and none of this goes to suggest that the Rushdie affair was a turning point after which 'fundamentalists' were increasingly able to coerce people into expressing Muslim rather than secular South Asian subjectivities.

It is only by completely abandoning essentialised readings of Muslim identities that we can adequately account for the ability of Muslims to articulate their identities in different ways and to convincingly read subtle changes in the ways in which Muslim identities are expressed in differing contexts. Moreover, abandoning essentialism also allows us to more convincingly account for the epistemic violence with which Muslim protests during the Rushdie affair were greeted. The scandal of Muslim identities articulated throughout the affair had very little to do with the disruption of pre-existing ethnic determinants and everything to do with the disruption of the ways in which these were constructed.

It is thus clear that anti-*Satanic Verses* campaigning by Muslims should be viewed as particularly significant for three reasons. First, the protests problematised dominant modes of conceptualising Muslim identities and, in doing so, demonstrated the political articulacy of Muslims willing both to fight for equal formal rights and for the right to exercise power of self-representation. Second, the protests were not

symptomatic of ethnicised minority identity crisis but rather symptomatic of broader difficulties with dominant modes of liberal multiculturalism. Third, the protests met with considerable epistemic violence in the wake of widespread Muslim self assertions. In many ways these issues reflect the concerns of my thesis as I concern myself with the construction of Muslim identities, the exercise of white power through formal multiculturalism and, as we shall see in the next chapter, the emergence of Islamophobia.

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[1] I acknowledge Kepel's assertion that until the mid-1980s social scientists paid little attention to Muslims but instead classified them "according to categories which, depending on the country, counted them as 'immigrants', as *'Gastarbeiter'*, *'extracommunitari'* or 'Blacks'" (inVertovec and Peach 1997: 48). As I argue in this chapter, 'fundamentalism' is merely another term to add to the long list of floating signifiers used to describe ethnicised minorities in Britain.

[2] In 1993 Winston Churchill MP famously countered his Prime Minister by arguing that "Mr Major promises us that 50 years from now, spinsters will still be cycling to communion on Sunday mornings - more like the muezzin will be calling Allah's faithful to the High Street Mosque", reported in the Guardian (29/5/1993) and quoted by Vertovec and Peach (in eds. Vertovec and Peach 1997: 5). While many would undoubtedly read Churchill's opinions as often rather illiberal, I argue that his broad positioning within the apparatus of liberal-secular British state is critical. His fears of a Muslim threat also reflect the growing liberal fears of a 'fundamentalist' presence throughout the 1990s. It is for these reasons that I lump him with liberals.

[3] For example, it is worth considering the dominant pathologies of Muslim youth as suffering from permanent and perennial identity crises as a result of inter-generational conflict. Such arguments are, of course, entirely unconvincing – after all, Hollywood made a fortune from films portraying the identity crises that American youth suffer from. In the case of repeated arguments that Muslim youth in Britain are engaged in far-reaching inter-generational conflicts over Islam with their parents which demonstrate the fallacy of appeals to universalist Muslim subjectivities it is, of course, worth recalling Marie Parker Jenkins' (1999) acknowledgement that these debates are tied up in a range of issues including relative levels of education. It goes without saying that relative levels of literacy, education, or access to Islamic literature in different vernaculars also inform such disputes. It is only possible to assert that such disputes and differences demonstrate the fallacy of Muslim identities if we buy into the logics that there is (or should be) only one essential way of being a Muslim.

[4] It is, of course, worth recalling that the 'Bradford Twelve', who were acquitted in 1982 after demonstrating that the firebombs they had prepared were necessary to defend communities facing threats from white racist skinheads that the racist Police were disinclined to protect them from, were an alliance of Muslims with members of other South Asian groups under the auspices of the United Black Youth League. It is also worth recalling that under the auspices of anti-racism a range of issues directly affecting Muslims were effectively politicised, ranging from planning permission for Mosques to Israeli oppression of the

Palestinians at a time in which it was unrepentantly supporting apartheid in Namibia and South Africa as well.

[5] 'Fundamentalist Moslem Violence in Britain', by Barbara Smoker, President of National Secular Society. The article is still widely circulated a dozen years after the Rushdie affair. For example, http://www.atheists.org/Islam/violenceinbritain.html

[6] I cite no page number for this reference, having accessed Barbieri's article on the internet rather than in hard-copy.

[7] For example, Bhatt (1997: 146) recalls a letter from John Patten, then Minister of State at the Home Office, to British Muslims dated 4th July 1989: "[If Muslims] are to make the most of their lives and opportunities as British citizens, then they must also have a clear understanding of the British democratic processes, of its laws, the system of government and the history that lies behind them...".

Chapter 3 – We defective westerners: Islamism and Islamophobia

"I should explain. I am an Arab. A good Arab. I am not a terrorist. I do not like war and I bear no animosity towards the Jews...The American lady and her English husband at the next table are Jewish. They objected to eating with what they called the 'terrorist'. So, they insulted me and moved..."

- Monologue from 'Journey into Fear' (1975)

1 Introduction

What emerges most forcefully from the Rushdie affair is that apparently novel ways of articulating Muslim political identities have the propensity to severely disrupt dominant western conceptual vocabularies, giving rise to resulting attempts to re-centre those vocabularies that were often characterised (in the Rushdie affair at least) by racialised pathologies of Muslimness. As Vertovec (2002: 23-24) notes, "essentialist notions of culture...foster the view that there is such a thing as 'the Muslim community.' Further, this community must in essence be of the same nature as those 'fundamentalists' seen in North Africa or the Middle East. So-called Muslim fundamentalists make political demands that pose a threat to western established social and philosophical order. Because British Muslims increasingly make political demands, 'common sense' logic argues that they must pose a parallel, if not identical, fundamentalist threat. Yet, when one examines the kinds of demands made by British Muslim organizations and spokesmen, it is apparent that for the most part they are asking only for an exercise of liberal rights..."

These epistemic violences constitute what is increasingly recognised and termed as Islamophobia. However, quite what we mean when we refer to Islamophobia frequently remains under-explored in discussions of Islam and Muslims. This leaves us either to assume that Islamophobia is a fictive manifestation, or alternatively that it

is little different from other forms of racism and alternative ways of representing 'the Orientals'. It is therefore necessary to flesh out what I mean when I refer to Islamophobia. At the same time, since it is clear that the emergence of contemporary Islamophobia somehow has its parallels with novel ways in which Muslims have increasingly noticeably come to articulate political identities, it is necessary to explore quite how contemporary manifestations can best be understood, and quite how they are related to Islamophobia. It is therefore to these questions that I turn in this chapter.

2 Recognising Islamophobia

It is rather curious that many academic works on Muslims in Europe largely ignore the question of Islamophobia to anything other than the most superficial of levels, choosing instead to focus on ethnographic exposés of life 'inside' the Muslim communities or even on areas of potential or emerging conflicts involving Muslims, whether those be conflicts with a range of other generational, ethnicised or gendered identifications (for example, Archer 2001; Bhatt 1997; Dwyer 2000; Macey 1999; Husain and O'Brien 2000; Zokaeie and Phillips 2000), with political identifications (for example, Purdam 2000) or with formal structures for minority integration (for example, Yilmaz 2002).

Such studies frequently discuss the insertion into a British context of complex webs of *biraderi* and *zat* systems (and suchlike) within the context of post-war immigration, and on occasion would even have us believe that it is of importance to note that most Muslims in Britain are barely a generation removed from rural peasantry (for example, Ballard 2002[1] along with Werbner 1989). Others, purporting to highlight the difficulties of integration maintain an emphasis on the foreignness of Europe's Muslims; for example, "in the eyes of the *hosts* [my emphasis], these disparate groups [of Muslims] share an essentialized negative identity as dangerous strangers"

(Zolberg & Woon 1999). By now we should all know only too well that Britain's first *masjid* was built on the eve of the twentieth century, that the majority of Muslims in Britain share a South Asian heritage, and that a great many religious and political tendencies are reflected among Britain's Muslims (*berelvi, tableeghi, sufi, salafi, ikhwani, Jamaat-i-Islami, al Muhajiroun…*). We are also by now well served by an extensive array of ethnographic and anecdotal accounts of Muslims in Britain and Europe (Anwar 1985; Hahlo 1998; Jeffery 1976; Lewis 1994; Raza 1991; Shaw 1988…). What is often left as something of an afterthought is a consideration of the relationship between the way in which we conceptualise Muslim identities and the appearance of this something-and-nothing we increasingly hear about and casually refer to as Islamophobia for want of a better term.

This is important because if we are unable to convincingly account for the presence of those describing themselves as Muslims without retreating into essentialist tropes of cultural or ethnic in/authenticity, then we will not be able to adequately conceptualise the emergence of distinctive forms of discrimination against and hostility towards Muslims over the past two decades or so. Neither will we be able to usefully conceptualise the emergence of a politics predicated around appeals to Islamic metaphors, or 'fundamentalism' as it is most commonly called.

It is equally curious that, while there is a recognition of the failure to adequately consider Antisemitism in studies on racism (for example, Solomos and Back 2000: 10; Iganski 1999), there is still by and large even less consideration of the question of Islamophobia. These difficulties appear even more inexplicable since Islamophobia has been openly discussed by Muslims in Britain since at least the late 1980s. Nevertheless, aside from a few isolated works – such as Elizabeth Poole's work on media representations of Muslims in Britain (2002) – there is still a dearth of research into and writing on Islamophobia. The notable exception to this has been the Runnymede Trust's groundbreaking report on Islamophobia (1997), which was even then mockingly referred to in the media as attempting to make people "Islamically

correct" (*Independent on Sunday*, 2nd March 1997). It is therefore useful to begin my discussion of Islamophobia with a brief look at the Runnymede Trust's report.

2.1 Defining Islamophobia

In the light of my critique of essentialist conceptions of Muslim identities in the last chapter, it is interesting to note that the Runnymede Trust's report on Islamophobia is not without its own problems in this respect. For example, the term 'Islamophobia' is suggestive of irrational fear of Muslims as well of notions of the 'real' nature of Islam and Muslims that can be countered against these misplaced irrationalities. This difficulty is exacerbated by the often largely procedural definitions of Islamophobia offered by the Runnymede Trust's report. As a consequence of these, the report's greatest use remains as a general guide for practitioners working with Muslims. Conceptually, these proceduralisms give way to attempts to discern the essences of Islamophobia. Terminology central to the report (e.g. 'closed' and 'open' views of Islam) is often highly contestable and steeped with the kind of relativism and truth claims that would be easily applicable to simple, routine cases of Islamophobia which follow set patterns and result in easily identifiable outcomes – for example, if a Muslim was to be denied a job opportunity on the grounds that Muslims are a menace to the public. However, their usefulness in supporting more complex articulations of Islamophobia or rejecting essentialist conceptualisations of identities and the workings of racialised discourse is limited. The report defines 'open' and 'closed' views of Islam as follows:

"Closed views see total difference between Islam on the one hand and the non-Muslim world, particularly the so-called West, on the other. Islam is 'other', with few or no similarities between itself and other civilisations and cultures ... Claims that Islam is totally different and other often involve stereotypes and claims about 'us' (non-Muslims) as well as about 'them'

(Muslims), and the notion that 'we' are superior. 'We' are civilised, reasonable, generous, efficient, sophisticated, enlightened, non-sexist. 'They' are primitive, violent, irrational, scheming, disorganised, oppressive ... Closed views see Islam as violent and aggressive, firmly committed to barbaric terrorism, and implacably hostile to the non-Muslim world" (Runnymede Trust 1997: 6-7)

This definition is interesting for it makes the sort of complex and highly sophisticated examples of Islamophobia that I am concerned with in this thesis reducible to simple questions of ignorance and/or refusal to open one's mind to the possibilities that we Muslims are not necessarily all that bad. As such, it completely ignores the problematic relationship between Islamophobia and the construction of knowledge that I have already raised. In particular, it fails to account for the representation of Muslims in terms of their assumed inherent status as defective westerners that I noted in chapter two was a key feature of Islamophobic responses to the Rushdie affair, instead focusing on the maintenance of Muslims in extremely crude forms of alterity. This is a significant failing of the Runnymede Trust's report, for it is clear that Islamophobia can also be extremely subtle.

The Islamophobia report is also problematic because it implicitly sustains ideas that there are certain essential identities from which we may discern the dominant identity of a particular discourse. This is reflected in the bluntest of all definitions of Islamophobia contained in the report, the notion that Islamophobia refers to "unfounded hostility towards Islam." This idea is naturally problematic, and we can infer from it precisely the same type of difficulties enshrined in hegemonic western definitions of Islamophobia which place an emphasis on the foundedness and legitimacy of representations of Islam, and in doing so imply the prior existence of essential Muslim identities that can either be legitimately criticised for what they are inherently or cannot be legitimately criticised for what they are inherently. This emphasis on the inherency of identities is central to pathologisations of Muslims and

members of other ethnicised groups, and it is problematic to assert that a definition of Islamophobia invoking such ideas will necessarily be completely effective in extending our understanding of these pathologies. Although the Runnymede report asserts the great diversity among Muslims, this procedure cannot in itself amount to a de-essentialisation. This failure leaves the Runnymede Trust's report open to the type of criticism that has often been levelled against simplicising notions of racism: that reducing racism to simple questions of intolerance, closed-mindedness, or stereotypical otherings cannot form the basis of an adequate politics of anti-racism.

This is not to suggest that the Runnymede Trust's report is without use. The report seeks to expand upon its reference to 'closed' and 'open' views of Islam through the following indicators (*ibid.*):

"1 Whether Islam is seen as monolithic and static, or as diverse and dynamic.

2 Whether Islam is seen as other and separate, or as similar and interdependent.

3 Whether Islam is seen as inferior, or as different but equal.

4 Whether Islam is seen as an aggressive enemy or as a cooperative partner.

5 Whether Muslims are seen as manipulative or as sincere.

6 Whether Muslim criticisms of 'the West' are rejected or debated.

7 Whether discriminatory behaviour against Muslims is defended or opposed.

8   Whether anti-Muslim discourse is seen as natural or as problematic."

What is perhaps most notable about this list is that it appears to conflate common Islamophobic stereotypes (inferiority, aggression...) with conceptual questions (essentialism...). As a consequence, the coherence of the Trust's definition of Islamophobia suffers. However, the single thread implicitly linking these indicators of 'open' and 'closed' views of Islam and Muslims is the idea of essentialism. Thus, what we are in fact left to assume is that whether or not Muslims are represented in terms of particular traits, capacities, and predispositions viewed as inherent to Islam

or Muslimness is the key to recognising whether or not a particular discourse is Islamophobic.

2.2 Islamophobia and proceduralism

Another major difficulty emerging from the Runnymede Trust's definition of Islamophobia lies in its proceduralism. The idea that one can discern Islamophobia merely by following a simple procedural approach is widespread. It is reflected, for example, in claims by the western political and media establishment that George W Bush's "war against terror" cannot possibly be Islamophobic since, despite involving the mass arrest of countless Muslims, it also has largely benign manifestations (such as *iftaar* meals in the Whitehouse). Clearly, it is not possible to assert that any discourse is likely to be sufficiently monolithic as to facilitate straightforward recognition of Islamophobia or other forms of racism. In this light it is, of course, worth noting that while racism has been increasingly challenged in Britain over recent years, in fact Islamophobia was more prevalent in the late 1990s than in the early to mid- 1980s.

Firstly, claims to benign content cannot in themselves demonstrate that a particular discourse lacks racism or Islamophobia. It is, of course, the case that most discourses present themselves as being benign to some extent. Within a British context this is reflected in the ways in which the fascist British National Party has increasingly represented itself as having benign concerns, not only arguing that its racist policies are in the best interests of white Britons, but also issuing platitudes to Hindus while targeting Muslims with racism and even, on occasion, arguing that repatriation of ethnicised minority groups may well be in the best interests of those concerned and could quite likely reflect their own needs and wants. Further afield, the research of Wetherall and Potter (1992) demonstrated the ways in which Pakeha (white European) New Zealanders would often attempt to configure their views around liberal principles of formal freedom and equality in order to avoid being

labelled as racist while still legitimising an unjust and racist social order. In other words, claims of benign concerns were central to the expression of the respondents' racism and their presence in a particular discourse cannot be cited as evidence of a lack of racist concerns.

Secondly, the idea that a discourse's benign content means that it cannot be Islamophobic or racist is clearly problematic because it implies that racisms follow a set pattern involving complete vilification of the racial other. This notion is clearly problematic, for it ignores the subtle workings of racism, the ways in which racist narratives can penetrate other discourse, and the logics of new racisms which involve supplanting older phenotypal racisms with more subtle forms of racism based around notions of cultural difference.

2.3 Islamophobia as discourse

The difficulties emerging from the Runnymede Trust's definition of Islamophobia are significant since they raise important conceptual points that directly relate to the ways in which knowledges are constructed. The incoherence of the Trust's definition of Islamophobia leaves us only to assume that a distinguishing feature of Islamophobia is whether or not a particular narrative invokes legitimately justifiable criticisms of negative features of an underlying essential identity. In other words, the report again directs us back to the logocentric conceptual vocabularies through which dominant writings on 'race' and ethnicity have frequently sought to deny Muslim identities as anything other than a manipulation and denial of 'true' underlying primordial ethnic determinants. This is clearly problematic. All discourses represent their concerns as legitimate and their critical or hostile narrative content as legitimate references to an established order of things. It makes little sense to suppose that one can only recognise racism or Islamophobia by discerning illegitimacy since all discourses attempt to ground and legitimise themselves. Contrary to the Runnymede Trust's claims, we cannot convincingly resolve tensions over whether or not Muslim identities

are viewed as natural or problematic by accepting the logics of its definition of Islamophobia. This is because the Runnymede Trust's logics in defining Islamophobia return us to the grounds of relativism and bind us into the cyclical logics of attempting to distinguish between whether the essences underlying the articulation of Muslim identities reflect a truth of Muslimness or of secular ethnicities (Pakistani...). Clearly, one cannot discern the nature of a particular discourse by first determining the nature of underlying essential truths.

The fundamental difficulty with the Runnymede Trust's definition of Islamophobia is thus that it comes to rely on a particular understanding of language as a reflection of a natural order of underlying essences. As a result of this, we are implicitly asked to find it credible that a particular word corresponds directly to the immutable characteristics of the object it was said to describe. In other words, this is based on what can best be understood in Derridan terms (1976) as logocentrism. That is, language use predicated around the notion that there is an immutable correspondence between the word as complete self-consciousness and the concept it describes as a stable transcendent signified.

To illustrate the difficulties of this approach it is worth turning to an example drawn from President George W Bush's rhetoric on the "war against terror". Bush's language use was similarly logocentric, and we cannot understand his binarism of 'civilisation'/'terrorism' without first understanding that our ability to conceive of these relies less on the grounding of these signifiers in some essential truth than in their relationship to other patterns of signification within a discourse predicated around extending what Ramazani (2001: 121) has described as Bush's "pathologizing" ultimatum of "you're either with us[/US] or with the terrorists". This discourse was also predicated around a teleological conception of history which was entirely hierarchical, with the United States established as the font of all modernity, democracy, civilisation and progress, and its allies represented as being non-terrorists irrespective of their own human rights abuses and acts of state terrorism. It

goes without saying that contradictions and inconsistencies riddle this rhetoric. However, these contradictions do not mean that President Bush is incapable of logical non-contradiction, but rather that undecidability inhabited every utterance. This is because each signifier used did not invoke some underlying essential truth or signified, but rather a web of other signifiers.

As a consequence of this it is most fruitful to view Islamophobia as a discourse. When I refer to discourse I mean structured "systems of meaningful practices that form the identities of subjects and objects" (Howarth & Stavrakis in Haworth et al 2000: 3-4). To put it in a slightly different way, a discourse offers us a means of appealing to a particular language system in order to structure the ways in which we are able to refer to a particular issue. This enables us to *construct* meanings and in doing so to also construct identities and relationships between them. Since discourse is necessarily fluid, it is not possible to assert that one discourse cannot be penetrated by another.

I contend, then, that a central feature of Islamophobia is the construction of Muslims as being flawed or incomplete westerners. That we *lack* is what distinguishes us from white westerners. The dichotomous construction of categories of 'good' and 'bad' Muslims is central to this representation, since those considered 'good' are nearly always those who in some way meet up to some essentialised standard of western identities. Drawing from Lacan, we can explain this by referring to Islamophobia as constructing Muslims as the mirror image of essentialised westerners. In Lacanian terms, this can be explained by referring to the relational dimensions of articulations of identity. Lacan introduces the metaphor of a child in front of a mirror in order to explain that identities are negatively relational. Since no identity can be an essential unity in itself, the child's first sense of her/himself emerges through the experience of seeing her/himself through an external image (Sarup 1993: 22). The mirror stage marks the emergence of the child's ability to access an *imaginary* that allows the child to see her/himself as coherent despite the

confusions and misrecognitions that arise from the child's experience with the mirror. Marked by experiences arising from opposition/ duality and idenitification, the imaginary organises the child's ability to conceive of its identity as being unified and coherent despite its emergence from constitutive lack and the impossibility of an essential closure.

In Lacanian terms it is not necessary for Islamophobia to involve maintaining Muslims only radical alterity, since the logics of opposition dictate in any case that the Muslim other represents the lack in the identity of the west and is introduced in order to create the illusion of essential closure. Within this arrangement, different degrees of alterity are required; the other as same (Muslims as incomplete westerners) is registered in the imaginary order; the other as binary opposite (Muslims as essential threat to all that Bush's America is reducible to) is registered in the symbolic order. The tensions produced by the interplay of the imaginary with the symbolic are reflected in the broader ways in which Muslims as incompletely realised westerners can be conceived of as 'civilised' and 'modern' (by not aligning themselves with those discommodious to US policies) or conceived of as 'terrorists', 'barbarians', 'evil', and immutably opposed to 'modernity' (by being less than conducive in the US' pursuit of a particular range of policies). The process through which Bush sought to construct the identity of the United States as being immutably related to abstract markers such as freedom, civilisation, and modernity themselves enabled, on an imaginary level, similarities between Muslims and westerners to be noted; after all the Whitehouse would become a space in which Muslims could attend an *iftaar* and democracy would establish a framework in which, as Bush promised, Muslims could co-exist alongside members of other faiths. But on a symbolic level, differences were registered on the basis of Muslims as being alien to all that the West was said to stand for: 'civilisation', 'modernity', 'progress', 'freedom', 'free-trade', US hegemony, and so forth. As a result, it was possible for the US establishment's normative discourse on Muslims, foreign policy, and national security to make a series of implicit demands concerning

the ability of Muslims to more adequately recognise the defective westerner lying within.

3 Islamophobia, racism, orientalism

One of the most commonly identified difficulties to emerge from discussions of Islamophobia relates to its differentiation from other forms of racialised discourse. For example, the general tendency has by and large been to ignore the question of Islamophobia on the grounds that if, indeed, it does exist, then it is largely manifested in racism against peoples who are members of other primordial ethnic groups (Pakistani, for example). Likewise, Fred Halliday's dismissal of Islamophobia (1999) is based on the argument that contemporary Islamophobia must be illusory since it differs so markedly from prior western discourses on Islam such as the crusades. In order for us to extend a workable definition of Islamophobia, then, it is first necessary to explore the similarities between Islamophobia and other forms of racialised discourse.

3.1 Islamophobia and Racism

Alexander (2000) makes the rather interesting point that traditional racist forms are often contiguous with contemporary Islamophobia. Alexander's argument is significant because it highlights the relationship between the broader workings of racialised discourses in the west and the emergence of contemporary Islamophobia. This point resonates with my earlier point that what made media discussions of Muslim treachery in the wake of the WTC attack appear relevant was not their transgression of some essential natural order by fighting for the *Taleban* – after all, white British mercenaries have murdered for money across the globe from Africa to Oman and even in Serbia and beyond, and it is well-known that young British Jews have taken part in the illegal occupation of Palestinian lands as members of the IDF

– but rather the prior workings of racialised discourses that pathologise ethnicised minority youth as deviant, threatening, pathological, and un-British. This point is also important for it is widely acknowledged that patterns of Islamophobia over time have overlapped with other forms of racism and xenophobia (see, for example, Gillespie 1995: 140-141).

Alexander's point also highlights an important difficulty with many writings on Muslim youth in Britain throughout the 1990s. One only has to read the classic discussions of pathologies of race and ethnicity offered by the CCCS in Birmingham (1978, 1982) or the analyses of the criminalisation of Black youth influenced by these (for example, Solomos 1988) to realise that dominant narratives on law and order were built on problematic ideas that the notion of immigrants as anti-British is tied to assumptions relating to their inherent lawlessness. In this there are clear parallels with the ways in which Muslim rights campaigners were represented during the Rushdie affair.

The parallels between 'new racism' and Islamophobia are even more striking. 'New racism' – or Ballard's 'cultural racism' (2002) – is so named because it involves the disaggregation of traditional phenotypal markers of racialised difference and their substitution with alternative relativistic cultural markers of difference. Since Muslim identities cut across bounds of secular ethnicities, national origins, or assumed 'racial' distinctions, the emergence of new racism has been a particularly significant parallel to the upsurge in Islamophobia across Britain. Clearly there are parallels between racism and Islamophobia. Like Antisemitism (for example), Islamophobia is a racialised discourse, and one which invokes hegemonic notions of whiteness and otherness. However, Islamophobia can be isolated on two grounds. First, as we saw in chapter two, 'old' and 'new' racisms were implicated in Islamophobic responses to the Rushdie affair. However, as Bhatt (1997: 133) notes, these forms of Islamophobia also worked to fix Muslims in subalternity in ways not explicable through "the cultural difference thesis of 'new racism'". This is because contemporary Islamophobia increasingly stresses the defective sameness of Muslims

vis-à-vis whitemales. Thus, rather than comparing Islamic 'fundamentalists' with Assassins or barbarous Moors (for example), they are more often than not made analogous with moments in western pasts – such as Nazism (Kepel 1997: 81) – that ideal-type whitemales are assumed to have outgrown. Second, it is also clear that Islamophobia differs in that it is specifically targeted at Muslims even if the descriptive schemas it invokes are more commonly associated with other forms of racialised discourse.

3.2 Orientalism, Eurocentrism and Islamophobia

Significant parallels also emerge between contemporary Islamophobia and what Edward Said has theorised as Orientalism. According to Said, Orientalism is not only an academic discipline concerned with studying the Orient but also a discourse concerned with production and management of the Orient itself and, through this concerned with the construction of what is meant by the Occident. Abdirahman A. Hussein (2002: 236-237) offers an insightful précis of Said's conceptualisation of Orientalism:

> "Orientalism, he tells us, is not "a positive doctrine," but a specific family of ideas – a style of thought, a set of practices, and affiliated institutions – which together constitute a broad, interdisciplinary discourse that evolved in the common cultural consciousness of Europeans for centuries for the purpose of making imaginary and actual purchase on the Orient (especially the "Near East") and its inhabitants. The specifics of Said's thesis can be further schematized:
>
> (1) Orientalism brought into being an ambivalent, bipolar understanding of the Orient according to whose definitions and terminology the region and its peoples were objectified globally and locally – through reductions,

anatomizations, categorizations, and various forms of pigeonholing. On the one hand there was the morally attractive, privileged Orient (namely, the Orient of Origins – including Christianity; of truth and plenitude; of the Garden of Eden, Jerusalem, and Prester John, etc.). On the other, there was the repellent, even demonic, Orient of dangers and apostasies (such as the Yellow Peril and Islam).

(2)   Alternating between modes of familiarity and strangeness, the bipolar oscillation was particularly energized by the rise of Islam, whose prophet and doctrine were, for centuries, domesticated in terms that ensured either their demonization or their trivialization by a Europe dominated by Christian dogma.

(3)   In the increasingly secular context of the past three centuries, Orientalist discourse has transmuted some aspects of its originally religious motivation. As more "eyewitness," empirical, or "scientific" knowledge (acquired through translation or study of Oriental texts, through travel, or through conquest) became available, some of the more imaginatively extravagant characterizations of the Orient were gradually pruned away. But Orientalist discourse also finally matured in the nineteenth century into a powerful, theoretically armed, highly conservative, "median category" that, in the hands of a technologically advanced Europe, became an ideological instrument with which to settle old scores, an instrument which has in more recent times been relayed to willing American hands."

Orientalism can safely be historically located within the age of modernity and made analogous to racist colonial subjugation since it supported, legitimated, and contributed to colonisation and came to be one of the most important tools for colonial construction and control over the Orient.

Since Orientalism was the discourse through which racist projects of western expansionism constructed the identity of the Orient and thus also accounted for the

identity of the west, the winning of independence had profoundly disruptive potentials in terms of the continued usefulness of Orientalism and thus also in terms of the identities that are constructed through Orientalist discourse.

This decentring of the west is what Sayyid (1997) has theorised as having dislocationary effects. In other words, it could not be adequately symbolised within the terms of the existing hegemonic symbolic order. There are two possible responses to a dislocation, either a retreat into the old paradigm or an attempt to articulate a new collective social imaginary capable of structuring a field of intelligibility against which the disruptive effects of the dislocation can be neutralised. In the context of Orientalism, retreats into the old paradigm are manifested in three ways. First, until the late 1980s they are manifested in increasing application of older Orientalist binarisms in construction of the west's cold war foes (Brennan 2001; Pease 1999). Second, they are manifested in the continued activities of 'old' Orientalists such as Bernard Lewis (Said 1997). Thirdly, they are also manifested in the recirculation of the residual traces of prior hegemonic practices of Orientalism. Examples of this include the consolidation of Zionism, "a carefully packaged theocentric ideology largely born out of European anti-Semitism and the European imperial venture but more recently sustained with American-made instruments of power and with residual Orientalism" (Hussein 2002: 180-181). Another means of recirculating these superstitions – or residues of prior hegemonic operations – centres on the emergence of what has been term a "curious" "new" Orientalism (McLelland 2001[2]), by which what is meant is a discursive formation bearing traces of older forms of Orientalism but frequently involving the displacement of traditional markers of assumed essential Oriental difference with disaggregated and radically relativistic markers of difference (the 'fundamentalist', Khomeini's 'turban'...).

These differing responses to the dislocatory experience of the decentring of the west are theorised by Sayyid (1997) as Eurocentrism; "an attempt to suture the interval between the West and the idea of a centre (that is, a universal template).

Eurocentrism is a project to recentre the West, a project that is only possible when the West and the centre are no longer considered to be synonymous. It is an attempt to sustain the universality of the western project, in conditions in which its universality can no longer be taken for granted" (Sayyid 1997: 128). Contemporary Islamophobia emerges from Eurocentrism as an attempt to recentre the west, and as a discursive form that (like other discourses) does not foreclose the possibility of penetration by other discourses or the invocation of residual traces of prior hegemonic operations. Thus, 'fundamentalism' – often seen by Muslims as the Islamophobic libel *par excellence* – only actually emerges to describe political activities by Muslims in the period following the winning of independence from racist colonial subjugation and the decentring of the west.

4 The Decentring of the west and Islam

Clearly, the decentring of the west does not only have implications for the ways in which the ideological project of the west accounts for itself, but also for the ways in which Muslims can account for themselves in a polycentric world. As a consequence, we witness in the period following decolonisation – and in particular following the end of the Cold War – increased concern expressed over what is generally referred to as Islamic 'fundamentalism'. How, then, can we account for the differences between this contemporary manifestation of politicised Muslim identities and other, earlier articulations of religion with politics? Most works on Islamic 'fundamentalism' tend to make it analogous to Christian fundamentalisms rooted in the early twentieth century – in an Apartheid state prior to the end of colonisation – and to Zionism – a settler-colonial discourse – as well as to contemporary political projects from the 'developing world' such as Hindu nationalism. If it is possible to locate Islamophobia to a specific historical context, then is it similarly possible to historicise contemporary political projects predicated around appeals to Islamic metaphors? In order to explore this it is worth comparing contemporary Islamic

'fundamentalism' with Zionism and forms of Muslim politics prior to the winning of independence from colonisation.

4.1 The emergence of Zionism

Whether or not one reduces the existence of Israel to the simple product of colonial and imperial meddlings in the Middle East, the key to understanding the differences between Zionism and Islamism lies in understanding their relative positionings vis-à-vis hegemonic western discourses. Commentators on both ends of the mainstream political spectrum in the west, for example, are often wont to regale us with endless expositions on the totemic functions Israel performs in the region as a paragon of democracy or a beacon of westernisation. Yet to Islamists, as well as to a large number of observant non-Islamist Muslims, Israel's very claims to democracy are frequently seen as an integral part of the impossibility its not being a western imperial imposition at the heart of the Muslim world.

Zionism originated as a largely secular movement for national self-determination. Theodor Herzl was a secularist and a European both by birth and political principles. The Dreyfuss trial marked a turning point in Herzl's life, persuading him of the need to found a state for the Jewish people. Herzl's positioning in relation to the modernist expansion of empire by the European powers was clear; after all, he pondered over whether to negotiate with the colonial powers for a stake in Argentina or Uganda before finally being persuaded that Israel should be founded in Palestine. By the 1920s Zionism was increasingly divided between the secularists and the highly religious Mitzrachi. Early Zionists were European by birth and outlook: Herzl and Jabotinsky were both liberal, while Ben-Gurion was a Russian leftist. Ben-Gurion's vision of Israel was a syncretic articulation of western civic conceptions of statehood with symbolic appeals to Judaic metaphors.

It is because this syncretic articulation of western liberal traditions with Judaic metaphors provided an unstable discursive platform on which to found a liberal democratic state for the Jewish people that Israel emerged as a state with an institutionalised identity crisis[3]. These tensions partly account for the cottage industry of revisionist accounts of Israel's formation at the hands of the official historians[4]. These tensions also account for ongoing disagreements over what is meant by Israel and, more pertinent to this discussion, what is meant by Zionism. From about 1977 onwards these tensions are reflected in the emergence of what is sometimes referred to as 'New Zionism', and they threaten the western liberal, rationalist values of state Zionism. Tensions between secular and ultra-religious Zionists became increasingly visible, and extremist activities by groups such as the messianic Zionist *Gush Emunim* (founded in 1974 by followers of Rabbi Kook) and the militant *Kahane Chai* or *Kach* movement (listed as terrorist by the US State Department) became more widespread. The tensions reflected in the emergence of these groups are so closely intertwined with the existing discursive instability of Zionism and Labour's inability to hegemonies its own Zionist project that what is at stake are the very founding principles of the Zionist state itself[5]. These tensions also manifest themselves in the increasing opposition voiced by secular Zionists (including members of the army reserve) against the oppression by the IDF of Palestinian self-determination struggles as well as against the continued occupation of illegal settlements by a rather mixed bag of terrorists.

The persistence of these tensions occurs as a result of the unstable origins of Zionism itself. Zionism is intelligible only against the imaginary horizons of the European enlightenment, reflecting concerns of rationality, progress, the civilising imperatives of colonial settlement, and in the great Zionist fallacy about Palestine and the Jews prior to 1948 ("a land without a people and a people without a land"), modernist notions of nation state building. As Ilan Pappé notes, "Peace – if it holds – harbours Israel's final arrival at the place where Herzl always wanted us to be: a sun-splashed Vienna, in the Middle East, but not of it" (Pappé & Usher 1995: 26). It is

significant that a senior Israeli diplomat noted in April 1956 that "New regimes emerged in Tunisia and Morocco. France is doing her utmost to win these regimes over, to transform them into pro-Western, pro-French entities. We should be most interested they do not turn to Cairo... it is our duty to [help guide them] to the West..." (Laskier 2001[6]). The westernising imperatives that Zionists saw as Israeli duties in the Maghreb[7] were functions not only of the conflicts between Israel and its neighbours, but also of the syncretic articulation of Judaic metaphors with western notions of state building, progress, colonisation and reason that were so central to Zionism. It is, of course, illustrative to remember that while Islamic independence projects were engaged in anti-colonial struggles, Zionists owed a considerable debt to colonial powers for the existence of Israel and were positioned as a sort of halfway house between independence movements and the colonial powers[8]. Closer to Israel, Zionism was not perceived in such ambiguous terms, but simply as an extension of western domination of the Middle East through the settlement of Palestine by diasporic European Jews and the displacement of indigenous Palestinians. And in the west, the Israeli state is said to be totemic in the struggle to westernise the Middle East.

4.2 Anti-colonial struggles and political Islam: proto-Islamism emerges

There are, of course, some basic superficial similarities between Islamic political projects prior to independence and Zionism. After all, these movements were also given to syncretic articulation of western and religious metaphors; in this case a religion that had no institutionalised presence in the modern west. Syncretist Muslim movements emerged in a number of ways from the nineteenth century onwards, at a time in which it was difficult to escape western domination[9]. Independence politics in the traditional Muslim heartlands came to centre on a range of syncretisms that left their impact on a range of unstable discursive formations from Ba'athism to the state discourse of Pakistan, and even influenced the development of the Palestinian

nationalist movement which, as Khalidi (1997) reminds us, emerged from a range of influences including nineteenth century Palestinian thought and colonial discourses. But while Zionism emerged from largely European experiences of anti-Semitism and allied itself to the powers of colonisation in order to achieve the settler nation-state, early projects of political Islam were far less ambiguous in their attitudes towards the West, condemning its brutal racist oppression of colonised lands and railing against those in the Muslim lands who would uncritically accept the idea that mimeticism of the west was necessary.

What emerged at this period were what can best be understood as early proto-Islamisms, often articulated by figures such as Afghani, Abduh, and Ridah, who opposed colonial domination and challenged the westernisers while still articulating a syncretic discourse combining many discursive elements. In the Rif, Abdul Karim's attempt to found an Islamic State – foiled by the small matter of Marshall Pétain's 300,000 French troops and 100,000 Spaniards – was a highly syncretic articulation of Islam with independence politics, penetrated both by narratives of Berber tribalism and western-style national self-determination. In South Asia, the leaders of the Indian Khilafat Movement – often seen as the main focus of Muslim anti-colonial resistance in Indian politics from 1919 until 1923 – articulated a fairly typical pre-independence syncretism in which Islamic discourses punctured other discourses of independence and identifications were possible with Gandhi's anti-colonial non-cooperation movement. In the Maghrib, Ibn Yusuf was supported by students of Zaytuna University mosque, where he delivered a famous *khutba* denouncing Bourguiba's agreement with France in 1955 and found himself expelled from the neo-Destour party for his troubles. In 1920s Algeria, the spread of *Wahhabism* allowed Islamic discourses to equally penetrate nationalist independence discourses. When the Akramic agreement was signed in April 1917, it provided for Muslims under Italian rule to be governed according to *Shariah*. This was a hesitant early step on the path towards Libyan *national* independence, but again one in which Islam punctuated the political vocabulary of anti-colonial resistance.

These early proto-Islamisms all shared a principled opposition to colonisation and western domination, although they also sought to ask how the west became so advanced. Proto-Islamists such as Mustafa Abd al Raziq, Abduh, Afghani, and Rida attempted to identify those elements of western Enlightenment traditions that were sustainable within new readings of canonical Islamic texts, and to isolate particular tropes (such as the primacy of scientific investigation and rational thought) as central to western progress, showing how these could be relevant to contemporary proto-Islamist defences of Islamic traditions and identities and attempts to articulate an Islamic politics of anti-colonial and anti-western resistance. Proto-Islamisms such as these were qualitatively different from earlier Islamic syncretisms, such as Simawism[10]. Figures such as Rida and Abduh were concerned largely with reforming and reinvigorating Islam and showing that Islam was thoroughly compatible with western originating ideas of modernity (Abou Sheisha 2001). The conditions of possibility for the emergence of proto-Islamism were an acceptance of the European nature of progress and rationality, and like Zionism, proto-Islamism was structured by the collective imaginary of the European enlightenment. When we refer to a collective imaginary, we mean what Laclau (1990: 64) would see as an imaginary horizon that "structures a field of intelligibility" against which European enlightenment originating projects such as liberalism make sense. At the same time, proto-Islamisms were always going to differ from Zionism in the balance of the various discursive elements that comprised proto-Islamist syncretisms and in the problematic relationship between Zionism and the colonisation of Arab lands by European diaspora.

4.3 Contemporary Islamism

A number of factors emerged over the course of the first half of the twentieth century which showed the limits of syncretic proto-Islamisms as a means of simultaneously

decolonising, challenging westernisation, and reinvigorating Islam by paradoxically looking to the example of the west itself. First, there were the 1914-1918 colonial wars which shattered the faith of many proto-Islamists in the belief that any modernising or civilising lessons could be learned from the west. Rida's faith in the western nature of progress itself was shattered by this experience and he found himself increasingly separating western thought from the western political project and became increasingly anti-western. This continued assault on human life mounted in the name of western progress and reason and intelligible against the collective imaginary of the European enlightenment culminated in the partition of Palestine, which further underlined the belief of proto-Islamists that selective borrowing from the west was compatible with the imperatives of defending and liberating the Muslim heartlands and reinvigorating Islamic political identities. Second, there was Kemal's dissolution of the *Khalifah*. Kemal's move was important because prior to this he had been championed as a brave anti-colonial fighter and defender of Muslims. This dramatic volte-face was, in fact, a function of Kemal's recognition that proto-Islamist syncretisms were fundamentally unstable discursive projects.

Kemal's method of dealing with the incoherence of articulating political identities predicated around Islam with western notions of progress, reason, and statehood involved a complete volte-face through which he completely disarticulated religion from the state. This solution had such a profound impact on political life across the traditional Muslim heartlands that it could not be adequately symbolised within the existing political discourses. As Sayyid (1997) notes, the dissolution of the *Khalifah* removed the possibility for pan-Islamist identifications, and even the possibility of an Islamic national space. As such, it presented what we can, drawing from Laclau (1990), dislocationary effects: the occurrence of a change in signification which permits us to recognise the contingency of the various strategies for representation and which can both threaten identities and form the basis for new ones. Central to a dislocation is the rendering of the contingency of discursive structures as visible (Howarth & Stavrakis 2000: 13). The dissolution of *Khalifah* was an event that could

not be adequately symbolised within the existing syncretic proto-Islamist discourses of the day and could not be adequately symbolised within classical Islamic texts that stress the impossibility of a secular Islam. Muslim political projects of the time faced a profound dilemma over how to stabilise the disruptive effects of this dislocation; some proto-Islamists even commended him for taking action against an institution that had become corrupt in recent history. Attitudes soon hardened, however, as it became increasingly clear that Kemal's preferred method of stabilising the effects of this dislocatory experience involved rearticulating the relationship between Islam and the state in a manner predicated around negating Islam's role as a master signifier of the political order (Sayyid 1997: 70).

Following the dissolution of the *Khalifah*, a new series of projects began to appear, vehemently opposed to secularisation and even more anti-western and anti-colonial than their predecessors had been. Of these, the most notable was Hassan al Banna's *Ikhwanul Muslimun*, a movement which shared the *Salafi/Wahabbi* inclinations of its logical Abduh and Rida influenced predecessors, but which differed in a number of respects. Firstly, whereas proto-Islamists such as Rida had attempted to reinvigorate Muslims by turning to the examples of the west and articulating Islam with western-style nation-state projects, Marxism, and so forth, al Banna founded his movement in March 1928 by swearing to live and die only for the cause of Islam (al Banna n.d.: 8). In other words, Islam was a master signifier for the *Ikhwani* political order in a far less syncretic way than it had been for the earlier proto-Islamists. Secondly, earlier proto-Islamisms were intelligible only when read within the context of western domination within which they were imagined and tended to focus on the relatively straightforward question of how this domination could be transmuted into *decolonisation* and the *halal* fruits of liberal nation state building for Muslims. The *Ikhwan*, on the other hand, were concerned with the contested nature of *postcoloniality* and articulated a project to build for a future beyond western domination, and they sought to do this by using education and welfare provision to

hegemonise a political project explicitly configured around Islamic metaphors among all Muslims, bringing together *Salafi, Hanafi, Sufi,* and even secular Muslims.

With their origins in pre-independence proto-Islamist syncretisms and their focus on the contested nature of postcoloniality, *Ikhwanul Muslimun* were as much the last of the proto-Islamists as they were the first of the Islamists. Contextually, the main difference between proto-Islamism and Islamism lies in the former's genesis within a context of western domination and overt racist subjugation of huge tracts of the non-western world through colonisation. Islamism, on the other hand, appeared in the period following decolonisation. This contextual note has profound implications for the differences between these two general types of project: whereas proto-Islamisms are only intelligible against a discursive field configured around the parameters of western domination, progress, and reason, Islamism takes root in the period following the shattering of these certainties. As Dr Hasan Turabi - bin Laden's erstwhile supporter in Sudan - notes, contemporary Islamism avoids the incoherence of earlier proto-Islamisms that were simply reactions to colonisation[11] (Sudan Foundation 1998). Emerging within the context of the decentring of the west, contemporary Islamisms are articulated around a final vocabulary of explicitly Islamic metaphors.

When we discuss Muslims in Britain it is important to bear in mind that we are referring to a range of people who deploy the master signifier 'Islam' to describe themselves. Among these groups there are Kemalists (who seek to secularise Islam), nominalists (who bear a Muslim name and may occasionally identify themselves as Muslims or engage in some acts of practice), Islamists (who articulate a political order around the master signifier Islam), and observant Muslims (who may or may not be Islamists but who identify themselves specifically as Muslims).

4 Conclusion

I opened this chapter by quoting from the film *Journey into Fear* (1975). Sharp-eyed readers – and cable TV subscribers – will not, of course, need reminding (as I did) by Shaheen (2001: 269) that the character subjected to Islamophobic representation as a terrorist is nevertheless more than he appears. As the film unfolds the character turns out *not* to be an Arab Muslim, but rather a character called Muller. Moreover, Mr Muller *is* an assassin. It need not be elaborated that the film is thoroughly Islamophobic; it only makes sense for a terrorist to masquerade as a Muslim terrorist masquerading as a 'good' Arab within a world in which each of these terms is afforded meanings by their positioning within a broader chain of signification that make both the disguise (as an Arab terrorist pretending not to be one) and the plot device appear credible. *Journey into Fear* illustrates that it is possible for a particular narrative to offer the illusion of challenging Islamophobia while remaining rooted in Islamophobic logics.

What ties many discourses[12] of Islamophobia together is the representation of essential Muslim identities that reproduce particular behaviour and moral traits as a mature of natural or inherent predisposition and whose implicit inferiority is a result of these traits and can only be rectified through westernisation. This discourse organises identities hierarchically and relates positive and negative traits to essential characteristics of different identity groupings (westerners on the one hand, Afghans, Islamists, Muslims on the other). The parameters of this discourse are configured around a logocentric conceptual vocabulary that attempts to create the illusion that all discourses are closed and impenetrable entities and which construct identities as singular and essential.

This brings me to my own definition of Islamophobia. By Islamophobia I mean racialised discourse that takes as its object Muslims. Since there is some dispute over whether or not contemporary Islamophobia can be characterised in terms of continuity with prior manifestations of racism against Muslims such as the crusades

(see, for example, Halliday 1999), it is necessary to briefly elaborate on this basic definition. Sayyid (1997) theorises the emergence of contemporary Eurocentrism as a hegemonic response of the western ideological project to decolonisation and the provincialisation of the west. The domestic implications of this have been theorised by Barnor Hesse as the move from 'race' as empire to 'race' as nation in Britain. This 'decentring' of the west as Sayyid terms is not a dislocation of the social – an event that cannot be resolved or adequately symbolised within the logics of the existing hegemonic discourse – since the residues of prior hegemonic discourse of the western ideological project exist. For example, Timothy Brennan (2001: 39) has noted that in the period following decolonisation, the East/West of colonial imaginary was transposed to the East/West of the Cold War, with communists referred to in terms previously associated with the colonised. However, although the decentring of the west is not a dislocation, it has dislocationary effects. This is to say that within the logics of the western ideological project, the response to the decentring of the west involves an innovative mixture of the residual traces of prior discourses of western supremacism – Orientalism and its subsets such as Indology – and what McLelland (2001) describes as a "curious new" form of orientalism in which the radical racial alterity in which the colonial other was held is replaced with disaggregated markers of 'cultural' difference which imply that the difference of the 'other' is relative rather than absolute. In other words, the other is characterised through the logics of defective sameness within the terms of this normative discourse. This 'curious', 'new' Orientalism is, of course, Eurocentrism, which emerges in the period following the independence of colonised lands and the end of the Cold War as the final site for the production of Orientalist knowledges. Contemporary Islamophobia is a subset of Eurocentrism. Although the residual traces of prior hegemonic operations are visible – and, consequently, Muslims are often portrayed in overtly racial terms – the main emphasis is on the 'cultural' difference of Muslims and on their defective sameness relative to whitemales. Thus, whereas prior racialised constructions of Muslim identities emphasised the essentially premodern nature of Islam and Muslims, within the logics of contemporary

Islamophobia, 'fundamentalism' emerges as a consequence of the inability of Muslims to adequately negotiate the challenges and opportunities of postmodernity, since contemporary Muslim identities are now represented as the incomplete products of an essentially western modernity. The logics of this relational discourse represent Muslims as being deficient or inferior to essential whitemale identities in status. Although this definition emphasises the relationship between Muslims and the western ideological project, this is not to suggest that other 'non-western' discourses cannot implicate Islamophobia. No discourse is a bounded entity impenetrable by other discourses. The emergence of contemporary Islamophobia in the west inflects and is in turn inflected by Islamophobia articulated in non-western societies such as China, India, or Israel, for example.

This definition of Islamophobia offers more scope for challenging analysis of discourses on Islam and Muslim identities because it opens a range of possibilities usually foreclosed by many official and policy-oriented definitions of Islamophobia. Firstly; this definition shies away from rigid procedural definitions of Islamophobia suggesting Islamophobia follows particular set patterns (hostility, lack of benign content, etc); secondly, it allows for consideration of the ways in which a particular discourse may be punctuated by invocations of older tropes and narratives or penetrated by other discourses; thirdly it allows for the complexities of discourses that represent themselves as being largely benign; fourthly, it allows for coherent analysis of references to older racist trope, allusions to colonial discourses, subtle attempts at normalisation of human subjects, and formal platitudes within a broader discursive structuring that pathologises Muslims or represents particular Muslim identities within a hierarchy that privileges particular non-Muslim or 'westernised' Muslim subjectivities; fifthly, it also allows for Islamophobic utterances made by people who are nominally other otherwise directly associable with Muslims.

This still fails to explain quite what the emergence of Islamism has to do with the emergence of Islamophobia. On the evidence of the Rushdie affair alone, one could

almost be forgiven for assuming that Islamophobia emerges simply as a response to the arrival of contemporary Islamism. As Sarah Glynn (2002: 976) notes, "Islamic mobilization may breed more Islamophobia encouraging more mobilization on religious lines". Such a reading would, of course, be clearly problematic. After all, while opposition to Zionism is often perceived to be Antisemitic, one rarely finds academics suggesting that expansive Zionism is actually an underlying cause for Antisemitism. Although hostility to Islamism can clearly be Islamophobic, Islamophobia cannot be conflated with opposition to Islamism. Such an approach would clearly be problematic in blaming the emergence of Islamophobia on Muslims ourselves. Stephen Vertovec attempts to resolve this problematic by viewing the emergence of Islamophobia and what he terms "advances in Muslim recognition" [by 'mainstream' agencies] as being "linked" or cyclical (Vertovec 2002: 32). That is to say, "in one process, as a result of the increased vilification of Islam in the media and discrimination against Muslims in everyday spheres...a variety of countermeasures – including changes to legislation, various institutional guidelines, and public policy adjustments – have been advocated [by Muslims, antiracists, and interfaith groups]...in a kind of reactionary process, anti-Muslim sentiments have swelled as part of a greater xenophobia, as many white non-Muslims in Britain object to changes in "their" schools, public policies, and soial services that have been made in order to accommodate the perceived inferior ways of "outsiders". As Islamophobia further increases, so does the now well-mobilized call for even more far-reaching forms of Muslims" (ibid.: 32-33). Vertovec's analysis fails in two key respects. First, as Ballard (2002) notes, contemporary Islamophobia is often expressed by ethnic minority groups such as Hindus as well as by white non-Muslims. Secondly, his analysis leaves us with the rather terrifying prospect of the "amplification" (ibid.) of Islamophobia as Muslims gain more rights.

A more convincing explanation of the relationship between the visibility of distinctive and comparatively new ways of expressing Muslim identities – including Islamism as much as improved access to rights – and Islamophobia can be found by returning to

the broader context within which both emerge, rather than focusing solely on these trends themselves. For the key to understanding both Islamism and Islamophobia lies in the decentring of the west. Islamism emerges from the possibilities raised by the dissolution of overt western supremacism and direct colonial control over the world from the west. Polycentrism does not only bring with it multiple possibilities for a future beyond the western project. The de-centring of the west is a dislocation of the social, the disruptive effects of which are re-stabilised through the emergence of contemporary forms of Eurocentrism (Sayyid 1997) and Islamophobic discourse, and the benefits of which are felt by Muslims seeking to identify possibilities beyond the hegemony of the western ideological project.

The Rushdie affair does not only disrupt the dominant western conceptual vocabularies, but also destabilises the causal assumptions through which it is assumed that Islamophobia is simply a response to the emergence of Muslim identities. Both Islamophobia and changes to the ways in which Muslim identities are expressed – contemporary Islamism, for example – arise in response to the decentring of the west, the former as attempts to recentre the west and the conceptual vocabularies of western dominance, and the latter to exploit the possibilities offered by the decentring of the west.

This is a reading of Islamophobia that I intend to develop and illustrate throughout the course of this thesis, although it is still an incomplete definition. As my thesis progresses I will draw out a range of tensions in order to situate what I call Islamophobia contextually and to distinguish between Islamophobia and traditional phenotypal racisms. I will also explore the tensions that emerge between Islamophobia and Islamism in university settings. By doing so I also intend to draw out the relationship between dominant conceptual vocabularies and the operationalisation of Islamophobia within British higher educational settings. But before I can do this, there are some people I would like you to meet...

[1] For example, Ballard (2002) refers to Primary migrations from places such as Mirpur in the context of "an ever-expanding process of chain migration which enabled members of the third-world peasantry who were fortunate to live in and around the villages from which the early pioneers were drawn to gain direct access to waged employment in metropolitan Britain".

[2] I cite no page number for McLelland since the article is in an electronic journal

[3] Is it a pluralist state? If so, how can we account for the mass displacement of Palestinians from lands they occupied for generations, or for the extension of 'right to return' to Jews across the world while it is denied to the Palestinians? Is Israel a democracy? If so, how do we balance these claims against the disenfranchisement of the Palestinians? Is Israel a liberal state? If so, how can we understand the tensions raised by Israel's self-definition as the Jewish state? Is it a pluralist state? If so, how can we account for the mass displacement of Palestinians from lands they occupied for generations, or for the extension of 'right to return' to Jews across the world while it is denied to the Palestinians? Is Israel a democracy? If so, how do we balance these claims against the disenfranchisement of the Palestinians? Is Israel a liberal state? If so, how can we understand the tensions raised by Israel's self-definition as the Jewish state?

[4] for example, the Arabs are displaced not by settlers, soldiers, killings, and violence, but they are displaced as a result of the cruel tricks played on them by the very Arab leaders who appear not to want them; the wars fought against Palestinians are fought because the Arabs who desire to hold on to their lands and histories are being anti-Semitic by opposing the Jewish right to self-determination.

[5] Thus, to Rabbi Dreyfus, "Israel will commit 'apostasy the day the agreement with the PLO takes effect. That day will mark the end of the Jewish-Zionist era in the sacred history of the Land of Israel. Historians will record that the Jewish-Zionist era lasted from 1948 to 1993. It ended when most Jews turned into Canaanites...In that era of sin, Jewish political thought, cultural-educational thought included, will be polluted by — as he terms it — "speedy Arabisation". The Jewish Left will continue its treacherous practices of dismissing Jews from key posts and replacing them with Arabs" (Shahak 1995).

[6] I do not cite the page for the quote from Laskier because the journal was accessed electronically.

[7] We must remember, of course, those Maghrebi nationalists who were so "deeply saturated in French culture" that they often turned to Israelis for support in their independence struggles (Laskier 2000).

[8] Israel's ambiguous positioning vis-à-vis western hegemony was reflected in its ambivalent attitudes towards the independence of North African states from French colonial domination; while formally supporting self-determination, Israel generally failed to recognise independence until after France had done (Laskier 2001).

[9] By then, colonial subjugation of Muslims had highlighted to Muslims that "it was only a matter of time before it [Muslim thought] collapsed, leaving the Muslim people with nothing but the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and memories of glorious Muslim achievements" (AbuSulayman 1993: 56).

[10] Simawism emerges, rather interestingly, from a context in which the Muslim presence in the Balkans has seen a number of other syncretisms such as the *devshirme* system of levying male children from non-

Muslim peasant families for training as soldiers of bureaucrats (Nitzova 1994). These syncretisms are imagined prior to the possibilities of the European enlightenment and western colonisation of Muslim lands that overshadow pre-independence proto-Islamisms, and they emerge as localised projects configured around the notion that classical Islam is the only possible alternative for running the state and articulate these with localised concerns arising from the plural composition of Balkans societies of the time.

[11] Interestingly, one of the few useful contributions Bernard Lewis has to make is his recognition (1996) that "Imperialist powers deprived most of the Islamic world of sovereignty; the prime demand, therefore, was for independence".

[12] When I refer to a discourse I mean a collection of statements that offer us a particular conceptual vocabulary through which we can discuss certain issues and in doing so construct specific forms of knowledge about them.

Part Two – Operationalising 'fundamentalism' and Islamophobia

Chapter 4 - Pulp friction: constructing 'fundamentalism' and Muslim student antagonisms : racialising the university (1)

1 Introduction

Having made a rather circuitous detour back "to where it all began" and introduced the concept of Islamophobia to my thesis, I come a step closer to being able to account for the experiences of Muslim students and the forceful emergence of institutionalised Islamophobia in British universities over the past decade or so. It is also clear by now that I see conceptual questions relating to what we understand by 'Islam' and 'Muslims' as being central to Islamophobia. For not only was it the case that the only particularly transgressive elements of the Rushdie affair was the outright rejection of essentialist readings of Muslim identities on the part of the campaigners, but it is also clear that conceptual questions relating to white western supremacism are central to contemporary Islamophobia. Clearly, I have positioned myself within the logics of anti-foundationalism and signalled that I am concerned with the discursive operations through which power is exercised (and resisted) and identities constructed rather than with revealing underlying truths. It is therefore relevant to turn now to university settings in order to consider the ways in which distinctive expressions of Muslim identities – including possibilities for a politics predicated around appeals to Islam – are bound up with broader patterns of Islamophobia and organised campaigning against 'fundamentalists' in higher education.

This approach leaves me facing a further challenge. For it is clear that debates on Muslim students have been dominated by endless assertions concerning the essential traits assumed to be attendant on Muslimness and 'Muslim' ways of doing politics. For example, one of the most oft-repeated aims of student campaigners against radical Islamist activities on campus is the desire to provide information on

exactly who these 'fundamentalists' are[1]. From these discussions of 'fundamentalism' emerges a particular way of constructing Muslim student identities, often through implicit assumptions concerning the assumed essences of Muslimness. In this light I find it useful to begin my reading of Muslim students' experiences of Islamophobia in British universities by turning to the question of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' that has so dominated discussions of Muslim students, aiming in this way to further explore quite why it should be that the public articulation of Muslim political identities in the ivory towers of the academy should be so widely viewed as being such a scandalous and worrying development.

1.1 Racialisation and the university

As this chapter and the next unfold it will become clear that I am primarily concerned with the relationship between NUS-led quests to root out Islamic 'fundamentalists' and the racialisation of university campuses. Before I can explore this theme any further it is necessary to qualify that I do not view these campaigns against Muslim 'extremism' in the academy as a decisive moment in race relations as a consequence of which our university campuses have become racialised. Rather, I am concerned with the ways in which these exercises have reinforced the existing racialisation of universities and inflected these dynamics with a specifically Muslim focus.

This is important because there can be no doubt that universities are already racialised. Writing in 1998, David Gillborn noted that "higher education has remained largely absent from the growing literature on the operation of race and ethnicity in the British education system" (Gillborn 1998: 11). Since then, increased attention has been paid to issues relating to equalities work on campus (see, for example, eds. Anderson and Williams 2001; Carter, Fenton and Modood 1999, and Jacobs with Hai 2002), although debates around access to higher education courses for those of

Black and Minority Ethnic heritage were more evident prior to this (see, for example, McManus, Richards, and Maitlis 1989).

The reasons for the perpetuation of racism in the liberal university are as complex and multi-inflected as for any other sector or institutional ensemble. However, it is clear that any organisation sited in a racialised and gendered society is unlikely to be immune to wider patterns of racism and sexism. Indeed, given the role of the academy in generating knowledge and its position of privilege vis-à-vis 'the establishment', it is also likely that the university plays a key role in reproducing racist and sexist norms. In this light, the position of the university in relation to those of ethnicised minority heritage is also influenced by the historical role of the western university in shaping the colonial discourses of Orientalism (Said 1985) and Indology (Inden 1992). Class is also remains a crucial factor in the racialisation of the university given the status of the academy as a domain of relative social prestige and elitism, with class and race intersecting with questions of access to higher education, an issue of particular significance following the introduction of fees and student loans and the erosion of maintenance grants. Thus, while Modood argues that minority ethnic young people's educational achievements have "at least in part bucked the determinants of class: despite their worse parental occupational profile, most minority groups are producing greater proportions of applications and admissions to higher education than the rest of the population" (Modood 1998: 37), his recognition that "belief in the value of education in achieving upward mobility and respectability is related to [the progress of minority ethnic young people in education]" (ibid.: 37) tells us more about widespread implicit perceptions of the university as a prestige arena with normative class functions than it does about the anti-racist credentials of the university.

2 Constructing 'Fundamentalism'

In chapter two I introduced Chetan Bhatt's (1997) reading of the emergence of what he terms 'religious authoritarianism'. One reason for this move was the obvious parallel between Bhatt's reading of the articulation of Muslim identities in Britain and those produced in earlier years by supporters of Women Against Fundamentalism campaigns. Another reason is that there are clear similarities between Bhatt's reading of 'authoritarian' religious identities and dominant narratives on Muslim student 'fundamentalism'. Like Bhatt, the National Union of Students' claims of widespread 'fundamentalist' activity have focused on the public articulation of specifically Muslim identities as being an inauthentic moment that disrupts assumed primordial essential ethnic determinants. Thus, what Bhatt conceptualises as 'religious authoritarianism' is largely analogous to what the NUS prefer to term 'fundamentalism'. The difference between the two approaches involves rhetorical substitution rather than a reconfiguration of underlying conceptual vocabularies. As a result, Bhatt's tendency towards procedural definitions of authenticity and 'authoritarianism' also find its parallels in NUS definitions of 'fundamentalism'[2]. Typically, the NUS defines Muslim student 'fundamentalism' in terms of authoritarian exercises of power over 'oppressed' groups.

2.1 'Fundamentalism' as a response to ethnic and cultural exclusion

One of the most intriguing features of dominant readings of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' is the idea that Muslim student 'fundamentalism' emerges as a response to the challenges and social exclusion facing South Asian youth in Britain today. This causal – perhaps that should read 'casual' – assumption was regularly rehearsed throughout the 1990s. Writing in *The Observer*, David Harrison (13th August 1995, 'Battle for Islam's Future') argued that the space within which groups

such as *Hizb ut-Tahrir* have become active is a "vacuum" created as a "result of the cultural chasm that has opened between young Muslims and their tradition-bound parents. Many eschew their parents' conservatism, and in the process largely eschew their religion too. But British society does not seem able to provide a palatable alternative. Unemployment in some Muslim communities is as high as 90 percent and drug-taking is rife. Housing is often poor, and racial discrimination a fact of life." According to Madeleine Bunting (*The Guardian,* 20th July 1997), "there is a strong sense of grievance that Muslims are suffering a high degree of economic discrimination which government has not addressed. Bangladeshis and Pakistanis combined have a long-term unemployment rate which is nearly three times that of the next most disadvantaged ethnic minority, Caribbeans. In the inner cities, nearly half of Bangladeshi and Pakistani men and women are unemployed." The National Union of Students Conference in 1995 discussed the question of Islamist activity in some detail, and resolved "To campaign against the conditions of social deprivation that provides a breeding ground for racism - including unemployment, poor housing and cuts in services."

One function of the considerable appeal of these logics is manifested in the frequency with which NUS campaigns against Muslim student 'fundamentalism' have accompanied professions of commitment to challenge broader patterns of racism and social exclusion. For example, according to the NUS' LGB *Campaign Briefing* of 1995, 'fundamentalists' "use the disillusionment of Asian youth. They identify the racism and poverty experienced by many and then take logic to absurd degrees... They exploit the ills of society to promote a far more dangerous and oppressive society, the dictatorial fundamentalist Islamic state". The briefing further recommends that "we must understand that many young Asian people may be attracted to Hizb ut Tahrir because of their experience of racism in this country. Fighting racism will also undermine and discredit Hizb ut Tahrir".

i Primordialism, substitutionalism, 'fundamentalism'

It is particularly striking that, for all its campaigning on Muslim student 'fundamentalism', the NUS has rarely acknowledged the presence of Muslims, other than through references to 'fundamentalists'. Indeed, it is clear from the NUS' campaigning rhetoric that Muslim identities are best understood according to the logics of a pathology described by Talal Assad as the curative pill of religion taken by members of ethnicised minority groups in response to the challenges of life in modern racialised western societies (Assad 1993: 280). Implicit to the NUS' argument that "many young Asian people may be attracted to Hizb ut Tahrir because of their experience of racism in this country" is the idea that some secularised form of Asianness is an authentic precursor of the articulation of Muslim identities, which themselves surface as 'fundamentalism'.

The obvious way of exploring this curious suggestion would involve problematising the NUS' reading of secular and religious identities. Such a reading could draw from the established literature noting the disingenuity of 'fundamentalism' as an analytical category on the grounds of the western origins of the concept (see, for example, Shepard 1987, Shepard 1988) and the fact that the traditional Muslim heartlands have not experienced a process analogous to the European enlightenment project (see, for example, Sayyid 1997). Clearly there are strong grounds for noting the difficulties and Eurocentrism attendant upon the casual deployments of 'fundamentalism' to which we have become increasingly accustomed. However, within the context of British higher education, I prefer to adopt a rather different approach.

The argument that Muslim students in Britain are by and large members of secular ethnicities prior to experiencing some form of 'ethnic' trauma and substituting their primordial identities for 'fundamentalism' does not only involve a problematic denial

and deferred recognition of the expression of Muslim identities, but also bases itself on a crude reading of ethnicised minority identities in Britain. The empirical weaknesses of this argument are inescapable. No reliable empirical data on the demographics of Muslim student populations in this country exists. However, the diversity of Muslim students was perhaps best reflected in Finchton University where, at the time of fieldwork, the Islamic Society President – an Indonesian woman – was supported by an Executive Committee comprised largely of Arab, British South Asian, British Sudanese, and Jamaican Muslims. Clearly, it is not particularly useful to frame our understanding of Muslim students solely with considerations about the experiences of South Asian youth in Britain, even if they are in the majority among Muslim students.

To this empirical difficulty we must also add the obvious problems of assuming that the natural order of South Asian identities is fundamentally secular. Profound contestations over whether Pakistan should be a secular or confessional state still rage (Sayyid & Tyrer 2002). Thus, there is no decisive means of arriving at a general rule as to whether or not those articulating themselves as Pakistani or even British Pakistani are identifying themselves along essentially secular or essentially religious lines. The idea of South Asia as an essential unity interrupted by the scandalous articulation of Muslim identities in the Pakistan project is, as Sayyid and Tyrer (*ibid.*) note, a function of the colonial discourse of indology (Inden 1992). Moreover, it is not empirically correct to argue that in British universities an assumed secular order of South Asian identities is penetrated by the emergence of Islamic 'fundamentalism'. For it is clear that, even more than Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual campaigning groups, those who have most forcefully lobbied the NUS to action against Islamic 'fundamentalism' are groups (including those representing South Asians) concerned with the articulation of religion with politics[3]. It is only possible to suggest that 'fundamentalism' occurs when assumed primordial secular ethnicities are disrupted if one first buys into an essentialist reading of ethnic identities that is not only reductionist but moreover which is also empirically unsound.

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The NUS' definition of 'fundamentalism' is not only laced with Eurocentrism and based on empirically unsustainable and crudely reductionist readings of Muslim identities, but also on an essentialist caricature of South Asian identities that valorises colonial discourse. The NUS' reliance on this definition of 'fundamentalism' not only renders it incapable of recognising the poly-valency of Muslim identities or their expression as being anything other than the symptom of an underlying pathology of South Asian youth, but it also renders the NUS incapable of representing South Asian identities as anything other than a vacuous essentialism that cannot convincingly account for the contingent and multi-inflected articulation of South Asian identities.

ii It was all a frame... contextualising 'fundamentalism

It is also clear that dominant readings of the emergence of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' are confronted with a considerable contextual difficulty. The argument that Muslim student 'fundamentalism' can only be understood through a consideration of wider patterns of social exclusion facing South Asians in Britain clearly contradicts the broader literature on Islamic 'fundamentalism' which tends to emphasise the middle class credentials of 'fundamentalists' as generally upwardly mobile professionals frequently educated in western-style technical institutions and working in areas such as engineering and medicine (see, for example, Roy 1994: 48-59). These two approaches towards extending a class-based analysis of Islamic 'fundamentalism' clearly contradict one another and in doing so, undermine the usefulness of 'fundamentalism' as an analytical category.

Attendant upon this approach are further difficulties that remain unresolved within the dominant literature on Muslim student 'fundamentalism'. It is certainly clear that by far the majority of Muslim students in British universities are drawn either from among the most socially excluded sectors of society or from comparatively poor countries in

the so-called 'developing' world. However it is also clear that the university represents a domain of relative prestige in comparison, particularly at a time of retrenchment in student funding. In this there are obvious contrasts between the modes of resistance against racism deployed on the streets of post-industrial northern towns and cities such as Burnley, Oldham, and Bradford in recent years, and 'fundamentalist' incidents in universities. To be an unemployed British Pakistani Muslim youth living in Manningham or Alumrock, for example, is clearly a qualitatively different experience from being a British Pakistani Muslim youth studying medicine in a place like Greenstone University. Likewise the potential for ethnicised youth for resistance against racialised white society must differ between university and community. Failing to draw this distinction can only result in the type of essentialist account reflected in a recent intervention by Marie Macey (1999), in which prostitution, pimping, drug-dealing and 'gangsta'-style behaviour on the streets of Bradford are identified as essentially Pakistani Muslim 'problems' and deployed to frame references to completely different forms of mobilisation and self-identification in Bradford University by 'fundamentalist' students. A more sophisticated and empirically reliable offering by Sarah Glynn (2002: 975) also counterpoints gang culture with Islam:

"Gang membership brings with it a sense of power as well as belonging, and, as youth workers in a drugs project observe, fights and drugs bring an excitement, which can only be bettered by using more violent weapons or stronger drugs...The growing polarity between drug culture and Islam is often remarked on. Islamic brotherhood is a potent antidote to alienation, and the fight against real and perceived Islamophobia can unite the community in a common purpose..."

Although Glynn's account is clearly focused on the streets of East London, it is clear that undifferentiated accounts like those extended by the NUS and Marie Macey cannot form the basis of a convincing account of Muslim students' political activities.

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Clearly, undifferentiated accounts such as this cannot alone be decisive in accounting for the emergence of Islamism in the élitist surroundings of the university sector – no matter how socially excluded one's background may be – and certainly cannot be viewed as likely to generate anything other than crude essentialisms on South Asian Muslims in Britain. To this it is also worth adding that there is in any case no reliable empirical data on drug use by Muslims in Britain. Indeed, four drug workers that I spoke to on this issue all gave very different reports of what they assumed to be typical patterns of substance misuse among Muslims, with one suggesting anabolic steroid abuse in preparation for *jihad* training[4], one plumping for high levels of heroin use[5], one suggesting that problematic drug use among Muslims is most likely to involve 'soft' drugs such as cannabis[6], and one supposing that people liable to describe themselves as Muslims are not likely to take any form of drug[7]. To further complicate matters, during my fieldwork in Finchton, Fowlerstone, Greenstone and Swanton universities, the question of drugs was so far from the agenda of observant Muslims' *daw'ah* and political activities on campus as to be completely irrelevant. The only references to drug use encountered during my fieldwork centred on the configuration of student life on campus around alcohol consumption and the ways in which this posed many observant Muslims with a choice between drinking alcohol or being excluded from many activities.

Likewise, if social exclusion in wider society is the cause of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' then one would be forced to similarly concede the likelihood of 'fundamentalist' mobilisation within ethnicised minority communities outside the university. Yet in this lies a clear difficulty, for discussions of the 'fundamentalist' threat to white society have increasingly focused on the activities of groups such as *al Muhajiroun* and *Hizb ut-Tahrir* in universities. By contrast to this, resistance against racism and social exclusion in places such as Oldham in recent years appears to have followed a qualitatively different pattern with far more in common with the inner-city uprisings of the early 1980s than with 'fundamentalist' rabble-rousing in places like Finchton University. If those facing the very worst of social

exclusion, white racism, and far-right incitement within Oldham's community rose up in defiance without recourse to 'fundamentalism' then it is unconvincing to argue that 'fundamentalist' activities on university campuses are largely responses to patterns of social exclusion and racism in British society more broadly. However, what we see on the streets of Oldham and in the rhetoric of NUS engagements with student 'fundamentalism' are qualitatively different modes of political mobilisation and self-identification by Pakistani Muslims within starkly contrasting localised environments.

It is also clear that the widely held assumption that inter-generational conflict is causally related to Muslim student 'fundamentalism' is at best unconvincing. It is certainly the case that many British South Asian Muslims may well experience inter-generational conflict, in which differing approaches to Islam may be implicated for a variety of reasons[8] [9]. However, one need not be a member of the James Dean fanclub or an avid fan of Marilyn Manson to realise that it is also the case that a great many young people of all ethnicities also experience disagreements and tensions with their parents. This disturbing pathology of South Asian families is only sustainable within the terms of an essentialised reading of ethnicised minority identities in which one is first able to identify a stable, immutable essence of South Asianness and establish this as an ideal type, from which any future deviation can only be read as transgression. Clearly this definition of 'fundamentalism' is unable to provide adequate explanation as to why inter-generational conflict should be assumed to give rise to 'fundamentalism' among members of some ethnic groups but not others, unless deployed as part of a broader racialised pathology of non-white youth.

iii Islamophobia, racism, 'fundamentalism'

Emerging from the cultural essentialism of readings of 'fundamentalism' is a curious difficulty over Islamophobia and racism. Once we accept that, left in their natural state, 'fundamentalists' would not be Muslim but essentially secular South Asian, it

naturally follows that it is as illusory to talk about Islamophobia as it is to discuss the articulation of Muslim identities. This is reflected in the NUS' logics that it is racism against secular South Asians rather than against Muslims that is a primary concern in cases of 'fundamentalism'. One function of this logic is the consistent failure of the NUS to make any noteworthy stand on the question of Islamophobia until the 2001-2002 session, and even then to do so grudgingly and with something less than credible conviction in response to criticisms of its Islamophobic "scapegoating" by Swanton Union and the President of Cambridge Union[10]. In fact, the NUS' approach to Islamophobia stands in stark contrast to its approach to other racialised discourses such as Antisemitism[11]. Thus, even the NUS' definitions of racism are racialised. Clearly, attempting to distinguish between 'fundamentalist' and secular South Asian identities based on an assumed hierarchy of essential subjectivities also involves drawing a sharp distinction between racism and Islamophobia.

This is, of course, a problematic argument. When I defined Islamophobia in chapter three, I also pointed out that Islamophobia has important parallels with racism, and highlighted not only the obvious influence of Orientalism but also the effects of the emergence of contemporary Eurocentrism and new racism. The obvious parallels between Islamophobia and more recognised forms of racism are illustrated by the frequency with which, in the dearth of legislative protection for Muslims, women being discriminated against for wearing *hijab* have been forced to pursue claims that they were discriminated against as Pakistani women who, on account of their religion, are likely to be disproportionately affected by anti-*hijab* edicts in schools and workplaces. It is also worth noting that the attacks and murder of Sikhs in America following the September 11th attacks are nothing new, merely continuing a trend that emerged during the first Gulf War (see, for example, Gillespie 1995: 140).

Goldberg (1993: 48) reminds us that, despite the similarities between racism and Antisemitism, both differ by selecting and naming different signifiers; thus the contrasting invocations of 'Dumb nigger!' and 'Communist conspirators' are

determined by the discursive field. The same is true of Islamophobia in the sense that 'Fundamentalist!' or 'Terrorist' emerge forcefully as the grounds on which Muslim students can be disciplined or excluded from exercising the same range of rights as members of other groups, in contrast to more traditional markers of racialised difference such as 'Paki' or 'Nigger'. However, as Alexander (2000) reminds us in her study of South Asian youth, in many ways Islamophobic discourse emerges to repackage older racist tropes. The importance of this observation cannot be overlooked, and is best illustrated by returning to dominant definitions of Muslim student 'fundamentalism'.

The logics of the NUS require us to believe that, with all the grandly titled 'Liberation Officers' doing battle for equality in universities, the academy is a relatively de-racialised space in which inter-group conflict largely surfaces only with the intrusion of 'fundamentalism'. In this there are obvious parallels with the broader workings of established racialised discourse that signify conflict involving 'immigrants' as 'immigrant conflicts' and thus contribute to the pathologisation, criminalisation, and exclusion of the racialised other (Miles 1993: 190). The logics of ethnicised minority youth being primarily responsible for the racialisation of campus – through their pathological inability to negotiate the challenges and opportunities of life in racialised post-industrial Britain – also reflect broader white racist pathologies that emphasise the culpability of those of minority ethnic heritage in the problems they face, and contribute to what Dominelli (1988: 94) terms the 'clientisation' of Black people, reinforcing stereotypes, pathologising members of ethnicised minorities, and reinscribing their subordinate status through habitualised practices of service delivery.

When representations of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' emphasise the social exclusion experienced by South Asians in wider society, they direct us back to older racist pathologies of criminalised Black youth which accentuate notions of racialised difference and the deviancy of minority ethnic youth. In this light it is important to

recall to mind Gilroy's argument that "where once it was the main streets of the decaying inner city which hosted the most fearsome encounter between Britons and their most improbable and intimidating other – black youth – now it is the classrooms and staffrooms of the inner-city school which frame the same conflict and provide the most potent terms with which to make sense of racial difference" (Gilroy 1992: 55). The juxtaposition of tropes of inner city exclusion with motifs of the relatively prestigious domain of the university are the currency through which this move is articulated in debates on Muslim student 'fundamentalism'. As Claire Alexander notes, "the reification of 'the Muslim community' has brought with it...its own set of demonologies – the underclass, the terrorist, the Fundamentalist, the book burner, the rioter..." (Alexander 2000: 231).

It is thus also significant to note that many of the assumptions central to dominant definitions of student 'fundamentalism' find direct parallels in the CCCS' classic *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and racism in 70s Britain* (Gilroy *et al* 1982). Thus, the pathology of ethnicised minority youth as suffering from a split subjectivity, torn between the allure of the 'modern' west and their 'tradition-bound parents' finds its parallels in Errol Lawrence's observation that "the arguments about the 'problems' caused by the 'cultural preferences' of Asians and the 'negative self-image' and 'weak' family structures of Afro-Caribbeans, form the backdrop against which discussions of Asian and Afro-Caribbean youth take place. The themes here are organized around the 'one and a half' or even 'two' generation gap which is thought to afflict the Afro-Caribbean community and the 'cultural conflict' between Asian parents and their children, who are 'caught between two cultures'...they all boil down to more or less the view that the different experiences and backgrounds of parents and youth lead to differing responses to and expectations of life in Britain, which in turn provide the occasion for conflict between parents and their children" (*ibid.:* 122). Lawrence goes on to relate this racist pathologisation with "the idea that there has always been a 'criminalised sub-culture' in the Afro-Caribbean community" (*ibid.:* 128). The parallels with representations of criminalised Muslim 'fundamentalist'

students are inescapable. In fact, it is therefore also worth glancing at a 1970s discussion of the 'Rastafarian' threat:

"Scotland Yard has alerted police forces in England and Wales about the infiltration threat by a West Indian mafia organisation called Rastafarians. It is an international crime ring specialising in drugs, prostitution, extortion, protection, subversion and blackmail...Scotland Yard has warned forces about their activities. The syndicate's home base is Jamacia but they are spreading their operation world-wide...They favour red, high-powered cars, wear their hair in long rat tails under multi-coloured woollen caps and walk about with 'prayer sticks' – trimmed pick axe handles. They are known to police and intelligence organisations on both sides of the Atlantic as being active in organising industrial unrest" (From *Reading Evening Post*, cited by Gilroy in CCCS, *ibid.*: 161)

Compare this to an NUS warning about 'fundamentalists':

"Hizb ut Tahrir are the most active Islamic fundamentalist group on British campuses. Hizb ut Tahrir...were founded in the Middle East in 1953, The party varies in strength across the Middle East and Hizb ut Tahrir internationally have been involved in terrorist activity...*in Britain they are a relatively small, organisation. This is largely because of the small Muslim population in this country* [my emphasis]. In order to grow Hizb ut Tahrir are targeting students unions with their reactionary ideas. They organise in Students unions not only as Hizb ut Tahrir but sometimes within Islamic Societies...they have also known to organise under different names: "One Nation"; "Current affairs society"..."Pakistan society"...They claim to be an ideological organisation...however, often "rational argument" becomes insult and intimidation...Hizb ut Tahrir also use the disillusionment of Asian youth. They identify the racism and poverty experienced by many and then take logic

to absurd degrees...they exploit the ills of society to promote a far more dangerous and oppressive society, the dictatorial fundamentalist Islamic state..."

It is clearly incoherent to suggest that Islamophobia should be treated any differently from other forms of racism and discrimination. The dangers of the NUS' approach are illustrated by the ways in which its own definitions of 'fundamentalism' succeed only in disaggregating older forms of racialised discourse and repackaging their central tropes around new, radically relativised markers of cultural (rather than racial) difference, articulating this through the ideological currency of 'fundamentalism'. Thus, we can only assume that within the terms of Marie Macey's pathologisation of Pakistani youth (1999) that the 'red cars' of the Rastafarians are replaced in Bradford by vehicles with blackened windows bass tubes in the case of Pakistani Muslims, and that within the terms of the NUS' definitions of 'fundamentalism' that the 'rat tails' are replaced with beards, woollen caps with *topis*, and the 'prayer sticks' with prayer beads (*tasbih*), given that by the NUS' own admission, it is only "because of the small Muslim population" that *Hizb ut-Tahrir* have not managed significant growth in Britain.

2.2 Procedural definitions of 'fundamentalism'

A pseudo-psychological approach underpins the assumption that the trauma of racist disadvantage and inter-generational conflict leads to the abandonment of the essential primordial identities and the emergence of Muslimness or 'fundamentalism'. This crude approach is also reflected in the increasing reliance upon offering general behavioural observations on the essential characteristics of Islamic 'fundamentalists'. In this, the NUS' definition of 'fundamentalism' finds its parallels with broader discussions of 'fundamentalism' and 'religious authoritarianism' that generally tend to identify procedural traits that can be assumed to be either essentially western or authentically Muslim. According to the NUS' LGB Campaign, the behavioural hallmarks of a 'fundamentalist' member of Hizb ut Tahrir therefore include

evangelism, oppression of women, belief in the pursuit of war to establish Khilafah, practice of racial hatred against Jews and Hindus, homophobia, and activities against feminism and democracy. These behavioural observations have gained a wide currency in the official discourses on Muslims in British universities which were most notably recounted in the NUS' 1995 motion number 116 on Liberation Campaigns, which included statements that:

> "4. Certain organisations in our society, which operate on college campuses, preach a hatred of different oppressed groups, such as Jews, Hindus, Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals.
>
> "6. Hizb Ut-Tahrir preaches the death of Jews, Hindus, Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals and has verbally and physically harassed Jewish students and has, on a number of occasions, affected the welfare of Jewish students.
>
> "7. This organisation has openly denied the Holocaust, referred to as a Jewish conspiracy in the media, financial institutions and the educational establishment.
>
> "8. This organisation is reported to have incited people to violence in the form of clashes between Moslems and Sikhs at a London college which resulted in the hospitalisation of several students and police officers."

This behaviouralist approach towards 'fundamentalism' has been common to media reports of student 'fundamentalism' as well as formal interventions by the NUS and Committee for Vice-Chancellors and Principals (1998). It is therefore worth considering whether or not it is convincing to argue that Islamists can most convincingly be read through their actions.

i Proceduralism and political motivation

This proceduralist approach remains deeply problematic and its main effect is to reaffirm the decontextualised readings of political activities by Muslim students already established through the logics that 'fundamentalism' on campus can best be understood by ignoring patterns of racism and Islamophobia in universities. By emphasising the essential procedural nature of 'fundamentalism' this approach encourages us to read the motivation of politicised Muslim students only through their behaviour. Once it is assumed that a particular group is discernible from other groups because of its behaviour as opposed to its political beliefs or motivation, then it also follows that behaviour behaviour is central to the constitution of that group and constitutes its own motivation. Indicative of this was the assertion in the NUS' 1995 conference (Motion 116) that "Hizb Ut-Tahrir, the 'Party of Liberation' stands not for the liberation of oppressed groups but instead, for their continued oppression."

If we add to this NUS' definition of oppressed groups as Hindus, Sikhs, Jews, and Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual students, the incoherence of its crude behaviouralism is clear. For whatever index of oppression one could care to deploy – from MPs by ethnicity/sex/sexuality to patterns of economic deprivation by ethnicity/sex/sexuality – it is clear that Muslim students will largely prop up statistical tables of 'oppressed' groups. The idea that political motivations can be read solely from the actions they produce remains problematic and cannot convincingly account for any form of political mobilisation. For example, such a reading of political action would leave us believing that the only possible motivation for organising a student protest against, say, tuition fees would lie solely in the desire to protest.

The difficulties of this logic are illustrated more broadly by a series of recent exchanges between supporters and opponents of Zionism on university campuses. The only time any of these debates received media coverage was when Muslim

students in Greenstone University supported a motion seeking to demonstrate that criticism of Israel is not Antisemitic. The motion was represented as a crude attempt by Greenstone's Islamic Society to ban the Jewish Society – even though the motion was the work of a white socialist and a member of the Friends of Palestine Society and the Islamic Society was not involved[12] – and received widespread media coverage. Similar motions across the sector seeking to establish a link between principled political criticisms of Israel with Antisemitism have not received anything like the same coverage even when, as in Fowlerstone University, they resulted in Islamic Society members being warned by union officials that any public display of support for the cause of Palestinian self-determination would see the Islamic Society banned[13]. Thus, Greenstone's Islamic Society was being read through the logics of possible effect, as though its sole motivation was to ban the Jewish Society, and this reading lay in stark contrast to that accorded Fowlerstone University's Jewish Society.

Clearly it is not possible to read political action as constitutive of its own motivation unless one either believes in a world full of automatons, or alternatively supposes that Muslim students as political actors collectively suffer from mental illness.

ii Proceduralism and the pathology of 'fundamentalism'

Reading the motivation of Islamists as being inherent to the political manoeuvres they make produces a picture of motiveless, compulsion-driven political actors which contradicts the prior argument that Muslim students are well enough socially and politically resourced agents to take up their cause with some vigour in response to racism and other social and class based problems. In fact, with the prior argument having fixed the essential primal identity of Muslims and our supposed culturally authentic subject positions, this manoeuvre is necessary to cement a construction of 'fundamentalist' students which is similarly essentialised. Thus, Muslim students as political actors need not be read through the contingency of their articulations of

Muslimness or the strategic political decisions they take, but merely through a fixed notion of what it means to do 'Muslim politics' and the potential of this to disrupt essential ethnic loyalties which Muslims are supposed to hold.

iii Proceduralism and racialised definitions of 'fundamentalism'

This definition of 'fundamentalism' is also flawed because in identifying certain forms of behaviour as being typically Islamist, it fails to account adequately for similar activity by other groups that are not Muslim. If it is not possible to contend that there is some psychological essence to Islamists that leads them to behavioural compulsion, then it is no more feasible to argue that some biological determinant drives fundamentalists to undertake certain physical forms of political behaviour such as intimidation, assault and harassment. Such an argument would inevitably founder when confronted with those displaying the same forms of behaviour but who are not Muslim. If the exhibition of particular physical actions thus aligns one with Islamism, 'fundamentalism' would be an ultimately meaningless analytical category with respect to Muslims since it would immediately align anybody perpetrating such actions with Islamic 'fundamentalism'. At the same time, any attempt to correct the obvious deficiencies of this means of defining and recognising 'fundamentalism' would be doomed to failure since such a move would necessitate demonstrating that particular forms of political behaviour are hard-wired into Muslim identities. However, such a move is logically impossible within the terms of NUS campaigning rhetoric, since it is already clear that the NUS does not believe Muslim identities to be credible as such, but rather reads them as the symptoms of a pathology or, more precisely, as primordial essential ethnicities in denial.

2.3 Testing 'fundamentalism'

It is clear that the NUS' definition of 'fundamentalism' is incoherent. However, it is still worth testing this definition by turning to examples of Muslim student 'fundamentalism'. The usefulness of this is highlighted by a curious failure on the part of the National Union of Students. Despite campaigning against 'fundamentalist' activities in universities for the better part of a decade, the National Union of Students has repeatedly failed to undertake any empirically reliable survey of the problem. So marked has this problem been that for a considerable length of time the only data at the NUS' disposal took the form of an (empirically unreliable) statistical breakdown of telephone calls to an NUS helpline established to support the victims of extremism on campus[14]. In the dearth of reliable empirical data, the NUS has tended to rely on information on Islamic 'fundamentalism' provided by student political campaigners and, like the CVCP, by completely excluding Muslim students and organisations from its consultations about Islamic 'fundamentalism'. The difficulties of this approach have already been established without reasonable doubt. For example, it was reported in *Socialist Worker* (no. 1437, 8th April 1995) that discussions of 'fundamentalism' at the NUS' 1995 conference were accompanied by the arbitrary branding of Muslims as being "stupid, backward and ignorant" and by accusations of 'fundamentalism' based largely on the skin colour of visibly ethnicised South Asian conference delegates.

The fallout from the 1995 conference was particularly noticeable in the University of North London, where one Imran Chaudhry found himself at the centre of a racist furore – in which the NUS was implicated – on being elected Union President. Only when it became widely known that Chaudhry had stood as a member of sporting rather than religious societies and that socialist students found him insufficiently radical was the national panic over an alleged 'fundamentalist' coup of the union finally silenced (*The Guardian*, 7th November 1995).

Incidents such as these illustrate the dangers and difficulties of the NUS' polemical references to 'fundamentalism'. In order to sustain the NUS' definition of 'fundamentalism' it will be necessary to demonstrate three things. First, we can expect to find that 'fundamentalist' activities involve the suppression of assumed primordial ethnic identifications. Second, we should be able to identify the emergence of a common pattern betraying the causes of this substitutionalism. This pattern should be marked by indicators of off-campus racism and social exclusion rather than appeals to Islamophobia on campus. Third, we can expect to see Muslim students doing 'Muslim politics'. That is, examples of 'fundamentalism' will reject well-mannered constitutional politics of the white middle class Blairites who have come to increasingly dominate the NUS[15]. Instead, we will witness general patterns of rabble-rousing punctuated by hate crimes.

i Suppressing primordial identities

Throughout my fieldwork there was no evidence at all of Muslim students suppressing or denying the valency of other modes of identification. In fact, while the observant Muslims I interviewed all defined themselves as Muslims, they also identified themselves by deploying a range of other signifiers ('Asian', 'British Asian', 'Pakistani', 'Punjabi', 'Gujarati', 'Shi'a', 'Turkish', 'Iranian', 'Palestinian', 'Arab', 'African-Caribbean'...). The possibility of making multiple and contingent identifications is perhaps best illustrated by an incident that took place in Greenstone University during the 1994-1995 session, and which was promptly constructed as an example of unreconstructed 'fundamentalism' on the part of the Islamic Society.

In April 1994 a number of Muslim students produced a spoof of the union newspaper, copies of which were successfully slipped into issues of the union organ as an 'erratum' notice. The leaflet focused on discrimination faced by Muslim students in Greenstone University, alleging that the hand of the union was never far away from

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this Islamophobia. Thus, in a take-off of the union's mission statement, the leaflet stated:

"Any Union member has the right to partake in the activities of the Union except if he or she is a Muslim, black or Asian...Minorities will not continue to be welcome and we will hinder their activities at every possible opportunity. The Union actively discourages minorities, especially Muslims, from getting involved in the Union".

Claims such as this demonstrated that those responsible for the leaflet were identifying themselves not only as Muslims but also as members of ethnicised minorities. Although the leaflet appeared to distinguish between the categories 'Muslim', 'Black', and 'Asian', a closer reading demonstrates that these terms were not deployed through logics of substitutionalism or mutual exclusion. Thus, "the racist [union] Executive wasn't going to stand by and see a bunch of "Pakis" and "foreigners" dictate policies". Reflecting this, the leaflet also alluded to broader forms of racism – including Antisemitism – in its references to Islamophobia. One headline in the four-sided leaflet proclaimed "Ghetto Project close to completion", while a text box pleaded "*The walls of Apartheid are crumbling in S. Africa. Don't allow them to be built on your campus!*" Splashed across the front page was: "MUSLIM CLEANSING TIME / SO IT'S... / UNION RACISM / APARTHEID IN ACTION / ETHNIC CLEANSING / AIN'T NO BLACK IN THE UNION...*JACK!* / YAKKETY YAK... / RACIST CRAP".

For the time being we should ignore the obvious difficulties of viewing this incident as an example of 'fundamentalism'. Allegations of 'fundamentalism' that emerge in response to incidents such as this all go towards the body of knowledge that tells us both of the assumed widespread problem of 'fundamentalism' in Greenstone's Islamic Society and across the Higher Education sector more broadly, and thus valorise and inform NUS campaigning on the matter. Far from demonstrating that

'fundamentalism' emerges as a pathological displacement of primordial, assumed secular ethnicities, the Greenstone University leaflet demonstrates the ways in which Muslim students – whether branded 'fundamentalist' or not – situationally identify themselves. Central to the leaflet was the range of strategic identifications made by Muslim students attempting to highlight the problem of Islamophobia. Far from disrupting assumed essential ethnic determinants, the leaflet disrupted only the logocentric assumptions governing dominant readings of ethnicised minority student identities. It transgressed only the grounds on which dominant notions of essential ethnic identities are based.

ii 'Fundamentalism', Islamophobia on campus, and off-campus social exclusion

In contrast to Greenstone University, where allegations of widespread organised *al Muhajiroun* student activity during my fieldwork were frequent and unsustainable, Finchton University did have a major tryst with the group, after the Islamic Society was apparently taken over by *al Muhajiroun* supporters during the 1997-1998 session. It was striking that while the university represented the episode as relating largely to inherent dispositions of Muslims as a pathological student community, staff and Muslim student respondents repeatedly related the university's commitment to challenging Islamophobia on campus to the removal of the group from campus. This was curious, for once we accept a causal link between good equal opportunities practices and the lack of 'fundamentalism', then we must also accept implicit links between Islamophobia, racism, and ineffective equalities practices on campus. Adding to the contradictions surrounding the official version of events was that by all accounts, counteracting *al Muhajiroun*'s influence over the Islamic Society was neither a particularly difficult nor a lengthy task[16]. Clearly, the indication must be that the Islamic Society's commitment to radical Islamism was either nominal or largely strategic[17][18]. Given the sanctions that would likely emerge from this flirtation with *al*

Muhajiroun, the question remained as to why Muslim students would adopt such a strategy.

These contradictions were exacerbated by reports seeping out of the institution that equal opportunities work had been seriously undermined in recent years. Yet at the same time, it appeared that the university had responded to the episode with *al Muhajiroun* by stepping up its programme of equalities work vis-à-vis Muslim students: an 'Imaam' was paid "a significant honorarium" by the university to work with the Islamic Society and to "represent university authority to Muslim students"[19], middle managers began responding to the Islamic Society's decade old requests for adequate prayer room provision[20], and even union staff were described as being extremely supportive of Muslim students' needs[21]. As my fieldwork progressed, it became increasingly clear that the key to understanding the *al Muhajiroun* incident actually lay in what I was not being told.

Interviews with former staff and students revealed a pattern of racism and Islamophobia on campus that belied the university's significant track record in equal opportunities delivery. As with Greenstone University, there were the obligatory reports of a Muslim British Pakistani student going to the union for a night out and being dragged off and beaten up by racist members of the rugby club moonlighting as union security staff, accompanied by predictable claims of management cover-up[22]. These were supplemented by other incidents, including an attempted assault against a Muslim woman in the university prayer room by a skinhead intruder[23]. Reports of a culture of racism frequently referred to verbal abuse directed at Muslim students by members of the Christian Union and Jewish Society when Muslims attempted to make use of shared multi-faith facilities[24]. One former PhD student and part-time lecturer even recalled being branded "the ethnic delinquent" by lecturing staff on the grounds that as an assertive and articulate *hijab* wearer she defied their racialised expectations[25]. A former lecturer recalled with some anger a culture of staff racism and Islamophobia that frequently focused on *hijab* wearing Muslim

women. Going further, he recalled allying himself with a Black African non-Muslim colleague to suggest that the university provided *halal* food in its refectory. The Head of Catering Services responded with a memo stating her opposition to "the bastardisation of our food", and a subsequent complaint about her racism was waved away by the Vice-Chancellor on the grounds that he did not wish to be "told what to do by a bunch of fundamentalists"[26].

As my fieldwork progressed it became increasingly clear that the campus had not been racialised as a result of *al Muhajiroun* activity in subsequent years, but rather that the group's influence over the Islamic Society had emerged from a context of racialisation in the university. Former Islamic Society President Mohammed elaborated on this context, referring to repeated attempts by Finchton's union to ban the Islamic Society at a time when there was no *al Muhajiroun* presence on campus:

"...it is really, really ironic that in the National Union of Students we had these issues about Antiracism officer, Antiracism week when the majority of people who are actually in these positions are white from posh backgrounds. They may be from that background, totally naïve with no understanding of Antiracism issues, and even when there's a black person in there it's a myth... [To] tell you the truth it rates on the level of the Metropolitan Police in London. The way they [Finchton Union] were against the skinheads and the National Front etc., if you remember it, when there's an issue, when one Scottish guy [in Finchton University] did something [to challenge far right activity on campus] there was very, very few people who ever backed him up. A couple of the Asians and Black guys decided to back him up...but only when Black people do it themselves... Actually, it's not what you know its who you know...I interviewed [a university Dean] as part of my dissertation so immediately when I knew they [Finchton Union] were going to try to ban us I was afraid but I was one step ahead of them, and so then I went to see [the Dean]. He said 'listen you've been truthful and honest just go ahead and do

your degree. I will look into this - don't worry nothing will happen in the meantime'. " [27]

Not only was Mohammed identifying himself as a Muslim with Blacks and Asians, but the issues he raised focused entirely on problems of racism with the NUS, in Finchton Union, and on campus in Finchton University. As a consequence, his explanation for the Islamic Society's flirtation with *al Muhajiroun* is particularly illuminating: "the Islamic Society stuck its face out and waited for the union to kick it". Not only was the Islamic Society effectively saying 'ya-boo' to union staff who had so successfully demonised Muslims as 'fundamentalists' that it had nothing left to lose, but it was also visibly asserting Muslim identities in an environment in which the presence of Muslims had often been subjected to vicious suppression. Like the Muslims of Greenstone University with their leaflet, Finchton's Islamic Society was attempting to disrupt essentialist representations of Muslim identities within the university. By inviting *al Muhajiroun* to the university the Islamic Society made a grave mistake that impacted on the safety of others and themselves[28]. However, we can only understand this strategic move as part of a broader play to reclaim powers of self-representation within the context of a climate of fear and demonisation of Muslims. Whatever activities the Islamic Society supported, it could not escape the labels '*al Muhajiroun*' and 'fundamentalist'. In an institution in which Muslim identities could only be conceived of in terms of deviancy and 'fundamentalism', the Islamic Society was disrupting this pathologisation by first strategically claiming those problematic signifiers themselves. This move thus has more in common with the reclaiming of the signifier 'Black' by the civil rights movement than with the simple surfacing of symptoms of an underlying pathology.

iii Muslims do politics...

The logics of the NUS' largely procedural definition of 'fundamentalism' require us to read the motives of Muslim students through their actions as well as suggesting that incidents such as these must have involved a rejection of essentially 'white' middle class forms of constitutional student politics. It is clear that on neither point is there any credibility in the NUS' definition of 'fundamentalism'. Both the leaflet circulated in Greenstone University and the invitation to *al Muhajiroun*'s leaders to hold study circles in Finchton University were motivated not by a simple desire to behave as 'fundamentalists' but rather by underlying problems of racism and Islamophobia in both institutions.

More to the point, it was also clear that these incidents had more to do with the failure of constitutional politics so far as Muslim students were concerned than with a pathological drive to manifest essential 'fundamentalism' through unconstitutional political moves such as rabble-rousing and hate crimes. Mohammed's critique of union racism and Islamophobia in Finchton University best illustrated this, with the union's unwillingness to challenge far-right white racism contrasted against the lengths to which it went in order to ban the Islamic Society for a 'fundamentalist' presence that was not actually to emerge until the 1997-1998 academic session. The leaflet circulated in Greenstone in 1994 was also motivated by parallel concerns. The leaflet was largely concerned with two manifestations of union racism and Islamophobia. First, the union had decided to relocate the Muslim prayer room from the central location of the union building to a disused store-room on the fringes of campus. According to the leaflet this move:

- "Would remove a substantial minority from the heart of campus

- Would make an open student facility less accessible to you

- Means accepting the results of the Union's discrimination

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- Means racial segregation, Soweto style"

Second, the Islamic Society had attempted to table union motions calling for the establishment of a Bosnian student scholarship to parallel its existing provision for students from South Africa, and requesting "a larger temporary prayer facility in the Union building". According to the leaflet, "the racist Executive wasn't going to stand by and see a bunch of "Pakis" and "foreigners" dictate policies. It received, using our Union finances, a specious ruling from its solicitor (incidentally one of the country's most expensive) that Muslim requests were unconstitutional".

Both of these incidents occurred in response to the racialisation of student politics and the difficulties experienced by Muslim students attempting to participate in formal union politics. These patterns of political activity cannot be understood through fixity and pathology, but rather through the contingency of identities and the political and through a recognition of the racialised exclusions operating through formal student politics.

3 Return of the great and the good: senior management on 'extremism'

A number of Muslim student respondents from across the sector defined Jim Murphy's 1995 address on 'fundamentalism' as a turning point in the racialisation of higher education, after which Muslim students and Islamic Societies would be increasingly demonised and excluded on the basis of spurious allegations of 'fundamentalist' activity[29]. It is clear that accusations of Muslim student infractions became increasingly frequent over the following three years. It is also clear that many of these were based on simplistic commonsense racist assumptions that public articulations of Muslim identities on campus must necessarily reflect the meddlings of groups such as *al Muhajiroun*, as the examples I have already deployed show. In this section I turn to another turning point in the racialisation of the Higher Education sector.

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In 1998 the Committee for Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) – now known as Universities UK – published a report on *Extremism and Intolerance on Campus.* The report was greeted with great scepticism by Muslims in Britain, and *Q-News* magazine drew attention to the Zionist credentials of one Vice-Chancellor involved in the report as well as his previous track record in opposing attempts to improve provisions and legislative protection for Muslims in Britain[30]. Writing pseudonymously, in June 1999 I also criticised the report as racist in *Muslim News,* drawing attention to the CVCP's failure to consult Muslim groups or individuals while writing the report (among other failures). More recently, an article in *The Guardian* (Faisal Bodi, 'And still we rise', 5th March 2002) voiced the same criticisms, citing a PhD thesis that in turn cites my own *Muslim News* article. Lesley Perry, Director of Communications for Universities UK, responded by letter to argue that in fact the report was a defence of equalities principals (*The Guardian,* Education letters 12th March 2002). Perry's response remains unconvincing: after all, the report itself notes the CVCP's aim was not to produce "a different kind of study of, for example, how to promote multi-cultural, inter-racial and inter-religious harmony and mutual respect" (CVCP 1998: 5). In this section I am interested in the sorts of knowledge about 'extremism' that can be generated by following the recommendations of the report, the ways in which 'extremism' has been operationalised in the period since the report's publication, and the impacts it has had on the racialisation of British universities.

3.1 Origins of the report on *Extremism and Intolerance on Campus*

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the CVCP report was that it was based largely on second-hand rumours of widespread Islamist transgressions in British universities, and particularly those circulated with the support of the National Union of Students. NUS interventions on Islamic 'fundamentalism' were based largely on data

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gathered through lobbying activities by national and student campaigning groups rather than on empirically reliable research. As encouraging as it should be to note the NUS' willingness to acknowledge concerns raised by rights-based campaigns, this mode of gathering data cannot adequately compensate for the dearth of reliable empirical data.

Not only was the CVCP report based on empirically unsound grounds, but a closer reading of it suggests that it was strongly informed by uncritical acceptance of problematic media accounts of 'fundamentalist' activity by Muslim students. For example, at one point the report suggested that attempts by one student group or society to ban another student society should be read as indicative of 'extremism' and 'intolerance'. This statement appears to be an implicit reference to a widely reported incident that took place in Greenstone during 1996-1997, when it was alleged that the Islamic Society was attempting to ban the Jewish Society[31]. Another indicator of the concerns reflected in the CVCP report can be found in its suggestion that attempts to coerce people to conformity in religious dress are hallmarks of 'extremism'. This suggestion is a direct reference to widely circulated claims of Sikh women in universities being routinely subjected to harassment by Muslim students and pressurised to convert to Islam and wear *hijab*. I will explore these rumours in chapter five, for now noting only that they are not reliable and that the CVCP report appears to uncritically accept their usefulness without further investigation.

3.2 Defining 'extremism'

Given the incoherence of the NUS' attempts to define 'fundamentalism', it is rather surprising that the CVCP makes no attempt to define either 'extremism' or 'intolerance' in the report. In this there is a stark contrast against the established (and mainly North American) literature on hate crimes on campus that emphasises the need for rigorous legalistic definitions (see, for example, eds. Heumann & Church

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1997). This failure exacerbates the difficulties attendant on the report's over-reliance on media-fuelled moral panics of 'fundamentalist' activities rather than on empirically sound research.

i Proceduralism in the CVCP report

In place of a workable definition of key terms such as 'extremism' and 'intolerance' the report offers a number of exemplars that may be understood as signifiers for 'extremist' political practices. These examples include:

Coercion to religious conformity in terms of dress.

Coercion to religious conformity in terms of practice (such as praying).

Attempting to ban another group or society.

Intimidating or harassing other groups on campus.

Having a prior reputation for having undertaken activities deemed to be 'extremist'.

As Sayyid (1997: 8-11) notes in a parallel critique, the control of bodies cannot be seen as decisive in determining the nature of a political project — whether 'fundamentalist' or not — since all acts of governmentality require the disciplining of bodies. Coercion cannot be copyrighted to 'extremists' alone and, as Wolfe (1995: 128) notes, may not be "pretty, but is often necessary to protect order". Moreover, the specific forms of coercion listed by the CVCP cannot reasonably be viewed as characteristic of 'extremism'. Coercion to sartorial conformity is widely practised in universities, and to view this as a hallmark of 'fundamentalism' would no doubt put a great many gownmakers into bankruptcy come graduation time. That the report is

specifically concerned with coercion to religious conformity underlines the incoherence of the report and establishes the forms of 'extremism' with which the report is concerned. Thus, respondents such as Aisha[32] – one of a number of Muslim women targeted with racist violence and abuse in Greenstone University for wearing *hijab* – cannot be conceived of within the logics of the CVCP report other than as possible victims of 'extremist' coercion, while the perpetrators of attacks against them and their *hijab* are unrecognised as 'extremists' because of their secular intent and thus, as was wont to happen in Greenstone, go scot-free[33]. Equally, it is problematic to assume that coercion to conformity in religious practice is an indicator of 'extremism' unless a reliable means of assessing coercion is offered. Does the *Azan* count as coercion to conformity? Why, of all the forms of coercion that take place in universities, should we only view religious coercion as 'extremist'? Why should we treat religious coercion any differently professional coercion? Clearly, the CVCP's loose, commonsensical definition of 'fundamentalism' is one likely to disproportionately affect members of faith than secular groups, and tells us more about hegemonic preoccupations concerning liberal secular society than it does about 'fundamentalists'.

ii Recognising 'extremism '

The report's failure to offer us a coherent and consistently implementable definition of 'extremism' is exacerbated by the tools it articulates for recognising cases of 'extremism' and 'intolerance'. Typical of the report's rather fudged approach is the suggestion that all cases of 'extremism' should be "judged at the time on the particular facts" (*ibid.*: 16), even though the report's valorisation of media scares about 'fundamentalism' obviously precludes recourse to an adequate, contextualised reading of the emergence of radical Islamism on campus. In fact, this statement is swiftly qualified with the proviso that it is not, in fact, even necessary to prove guilt beyond reasonable doubt: "clearly absolute certainty [that an 'extremist' offence will take place] cannot be required...In our view, reasonable belief or suspicion will

suffice. This...may arise through previous experience, whether at that institution or elsewhere. We do not think it is possible or indeed desirable to attempt to be more specific as to what is meant by reasonable belief or suspicion in this context" (*ibid.*). In other words, it is not actually necessary to judge each case on its own merits since pre-emptive interventions may be made based on judgments emerging from cases that university staff members may not even have first hand experience of.

This contradiction illustrates the incoherence of the *Extremism and Intolerance on Campus* report. When we combine this with the report's recommendation that judgements be based on "common sense" (*ibid.*), the report becomes an extremely dangerous document. It does not take a Paddy Hill or a Satpal Ram to recognise the dangers of combining a reliance on media-fuelled moral panics and concentrating discretionary powers in the hands of individuals empowered to act on the basis of unspecified similarities between alleged perpetrators in order to fulfil commonsense imperatives. The logics of the CVCP report are the logics of all racist miscarriages of justice, recommending that judgments be based not on particular facts but rather on patterns of crime assumed to be related to particular groups and thus that can be predicted by identifying members of those groups.

3.3 Operationalising 'extremism'

In order to test the impact of the CVCP report it is now useful to turn to questions of operationalisation. By exploring such issues it is possible both to develop a general sense of the mood into which the report taps and an understanding of the knowledges of 'extremism' that are likely to be generated by practitioners applying its recommendations.

i *al Muhajiroun* in Greenstone University

Muslim students in Greenstone University have been rather mendaciously accused of various crimes – including the distribution of terrorist literature – on a number of occasions, as I shall explore in chapter six. At this point I turn to an allegation of *al Muhajiroun* activity that, unusually, was empirically sustainable. This incident centred around the distribution of a leaflet in the union building during the 1998-1999 academic session. The incident was widely debated on campus and even made the front page of the union newspaper, with the leaflets described as Antisemitic and the whole incident framed by a consideration of the positioning of *al Muhajiroun* as part of an international network of terrorists. Faced with evidence such as this, how can my analysis focus so closely on questions of racism and Islamophobia?

First, it was clear that racism was implicated in the union newspaper report of the incident. An entirely innocent Muslim student – in fact, one of my respondents – was misidentified in the article as the perpetrator of the leaflet, a move that enhanced the credibility of the article's suggestion that organised *al Muhajiroun* activity among Muslim students was a significant problem. In fact, the leaflets had been distributed by a lone supporter of the group who was not even a member of the university. The student journalist had, it seems, happened upon a bearded and visibly ethnicised Muslim student expressing some agreement with the sentiments of the *al Muhajiroun* leaflet, assumed that he was the perpetrator, and published the resulting discussion, thereby lending some credence to his claims of 'fundamentalist' student activity[34]. At the very least this was irresponsible and empirically unsound journalism, and one cannot ignore the racialised undertones in the writer's treatment of the case. Clearly, once we begin basing our judgments of particular incidents on the basis of similarities between alleged perpetrators, we begin to blur the distinction between the innocent and the guilty until it no longer matters

Second, there is the question of the Antisemitism of the leaflet, which had argued that the NUS was Islamophobic and that this Islamophobia was related to the NUS' positioning as a "tool" for Zionists. We cannot ignore *al Muhajiroun*'s appalling track record of Antisemitism. We must also acknowledge the obvious parallels between the leaflet and Antisemitic motifs of Jewish conspiracy. It is also worth turning to Braithwaite *et al* (1997), whose work emerging from a roundtable discussion involving minority students notes the Antisemitic overtones of perceptions of Jewish students' relatively high levels of access to power and privilege voiced by Black and South Asian participants. However, we must also temper our reading of the Antisemitism of the *al Muhajiroun* leaflet with a recognition of the context in which it was able to appeal to Muslim students in Greenstone University. After all, in both Fowlerstone and Swanton Universities with their outstanding support for Muslims facing Islamophobia and racism, groups such as *al Muhajiroun* were never able to make successful appeals to Muslim students. In particular, a number of institutional practices in Greenstone University succeeded in racialising the campus and in institutionalising the possibility of conflict between Jewish and Muslim students. These practices included the circulation of a memo calling for racialised segregation of university accommodation – in the light of the 1994 leaflet noted earlier, let's call this practice Apartheid – in order to "protect" Jews from "Muslim students" before the occurrence of maiming or murder[35]. This clearly racist memo was actually one of the main lynch pins of a campaign to provide designated *Kosher* accommodation to Jewish students[36]. Thus it was politically motivated racism that sought to exploit racist moral panics about Muslim students.

To the circulation of this memo must be added broader experiences of Muslim students, who frequently reported during fieldwork that while the Jewish Society was freely allowed to support Zionism and Israel, it was extremely difficult for Muslim students to publicly support the cause of Palestinian self-determination without being falsely subjected to polemical accusations of terrorism or 'fundamentalism'[37]. Indeed, while Muslim students were frequently discussed from within the logics of the

'fundamentalist' problem, a tiny fringe group of militant Zionists had been able to undertake a range of crimes against their Muslim peers – including death threats – without any action being taken[38]. Additionally, for a number of years the university had publicly advertised its provision of examination and assessment exemptions clashing with Jewish religious festivals[39] while denying Muslim students access to the same right[40]. Clearly, the *al Muhajiroun* leaflet did not racialise the campus, but rather appealed to Muslim students' recognition of the ways in which university and union delivery was already governed by patterns of racialised inequality that constructed an opposition between Muslim and Jewish students and institutionalised competition and rivalry between the two groups over even the most basic of rights and provisions, often at the direct expense of Muslims.

ii Commonsense and 'fundamentalism'

Among the many reports of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' that surfaced in Greenstone University, an incident that took place in a university hall of residence during the 1999-2000 session is both representative and symbolic. The hall's Warden undertook to provide Muslim residents with *halal* food for an *iftaar* meal during *ramadhan*, and did so reassuring the recipients that the food provided had been purchased from a local Pakistani-owned *halal* meat shop. When the Warden submitted his receipts to the hall's Residents Association for reimbursement it emerged that the food had in fact been purchased from a local supermarket that did not stock *halal* meat at the time of the incident. Muslim residents expressed their understandable concerns at the incident and asked the Warden to clarify what had happened.

The Warden's initial response involved around recounting ever more contradictory versions of events to cover up the incident. Seeing that this approach was succeeding only in adding to the anger of Muslim students, the Warden decided on a new tactic which involved alleging 'fundamentalist' infractions on the part of Muslim

complainants. The Treasurer of the Residents Association – a Jordanian Muslim – who had highlighted the Warden's failure was accused of trying to undermine and overthrow hall management. It is extremely significant that the Warden – who had lived in Egypt – deliberately deployed the signifier *inqilab* as a marker of the student's newly alleged transgression: the term translates from Urdu as 'revolution' and from Arabic as 'coup'.

The Warden cemented this representation of Muslim student complaints as 'fundamentalism' by then alleging to a number of people including myself that a *hijab* wearing postgraduate student on one of his courses had stood up in the middle of a lecture to abuse and harass the Warden for "poisoning Muslim students". My subsequent investigations revealed that no such incident had taken place and that the student accused of abusing the Warden did not even exist[41]. However, the Warden succeeded in convincing staff under him at the hall that, far from being the cause of legitimate grievances among Muslim students, he had acted in good faith and ended up as the victim of 'fundamentalist' hate crimes. Knowing that I had been following up the incident, the Warden then implicitly accused me of "betraying" his "trust" and causing his harassment by slandering him to the (non-existent) 'fundamentalist' who had allegedly disrupted his lecture[42]. Implicit to this was a suggestion to hall staff that information on the incident should not be shared with me since I was, in fact, in cahoots with the 'fundamentalists' seeking to stage a coup against the Warden and harass him[43]. To compound the intrigue, the Warden eventually contacted me to consult over the wording of a rather grudging public apology he later issued to Muslim residents, in which he admitted that he "may inadvertently" have misled them over the food they were provided, blaming this error on supermarket staff who were claimed in turn to have misled him[44].

At times almost surreal beyond belief, this incident was as worrying as it was interesting. Probably through laziness rather than malice the Warden had made a mistake that, while upsetting Muslim students, could have been easily resolved

through a swift apology. Having lost further credibility through increasingly contradictory attempts to justify his actions, the Warden responded by successfully appealing to commonsense assumptions about Muslim student 'fundamentalism'. The success of this racial hoax was illustrated when, in June 200, the Muslim student accused of plotting a 'coup' against the Warden was unanimously rejected in his application for a paid post within the hall partly on the grounds of his track record of militant infractions[45].

This incident perhaps best illustrates the difficulties attendant upon dominant discussions of Islamic 'fundamentalism' among Muslim students. Not only were Muslim students in Greenstone University mobilising in resistance against Islamophobia – rather than other forms of racism outside the university – but they were also subjected to largely polemical accusations of 'fundamentalism' that had very little to do with any notable transgressions at all. For all the discussions of Muslim 'fundamentalism' in Greenstone University, in four years of extensive exposure to the institution I only encountered one Muslim – and a non-student at that – expressing views that could be interpreted as supporting terrorism[46]. Not once did I witness Antisemitic or other hate literature being distributed among students. Although it is well established that *Hizb ut-Tahrir* and *al Muhajiroun* have been known to distribute and express inciteful literature and views, neither group enjoyed serious levels of support among Muslim students in any of the case study universities and they were frequently referred to in patronising or openly disparaging terms by Muslim students. Moreover, the only activities by members of these groups witnessed during my fieldwork occurred in Greenstone University and centred on exhortations to establish *Khalifah* occasionally interspersed with slightly more subversive though still not pro-terrorist or inciteful activities[47].

3.4 Racialising the campus

Since the publication of the CVCP report on *Extremism and Intolerance on Campus* allegations of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' have become ever more frequent to the point at which in October 2001 the President of Cambridge Union even went public on the racist and Islamophobic dangers on what he termed "the NUS' alarmist faxing fetish"[48] that has been so central to the circulation of (often empirically unsound) rumours of ritual crimes by Muslim students. Whereas allegations of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' generally centred on accusations – whether proven or not – of activity by *Hizb ut-Tahrir* or *al Muhajiroun* and the repeated naming of the same handful of universities as particular sites of 'fundamentalist' activities[49], after the publication of the CVCP report these allegations became increasingly regular and ever more far-fetched. Empirically weak claims of *al Muhajiroun* infiltration have been increasingly supplanted by claims of *mujahideen* recruitment[50], and even by Russian government claims of Chechen separatist recruitment in the London School of Economics. The allegations were roundly rejected by Acting Director of LSE Professor Stephen Hill on the grounds that they were untrue and politically motivated[51]. As the examples I have deployed demonstrate, our universities are so racialised that 'fundamentalism' can be invoked to defer recognition of institutionalised racial inequalities in universities, for largely political reasons, or even to cover backs and discredit Muslim students requesting sensitive provisions.

The fundamental difficulty with interventions like the CVCP report is that the conceptual tools they provide us with are only capable of racialising university campuses and justifying false allegations against Muslim students. Far from offering a useful means of identifying and challenging hate crimes carried out by groups such as *Hizb ut-Tahrir* and *al Muhajiroun* they offer only a means of valorising racialised inequalities, constructing and fixing 'fundamentalism' relative to the presence of student articulating themselves in ways that disrupt dominant modes of

representation, and therefore contributing to the type of environment in which these groups are able to successfully appeal to Muslim students on the basis of the exclusions and demonisation to which they are subjected.

4 Contesting 'fundamentalism'

What is perhaps most surprising about the proliferation of discussions of 'fundamentalism' in recent years is the profound contestations over its usefulness as an analytical category that have raged. Among the term's advocates, Bruce Lawrence does, to his credit, acknowledge that 'fundamentalism' is a term with "dubious origins and shifting connotations" (1995: xiii) that reduce its function to an "ad hoc label for a diffuse, modern phenomenon" (*ibid*.: xii) before rather unconvincingly wriggling out of this difficult bind by deployment Shaalan's argument that 'fundamentalism' "is there. It's something that's bothering every one of us. We need to say what this is, and what are its characteristics. Whether we call it fundamentalism or radicalism, fanaticism or extremism doesn't matter" (*ibid*.: xiii). It is scarcely credible that any analytical category can be valorised and accepted on the grounds that it really doesn't matter what we call it. This is to some extent indicative of the broader tensions affecting contemporary representations of Islamism as 'fundamentalism'. In fact, the shaky and dubious origins of 'fundamentalism' and the important conceptual debates over its use as an analytical category are of greater significance than the term's apologists are generally wont to acknowledge. As Glavanis (1998) notes, "there is still a paucity of analytical and critical research which can account for the manner in which Islam as a global identity motivates and structures political action...Instead there is a plethora of often contradictory, and in some cases polemic, accounts of the 'disruptive' potential of 'Islamic fundamentalism' ". So sharply highlighted are debates over its applicability that, drawing from Gallie (1962) and Connolly (1974), we can best understand 'fundamentalism' as an essentially contested concept in politics.

4.1 'Fundamentalism' as an essentially contested concept

Gallie (1962: 125) defines an essentially contested concept as one which signifies a valued achievement of an internally complex whole that is variously describable and can be modified in the light of changed circumstances and whose use is contested by various parties. In short, an essentially contested concept is one which is subject to profound contestations relating to use of competing conceptual vocabularies in which our interventions and the conclusions we reach are entirely contingent upon our choice of vocabulary. It therefore follows that essentially contested concepts can never find full resolution since no final agreement on their definition and significations is ever possible. For example, freedom can be seen to be an essentially contested concept since the way in which we define freedom is dependent upon a range of other political conflicts we are engaged in; freedom in a Leninist, liberal, and right-wing US gun-lobby senses means entirely different things and each of these rival definitions is a function of differing conceptual vocabularies.

'Fundamentalism' is an essentially contested concept, and one deployed in a higher education context in ways that can only reveal a range of preoccupations with particular definitions of society[52] and the elite domain of the university and which serve as functions of a logocentric conceptual vocabulary. 'Fundamentalism' thus invokes and valorises a range of concerns relating both to privilege and under-privilege in racialised British society, and how these are interpolated in the arena of relative privilege and upward mobility that we understand as the academy. 'Fundamentalism' is also invested with racialised moral panics about socially excluded and criminalised inner city ethnicised minority youth, as well as appealing to Orientalist and Indological tropes.

Within the context of higher education, 'fundamentalism' is incapable of telling us a compelling story about the articulation of Muslim identities. What 'fundamentalism' does manage, however, is to provide an account of fundamental conceptions of racialised society and to illustrate the epistemological historicity of the analyses that generate knowledges of 'fundamentalism'. As deployed in discussions of Muslim students, 'fundamentalism' can only ever succeed in providing an account of ideal forms of student identities, counterpointing the invisible whiteness articulated through its operations against a pathology of ethnicised minority youth as criminalised, excluded, incapable of negotiating the challenges and opportunities of life in western post-industrial urban space, and unable to negotiate inter-generational change. 'Fundamentalism' succeeds in eliding consideration of Islamophobia since it refers to an assumed ideal type of secular ethnicised identities, and works to represent racism not as a white problem, but rather as a problem of South Asian youth, who are assumed to be disposed to 'fundamentalism' as a consequence of their inability to adequately cope with racism.

The scandal of 'fundamentalism' in the academy is not simply a question of violence and turpitude on the part of Muslims. Rather, it is the scandal of ethnicised minority youth penetrating an élite domain and, in doing so, disrupting dominant modes of representation of a range of ideal student types – white, relatively privileged, secular, given to constitutional modes of formal political mobilisation – usually articulated through the commonsense currencies of 'student life', 'student politics' and 'student behaviour'. 'Fundamentalism' is also the scandal of ethnicised minority youth disrupting dominant essentialist representations of ethnic identities as assumed primordial and unchanging unities – 'South Asian', for example – and in doing so, not only challenging the grounds of prior pathologies but also the grounds on which traditionally 'white' spaces and identities are constructed. 'Fundamentalism' does not merely run the risk of racist stereotyping as Ahmed (1992) notes, but is rather one of the ideological currencies through which contemporary Islamophobia is articulated. 'Fundamentalism' fixes Muslims as though a throwback to some prior stage of

western teleology and, in so doing, cements representations of Muslims as defective westerners. 'Fundamentalism' is a polemical category that justifies the need for disciplinary interventions against those who by articulating themselves as Muslims disrupt essentialised and racialised logics underpinning notions of western supremacism.

4.2 Abandoning 'fundamentalism'

It is clear, then, that there is a certain conceptual hollowness to 'fundamentalism' as it is most commonly used in reference to Muslim students in Britain. But my argument here is not that these gaps should be filled by, say, undertaking further empirical research into 'fundamentalist' students or attempting to reconcile the contradictions articulated through almost every invocation of 'fundamentalism'. On the contrary, I argue for the abandonment of 'fundamentalism' as either a descriptive term or as a sociological or political unit of analysis. For the gaps in 'fundamentalism' are not simple voids created by some kind of sedimented and institutionalised complacency that prevented it from becoming a useful analytical category. Rather, the gaps in 'fundamentalism' are central to its function. The inadequacy of 'fundamentalism' demonstrates that on one level it means actually very little; we cannot seriously take it as a means of extending the scope of sociological enquiry or as the basis for political action on the 'Muslim problem'. But on another level, this inadequacy means that 'fundamentalism' also means everything; it is a vessel that can be hollowed out and refilled in order to organise a spread of narratives on the Muslim presence which conflates everything from ethnic minority criminality to Middle Eastern terrorism. It is only by having such a conceptually hollow tool as 'fundamentalism' that it can, as a floating signifier, be coupled and re-coupled so easily to so many conflicting narratives on transgression, and it is only through the historical contingency of its use and the conflational logic it requires that whenever 'fundamentalism' is spoken it is

known to be synonymous with Muslims rather than any other group that could match its incoherent criteria. So while telling us so little about Muslims, 'fundamentalism' also tells us all we really need to know. It is able to organise its narratives based on denial ('fundamentalism' and Muslimness are inauthentic ethnic moments) and transgression ('fundamentalists' are behaviourally recognisable but unacceptable and compulsive) so that we know 'fundamentalism' as a shorthand for the presence of Muslims (Ahmed 1992: 15). In this way, breathing the names of Hizb-ut-Tahrir or al-Muhajiroun has become symbolic of the previously denied Muslim presence in higher education, and Muslim politicisation could be greeted by the invocation of their names even when they were not involved in particular actions, and even when no two media 'experts' could even reach a consensus on how to spell the names of these groups. Hence the repeated media motif "Hizb-ut-Tahrir, banned in a number of universities..."

5 Conclusion

The French 'hijab wars' demonstrated the limits of the religious tolerance that liberal secular states had been created to provide. The idea that the headscarf, as an outward manifestation of one's Muslim identity, was in conflict with the secularism that underpins the French state politicised the wearing of hijab to the point at which it was considered both transgressive and threatening (Vertovec and Peach 1997 : 7). The struggle for the right of schoolgirls in France to wear headscarf may well be a more radicalised example of the natural antagonism towards expressions of Muslimness found within liberal discourses of its denial and repression, but it is nonetheless broadly symbolic of attempts to portray Muslims as the illusory figments and fragments churned up by the collapsing of problematic 'authentic' ethnic conundrums. 'Fundamentalism', 'transgression', 'extremism' become the only way in which such discourses of repression are able to deal with the surfacing of articulations of Muslim identities that were never supposed to exist anyhow.

'Fundamentalism' not only demonstrates the failure of denial (by requiring some prior acceptance of the identification 'Muslim') but it attempts to shore up the rubble left by the collapse of the 'essential' ethnic marker by requiring us to read Muslim political activity through the split subjectivity of the (in)-authentic agent retreating from the trauma of some other primordial ethnic experience.

In offering such a valiant rearguard, 'fundamentalism' thus fixes Muslim political behaviour as compulsive, motiveless, inauthentic, and acts as a nodal point around which narratives of ethnic minority criminality, Middle Eastern war, terrorism, and so on may be organised. That 'fundamentalism' has strictly limited use as an analytical category has been argued far more comprehensively elsewhere, but the critique of its use in theory and practice offered here demonstrates the ways in which its invocation ensures particular constructions of Muslim political identities, obscures underlying discrimination against Muslims, and defeats the purpose of understanding anything at all about the articulation of Islam with politics by Muslim students. For 'fundamentalism' as it is defined in the hegemonic discourses does not exist. 'Fundamentalism' in universities is nothing more than the term used when all other attempts to deny or describe Muslims and other ethnicised minority identities have failed, and liberal discourses are confronted with political mobilisation around Islam seeking redress for the imbalances created by the attempt to deny their presence. And similarly, many incidents of Muslim student politicisation uncovered during the research occurred because the Muslims who weren't supposed to exist were necessarily drawn into conflict with the structures that sought to deny the validity of their identities and their rights. In such scenarios, simply to describe oneself as Muslim is a politicised act, and the identities drawn into this conflict are necessarily political. The theoretical framework which underpins the invocation of 'fundamentalism' may be incoherent but it is so deeply sedimented that even the dissenting voices within the field of higher education abide by its logic in arguing quaintly that 'fundamentalists' do exist but Muslims should not be stereotyped; we should be engaged in dialogue intended to supportively instruct on the errors of the

'fundamentalist' path. However, it is only by unravelling 'fundamentalism' that we can begin to offer any meaningful analysis of student political activity by Muslims; once we understand its contingent invocation and look beyond the stream of consciousness common-sense racisms that it holds together we can begin to re-contextualise Muslim student activity and understand how the denial that requires 'fundamentalism' has a great bearing on the political activity of Muslim students. This does not mean that Muslim students exist and act only in reaction to the hegemonic structures seeking to contain them. Neither does it mean that the presence of Muslims is preceded by pathological rejection of a prior essential marker of identity. For, in the final analysis, the presence of those articulating themselves as Muslims must necessarily precede denials of the poly-valency of those identifications.

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[1] For example, this was resolved at Bristol University Students Union's AGM on Thursday 8th February 2001

[2] For example, Bhatt argues that use of mass media is essentially western and 'modern' – he conflates the two – and therefore inauthentic for 'religious authoritarians'.

[3] Into this category fall student organisations such as the Union of Jewish Students and British Organisation of Sikh Students, as well as supporters of Hindu Nationalism.

[4] Female drug worker, mid thirties, East Midlands, February 2003

[5] Male drug worker, early forties, North West, March 2003, speaking about drug use patterns observed in West Midlands

[6] Male drug worker, early thirties, Greenstone, referring to drug use amongst arrested Pakistanis he had engaged with in police cells and a prison, March 2003

[7] Female drug worker, mid fifties, Greenstone, March 2003

[8] For example, Parker-Jenkins (1999) alludes to this.

[9] For a standard but nonetheless thorough discussion, see Lewis 1994.

[10] The 2001-2002 session opened against a rising tide of Islamophobic hate crimes across the country ranging from arson attacks and grave desecrations to physical and verbal assault and harassment. Greenstone's Islamic Society even received a bomb threat. The NUS' rather predictable response involved circulating warnings of widespread 'fundamentalist' activity. On 18th September 2001 Swanton Union agreed to issue a statement condemning the NUS for falsely alleging 'fundamentalist' recruitment in the university without first verifying the facts. The statement pointedly called for "responsible people" to challenge Islamophobia and railed against the "scapegoating" of Muslims that was central to the NUS'

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spurious allegations of 'fundamentalism'. A month later the President of Cambridge Union entered the fray, condemning the NUS for its "alarmist faxing mania" that was demonizing Muslim students, making them afraid to articulate themselves as Muslim, and spreading Islamophobia. He also criticized the NUS for singularly failing to offer any practical guidelines on facilitating inter-group harmony. In November 2001 the NUS responded to these criticisms by finally making its first notable stand on Islamophobia. Questions must be raised concerning the credibility of this stand, since the NUS' statement about Islamophobia was tacked onto the end of one of its routine campaigning statements on 'fundamentalism'. The NUS' argument was that attacking 'fundamentalism' was the most effective means of challenging Islamophobia. Thus, it appears more as a justification for its existing and widely criticized policies than a credible stand in its own right.

[11] The NUS' position on Islamophobia – that it can best be challenged by attacking 'fundamentalists' – stands in stark contrast to its implicit acceptance of the idea that any criticism of Zionism or Israel must by definition be Antisemitic (see, for example, NUS 2000).

[12] The motion was the work of a socialist student and a Muslim union officer and member of the university's Friends of Palestine Society.

[13] This occurred in Fowlerstone University, when Union staff entered the prayer room after Friday prayers one afternoon in April 2002 to warn Muslim students that the society would be banned if they were found criticizing Israel or supporting Palestinian self-determination.

[14] See, for example, NUS (1995b), *Campus Watch Calls Summary*. Between 15th October 1994 and 15th October 1995, the NUS' helpline received 381 calls, of which 271 related to "Islamic Extremist Groups (primarily Hizb ut-Tahrir)".

[15] Of course, loyalist Blairite MPs Stephen Twigg, Lorna Fitzsimmons, and Jim Murphy are all former NUS Presidents.

[16] For example, Peter, a Middle Manager (mid 40s) noted during interview (August 1999) that *al Muhajiroun* was defeated by a two-pronged strategy. First, routine administrative practices (e.g. providing full names of guest speakers when booking lecture halls) were rigorously applied to provide the best possible opportunity for harrying and frustrating the group's activities. Second, dialogue was opened with identified 'moderate' Muslim students who then formed their own Islamic Society and left the *al Muhajiroun* –run society memberless.

[17] This view was paralleled by responses from Islamic Society members during the 1998-1999 session. At the time of fieldwork these respondents were generally unwilling to explore the problems of the previous year, possibly due to the excessive levels of surveillance – including Special Branch activity – that had gone hand in hand with *al Muhajiroun* activity on campus. However, the few isolated statements that were made by respondents interspersed unequivocal criticisms of *al Muhajiroun* with references to the previous Islamic Society Executive Committee as having "made a mistake" (Abid, Islamic Society President, mid 30s), or "miscalculated" (Tahmur, Islamic Society member, early 20s) by inviting *al Muhajiroun* onto campus. These respondents clearly had no time for the group but it also seems that they understood its

prior activities on campus as having been a calculated tactical move by the society, rather than necessarily a question of principled conviction in the group's beliefs.

[18] Indeed, it is worth noting that the society only appears to have had one member particularly committed to al Muhajiroun, Mazar – a British Pakistani male in his early twenties. Mazar's fate is unclear; some respondents claimed he was expelled from the university while others claim he left of his own volition in order to get married. Most respondents were, however, in agreement that Mazar was suspended from using Finchton's computer facilities while still a student, on the grounds that he was using email to circulate al Muhajiroun information. By August 1999 I had managed to trace Mazar and, while he remained committed to al Muhajiroun, he also made it clear during a telephone conversation that the brief period of activities by the group on campus could not be understood outside the context of institutionalized Islamophobia.

[19] Peter, Middle Manager, interview in August 1999

[20] For example, Abid (Islamic Society President, mid 30s) noted during interview (June 1999) that two middle managers had recently visited the prayer room during Friday prayers in order to see for themselves the overcrowding problem – students often had to pray outside on the pavement – at its busiest time.

[21] For example, Abid built up such strong links with union staff that he decided to stand in the union elections, only later changing his mind.

[22] This incident was said by a number of former student and staff respondents to have occurred at some time between 1993 and 1994, although nobody was able to provide precise dates or details.

[23] Shabana, former member of administrative staff, aged mid 30s told me of this in May 1999. Story validated by University Chaplain, who noted that as a result of the incident a panic alarm was installed in the prayer room.

[24] A number of former students referred to these and suggested that common topics for discussion included Palestine, with demeaning remarks about there being too many Arabs and Muslims as it is.

[25] Rahila, PhD student (mid 20s at time of leaving in 1994) told me of this during a conversation in the 1996-1997 session.

[26] Latif, former lecturer (now middle manager in Fowlerstone University), aged mid 40s, told me of these incidents during interview in October 1998.

[27] Mohammed, mid 20s, during interview in May 1999.

[28] The exact list of al Muhajiroun infractions from the time is unclear. Multiple respondents agreed that at one Islamic Society event a non-Muslim woman student attending with one of her Muslim friends was told by one individual to go away and return as a hijab wearing Muslim. Peter, a middle manager, alleged a range of other infractions including death threats against a Lesbian union officer and leaflets calling white women "whores" and "bitches". Not one staff or student respondent was able to verify Peter's claims and they must therefore be taken with some skepticism. However it is clear that however we look at it, when Omar Bakri (leader of al Muhajiroun) became active on campus, he brought with him people who were willing to breach the university's codes on appropriate speech at the very least.

[29] For example, during a conversation with Arif (a former President of Greenstone's Islamic Society, aged mid 20s) in March 1999, he feigned an Iranian accent and announced with great irony that Jim Murphy was the "great *Shaitaan*" [literally means 'Devil' or 'Satan', but is not deployed in the hellfire and brimstone terms of western Christianity as a signifier for a figure with typically cloven hooves, but rather as a signifier for mischief making and wrong-doing more generally]. Dropping the satire, Arif proceeded to state that Murphy was "the great Islamophobe", who had pandered to pro-Zionist campaigners in order to initiate a nationwide witch-hunt against Muslim students based on empirically unsustainable allegations of widespread 'fundamentalism'.

[30] Q-News, no. 300, January 1999: 9

[31] In fact, as the union administrator pointed out during a discussion in July 2000, the incident had been merely the latest in a string of one-upmanship moves in which both the Islamic and Jewish societies had been guilty of exactly the same range of infractions against each other (including attempted bannings).

[32] Aisha, Palestinian Muslim PhD student, early 30s, met and interviewed in June 2000. Aisha reported being repeatedly targeted for racist abuse by white undergraduates in her previous hall of residence. These incidents eventually culminated in a violent assault in which pieces of wood – presumably from broken furniture – were used as ersatz missiles against her. The various incidents of harassment took place between September 1999 and April 2000.

[33] Aisha's attackers were not punished in any way, although Aisha was moved to another hall of residence for her own safety.

[34] As it happens, the student agreed with the argument on the leaflet but was a principled critic of *al Muhajiroun*

[35] The memo was sent during the 1997-1998 session, and I was shown copies by two respondents independently of each other – a staff member who described himself only as "an ally in challenging racism", and Abid, a former Islamic Society President who had obtained a copy of the leaflet by attending a university committee on accommodation issues at which the memo was discussed. The memo was sent by a prominent Rabbi with a high media profile who is generally seen as 'liberal' and who has professional links with Greenstone University.

[36] Iannis, a lecturer and Warden of a Greenstone University hall of residence informed me of this during a discussion in July 1999.

[37] For example, reports of militant Zionists attending open lectures and seminars and heckling were provided by a number of respondents, including a Sikh woman lecturer (mid 30s, June 1998). In November 2000 Shaista (early 20s, postgraduate student) noted attending an open lecture on Zionism organised by pro-Zionist students, telling me that her questioning of dominant readings of the Palestine-Israel conflict would mark her as a 'fundamentalist' but noting "Zionists attend our events and heckle, so I'm not going to refrain from expressing my own opinions, even if they do try and turn it into another claim of 'the fundamentalists are at it again'. You can't have it both ways".

[38] For example, during the 1996-1997 session, militant Zionists issued a death threat against former Islamic Society President Arif. In the 2001-2002 session, Laila, an Arab member of lecturing staff in her 40s, also reported to me that she had been threatened and harassed for her public support for the cause of Palestinian self-determination.

[39] As recently as the 1997-1998 session (during my initial pre-fieldwork fact-finding) the university was displaying posters listing dates of Jewish festivals and informing Jewish students of the correct procedure in order to gain exemptions from examinations and assessments on those dates. In May 2000 I requested a copy of the poster from the university and was first told that it had never existed, and then that it had existed but been lost a long time ago during an upgrade to the computer systems. When I expressed my sadness at this and described the poster as 'good practice' rather than an example of the racialisation of university provisions, I was told that one of the non-existent posters would be dispatched to me immediately. I received it the following morning, complete with a compliments slip.

[40] As Arif noted during interview, "back in 1994 we campaigned to have rights for exam exemption and we were told many times they were looking at it...They were looking at it and many of our Jewish colleagues were being exempted from their exams so we demanded an exemption and weren't given one. This year [1998-1999] when a Muslim got elected on the executive via all channels within the University and after a short while they did exempt us but on certain conditions"

[41] I can be absolutely certain of this since the Warden provided the date and time of the lecture, named the course of which the lecture was a part, and clearly described the non-existent Muslim student in question. I had links with staff and students involved in the course and it took me all of three hours to verify beyond any doubt that no such incident had occurred and that the student against whom the allegation was made did not even exist.

[42] This accusation was made to me in front of the Deputy Warden of the hall one evening during March 2000.

[43] All hall staff knew that I am a Muslim.

[44] The apology was eventually issued in May 2000.

[45] Athena, Greek respondent aged early 20s, Costas, Greek respondent aged mid 20s, and Francesco, Italian respondent aged early 30s were all on the selection panel and independently informed me of this following interviews.

[46] During the 1999-2000 academic session a guest *Khatib* (Syrian, male, late 30s) spoke to worshippers at *jummah* on a number of occasions. On one occasion (March 2000) he referred to recent conflicts involving Muslims across the globe, and described Muslims who had attacked Churches in Indonesia as "heroes" and condemned those who described them as "terrorists".

[47] For example, during the 1997-1998 academic session I was introduced in one of Greenstone's Kebab houses to a local member of *al Muhajiroun* who proceeded to describe as a strategy for establishing *Khalifah* emigration to Pakistan in order to join the Army and participate in a pro-Islamist coup against the then President Nawaz Sharif. During the following academic session, an *al Muhajiroun* stall situated within

walking distance of the university displayed literature primarily concerned with establishing *Khilafah* and

nothing of an inciteful nature. When I engaged those running the stall in conversation they expounded a

rather fanciful strategy involving establishing *Khilafah* in Pakistan and signing peace treaties with China

and Russia in order to liberate occupied Muslim lands such as Chechnya.

[48] 'News: get your Akhtar-gether', James Birchall, *Varsity*, 19th October 2001

[49] Queen Mary and Westfield, SOAS, and Greenstone University are repeatedly named in discussions of

'fundamentalist' activities, presumably in the dearth of reliable new empirical data.

[50] See, for example, 'Call to arms' (Abul Taher, *The Guardian* 16th May 2000). Based on the decision of

three students of Queen Mary and Westfield College to withdraw from their studies and train for *jihad*,

Taher argues that "students as young as 16 are known to have been recruited for military training abroad,

often without their parents knowing anything about it". From my own fieldwork experiences I find two

problems in particular emerging from reports such as this. First, I maintain that it is most definitely not the

case that *mujahideen* recruitment is a noteworthy trend in British universities. Second, during my fieldwork

I encountered a significant number of students who had served in the armies of secular states such as

Israel and Turkey already noted for human rights abuses. The only conceivable reason why practicing

Muslims should be demonized as potential *mujahideen* on the very weakest of grounds without similar

attention being drawn to former members of the IDF and Turkish army (for example) is racism.

[51] Letter from Professor Hill to Lee Federman, General Secretary of LSE Students Union and LSE Islamic

Society, sourced from LSE News and Views Volume 24 No. 9, 5th March 2001.

[52] At this point it may also be useful to invoke, as an exemplar of the contested nature of 'fundamentalism',

a *khutba* given in Finchton University in which the *khatib* argued that a 'fundamentalist' Muslim is not one

who engages in acts of terror, tyranny, oppression, or hypocrisy, but rather one who holds fast to the

fundamentals of Islam and who lives a good life according to these principles and *challenges* those who

commit such acts. Neither of these definitions can extend our understanding of 'fundamentalism', nor can

they be understood as participants in a single discursive enterprise. Rather, they are rival interlocutions

that each reflect opposing conceptions of society, power, and social relations.

Chapter 5 – Antisemitism and Islamophobia on campus: racialising the university (2)

1 Introduction

Clearly, it is extremely difficult to effect any convincing separation between recent campaigns against Muslim student 'fundamentalism' and Islamophobia. On the basis of the analysis extended in chapter four, both appear to valorise and authorise each other. Within this context, it is also significant that political activities by Muslim students in universities like Finchton and Greenstone which are branded and responded to as instances of 'fundamentalism' and 'extremism' apparently have far more to do with resistance against racism and Islamophobia than with any innate predilection for hate crimes and terrorism on the part of Muslims.

This reading raises an important paradox in the ways in which we conceptualise racism. It is clear that the concept of student 'fundamentalism' in Britain has been so successful in capturing the popular imagination because of its investment with common racist ideas. However, it is also clear that the principle justification for Islamophobic witch-hunts across the HE sector has been the argument that it is in fact the Muslims who are opposed to tolerance and plural harmony. Thus the assumed essential anti-modern, anti-western nature of Islam is reaffirmed as racialised campaigning against political activities by Muslim students is represented as a synonym for the protection of liberal tolerance in general and of other minority group members in particular.

This paradox has become most clearly manifested in student debates on the Palestine-Israel conflict. In perhaps the most famous of these, a motion was tabled at Greenstone Students' Union in February 2002. This led to a fierce debate over whether or not criticism of Zionism is tantamount to Antisemitism. At the heart of the debate were two intertwined questions. First, there were assumptions concerning

the assumed inherent predisposition of Muslim students towards Antisemitism which, it was assumed, had led Greenstone's Islamic Society to attempt banning the university's Jewish Society. Second, the debates posed far-reaching questions relating to racism and intolerance, since it was widely assumed that the right of Muslim students to campaign in support of Palestinian rights would impinge on the right of Jewish students to extend their support to Israel. More worrying still, it was widely claimed that permitting such debates was itself an act of Antisemitism. As a consequence of this, it is clear that how we understand recent political contests involving Muslim and Jewish students holds the key not only to understanding the Islamic 'fundamentalism' campaigned against with such regularity by bodies as diverse as the National Union of Students and the BNP, but also that it somehow also holds the key to our understanding of racism and Equal Opportunities.

2 Muslim students and Antisemitism

The attitudes of Muslim students towards their Jewish peers appear to have become a kind of litmus test for the characterisation of Muslims as 'fundamentalist'. Such questions have most commonly been approached through a consideration of the activities of groups such as *al Muhajiroun* and *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, who are not only held to advocate the complete destruction of Israel but also to incite and perpetrate crimes of violence against Jewish students in particular. The fallout from this method of characterising Muslims has not only been felt by Muslim students but also by staff, as was attested in 1996 by organised campaigning to sack a Muslim lecturer from his post in the University of Edinburgh for allegedly holding anti-Israeli views, even though these views were apparently never communicated to students, and even though the lecturer in question was a member of a *Sufi* order rather than a radical Islamist cell[1][2].

In this chapter I find it useful to turn to a closer reading of tension between Muslim and Jewish students, focusing on political disagreements over the Palestine-Israel

conflict in Greenstone University. This move is not only important given the emphasis on characterising Muslim students as 'extremist' on the basis of their alleged inherent hostility toward Jewish students, but also because of a curious paradox that emerged during my fieldwork. For the only verifiable instance of Muslim Antisemitism that I was able to uncover involved unsubstantiated boasts concerning involvement in the beating up of a Jewish student on account of his support for Israel. These boasts were made by an employee of a London-based university with specific Equal Opportunities related responsibilities, as we shall see presently. What is perhaps most significant about this incident, however, is that far from being a radical Islamist, the staff member concerned is a non-practising Muslim who has also expressed Islamophobia, racism, and sexism in front of myself and other witnesses. Clearly, even this incident challenges the assumption that we can consider Muslim-Jewish tensions on campus only from the perspective of Antisemitism. As a consequence, I now turn to a closer reading of such tensions in Greenstone University in order to disentangle questions of Antisemitism and Islamophobia from political disputes over Palestinian rights.

2.1 Campaigning for Palestinian self-determination in Greenstone University

The most recent and best publicised of these incidents occurred in Greenstone University during the 2001-2002 academic session. This centred on the tabling of a motion supporting Palestinian rights in Greenstone Union. Opponents of the motion claimed that it was nothing if not a direct throwback to alleged Antisemitic activities by the Islamic Society over half a decade earlier and suggested that the incident could most fruitfully be understood as an Antisemitic plot by the Islamic Society to ban the Jewish Society. Supporters of Israel were successful in mobilising enough students to defeat the motion, but not before observers had been treated to the oxymoronic vision of a number of particularly vocal campaigners picketing outside the Students' Union building in specially printed T-shirts that hurled to the four winds the campaigning slogan "Scared to be Jewish". Opponents of the motion left

observers in no doubt as to what was happening: the university was not only witnessing the resurfacing of inherent Muslim Antisemitism but also the resurfacing of the blood libel itself. Thus, protests against the killing of civilians (including children) by the IDF were represented as attempts to brand Jewish students "baby killers"[3]. According to the Board of Deputies, the motion "seeks to deny to Jewish students their civil rights, religious identity and equal treatment"[4]

Such responses to the motion combined two threads that have become increasingly recurrent in writings by pro-Zionists and right-ist journalists. The first of these is the idea that Islamophobia is something illusory that Muslims claim to suffer in order to perpetuate Antisemitism by representing Jews as "infernally clever...aggressors" and Muslims as "the victims" (David Aaronovitch, 'Everybody wants to be a victim', The Independent 16th October 2001). Among the more offensive expositions of this argument occurs in Robert Jancu's 'Wanted by the Arabs – "a Holocaust" ' (Judaism 38, 2, Spring 1989). Variations on this theme often attempt to argue that criticism of Israeli treatment of Palestinians is completely disproportionate to Israel's misdeeds and constitutes a form of racism. The second is the notion that Antisemitism is somehow hard-wired into Muslims. This argument has frequently involved attempts to parallel Arab perspectives on the occupation with Nazism, as Habibi (1988) notes. In writings on campus debates of the Palestine-Israel conflict this argument is manifested in attempts to portray Muslims as the ringleaders of what is assumed to be the necessarily Antisemitic act of criticising Israel (Lucas 1985). This argument coincides with increasing academic and journalistic interest in Muslim attitudes towards Jews (Taji-Farouki 2000, for example).

The implications of this approach became clear from the campaign against the Palestinian rights motion in Greenstone University. First, we were implicitly asked to assume that this incident was in fact nothing more than the predictable 'resurfacing' of inherent Muslim Antisemitism. Second, on the back of this logic, we were being asked to assume that it was appropriate to suspend consideration of Muslim and

Palestinian rights in order to protect Jewish students from the Antisemitic attack launched against them by Greenstone's Islamic Society. Or, to put it another way, we were being asked to assume that Antisemitism is inherent to Muslims and that as a consequence of this there is also a natural and inescapable tension between challenging Antisemitism and challenging Islamophobia. In this way, Muslim student attitudes towards the question of Palestinian rights become not only the primary indicator of the extent to which we can assume 'fundamentalist' infiltration of student Islamic societies but also the faultline in an assumed zero-sum face off between two distinct racial groups and, by extension, between the rights that members of each group can safely be permitted to exercise. Thus the Palestinian rights motion tabled at Greenstone University's Students' Union in February 2002 is not merely of peripheral interest in discussions about Muslim students in British universities. For, in order to test what we have discovered about Muslim students, it is first necessary to discern whether or not Muslim Antisemitism lay behind the incident.

2.2 Muslim students and the Palestinian rights motion

Debates surrounding the Greenstone motion highlighted broader questions of context. The motion's advocates predicated their case around implicit appeals to a long history of student anti-racist activism including anti-Apartheid campaigning and 'no-platform' campaigning that, as Greenstone's Vice-Chancellor noted, was often directed against supporters of Zionism during the 1980s[5]. For their part, the motion's opponents sought to pre-empt discussions of Israeli state racism against Palestinians by emphasising the problem of Antisemitism. Thus, the Greenstone motion was represented as merely one among a number of similar campaigns taking place in universities up and down the country. Since these campaigns held the potential to disrupt pro-Israeli political activities by Jewish students, it was claimed that the motions were inescapably Antisemitic. Underpinning these claims were inferences drawn from the large sizes of Greenstone's Jewish and Islamic societies which

meant, respectively, that challenges to the position of this "flagship" Jewish Society would be translated into a weakened position for Jewish students elsewhere and that a strengthening of Greenstone's Islamic Society would result in increased levels of Antisemitism across the country as well as being related to broader problems of radical Islamist activity among students.

These contrasting approaches to the Greenstone motion leave us at something of an impasse in extending our understanding of the incident, for it is clear that suggestions of a zero-sum face-off between Jews and Muslims were based on an uncritical acceptance of the views of those who opposed the motion. Absent from these readings is any meaningful consideration either of the views and political claims of the motion's supporters. As such it is extremely difficult even to discern the actual level of Muslim student involvement in the motion, since discussions of the incident have been overshadowed by assumptions concerning the supposed inherent Antisemitism of Muslims and polemical claims linking this antiracist campaign with Muslim power, organised Antisemitism, and radical Islamist activities.

These difficulties are exacerbated by the fact that the Greenstone motion was by far the most widely publicised motion on the Palestine-Israel conflict in recent years. A number of comparable motions (both pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian self-determination) were proposed (and even passed) in universities across the country during the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 academic sessions. However, few if any of these motions received anything like the level of media attention as the Greenstone motion. For example, a pro-Israeli motion was passed in Fowlerstone Union during the 2001-2002 session and resulted in immediate warnings to the Islamic Society that any criticism of Israeli policies would result in the society's banning. This motion went completely unreported in even the local student media, and Muslim students in Fowlerstone University reported that they only learned of it when union staff attended the prayer room following a *jummah* prayer in April in order to notify them of restrictions on their right to support the cause of Palestinian self-determination. In

contrast to this, the case of UMIST's Professor Mona Baker – who removed Israeli academics from the editorial board of a journal in support of an academic boycott of Israeli institutions – received intensive media coverage, eventually culminating in a formal UMIST investigation into Professor Baker's actions and scrutiny of her claims that the academics were not removed from involvement in the journal because they were Jewish and Israeli but simply because of the organisations they worked for. On the other hand, a pro-Palestinian rights motion was passed by students in the University of East London during the 2002-2003 session but received little 'mainstream' national press coverage. The UEL motion did, however, receive significant coverage in Jewish newspapers[6], frequently accompanied by claims that UEL students' support for Palestinian self-determination would increase Antisemitism[7] and even that they were "supporting suicide bombing"[8]. Not only were there noteworthy differences between media responses to motions in institutions such as UEL or Fowlerstone University and Greenstone, but it was also clear that the Greenstone incident stood out as a consequence of attempts to represent it as an example of Muslim plotting.

The key to understanding these contrasting responses to motions on the Palestine-Israel dispute lies in a closer reading of Muslim student involvement in surrounding debates. Fowlerstone's pro-Israeli motion was passed before the Islamic Society had even realised what was happening or how Muslim students would be affected, and therefore met with no visible mobilisation on the part of Muslims. The UEL motion in support of Palestinian rights was comfortably passed without visible large-scale mobilisation of Muslim students, and the bulk of the visible campaigning in support of the motion was carried out by white non-Muslim campaigners. In contrast, Muslim students were involved in extremely visible campaigning in support of the Greenstone motion. From a purely superficial reading of the incident, then, it appears that characterisation of the Greenstone motion as Muslim Antisemitism emerges from the apparent scandal of a visible Muslim presence and buys into racialised scaremongering about Muslims.

This difficulty is also manifested in the broader difficulties of characterising the Greenstone motion as a Muslim-led incident. Given the widespread polemical claims of 'fundamentalist' Antisemitic activities by the Islamic Society, it is rather surprising to discover that the Palestinian rights motion bore no traces of radical Islamism. Islamist activities in British universities tend to focus on notions of self-determination which emphasise the role of Islam in the running of the state, dispute the legitimacy of colonial-legacy nation states in the traditional heartlands of Islam, and advocate first and foremost the establishment of *Khalifah*. By contrast, the Greenstone motion did not seek to establish an independent Palestine as a province of some nascent Islamic state, but rather to campaign in support of a range of basic, secular human rights for Palestinians including meaningful self-determination for Arafat's still-born and secular Palestinian Authority. Indeed, the Greenstone motion contained no use of Islamic metaphors whatsoever, instead emphasising a liberal notion of human rights.

To these difficulties we must also add an awareness of the mendacity of characterising the motion as an instance of radical Islamist plotting by the Islamic Society. Throughout my fieldwork it became patently clear that participating in formal student politics is not necessarily something that many Islamists are entirely comfortable with, and that there were those of *Salafi* and *al Muhajiroun* persuasion within universities such as Greenstone who were completely opposed to the very idea of participating in students union politics[9]. Indeed, Sarah Glynn's study of Muslim political mobilisation is configured around a recognition that groups such as *al Muhajiroun* actually advocate Muslim non-participation in local and general elections (Glynn 2002). Clearly, any suggestion that radical Islamists are at all likely to table union motions contradicts not only broader assumptions concerning Muslim ritual crime in universities – as centring primarily on assault and sexual crimes – but also all reasonable evidence.

This is significant since, despite claims to the contrary by campaigners against the motion, Greenstone's Islamic Society had not become involved in campaigns surrounding the Palestinian rights until a surprisingly late stage. The roots of the motion lay in an alliance between socialist students and the university's Friends of Palestine Society. While it is the case that a Muslim member of the Friends of Palestine Society was involved in the tabling of the motion, it is significant that the student concerned was a former, but not a current, member of the Islamic Society. The other driving figure behind the motion was a white socialist student. From this it is difficult to conclude that the motion was in fact an example of Antisemitic plotting by Greenstone's Islamic Society. In fact, the Islamic Society did support the motion but only began significant mobilisation of Muslim students once it had entered the public domain and was already being debated across the campus by diverse student groups. This obvious empirical difficulty in allegations of Islamic Society Antisemitism illustrates the difficulties of assuming that the character of the Palestinian rights campaign (as essentially Antisemitic) can be established through the political activity of Muslim students.

2.3 Muslim students and Palestinian rights campaigns in context

In the wake of these empirical difficulties, opponents of the Palestinian rights motion came to increasingly rely on the argument that, since the Islamic Society had been involved in an earlier motion supporting Palestine and criticising the Jewish Society's Zionist activities, then the latest incident could be nothing if not a direct throwback to this earlier, assumed Antisemitic, motion. This account also flounders on empirical grounds. For the two motions were separated by over half a decade in an institution characterised by regular student turnover. At the time of the 1996 motion the majority of Greenstone's 2002 Islamic Society leadership had not yet sat their GCSE examinations. Moreover, there is no reliable data to support the assumption that the Islamic Society – run by students on a part-time and often informal basis –

possessed sufficiently sophisticated administrative structures as to engender institutional memory of an incident that had taken place several cohorts of students earlier. This point is particularly important since even the students' union itself claimed not to have a copy of the 1996 motion on file.

Despite these difficulties, the idea that Greenstone's Palestinian rights motion was nothing if not a manifestation of Muslim Antisemitism came to dominate surrounding debates. The only way in which it was possible to ground such assertions lay in the assumption that large scale Muslim mobilisation alone can be considered decisive in determining the character of the campaign in terms of intent (to deny Jewish students free speech) and nature (inherently Antisemitic). The conceptual glue that holds this argument together is the idea that there must be something inherent to Muslims capable of determining the nature of their political activities and of linking separate events separated by temporal and informational chasms. In other words, before we have even been able to adequately demonstrate whether or not the Greenstone motion was an example of Islamic Society Antisemitism, there are strong reasons to suspect the working of Islamophobia in opposition to the motion.

Prioritising an essential reading of Muslim identities (and assumed inherent Muslim traits such as Antisemitism) is not, however, the only way of reading the Greenstone incident. In fact, it is clear that even the earlier 1996 motion occurred in a context marked by ongoing racialised campaigns against Islamic 'fundamentalism' in universities. Of particular significance were government guidelines issued the previous year which articulated stringent guidelines on forms of student political activities deemed acceptable (DfEE 1995). Under the terms of these guidelines, acceptable campaigning would be restricted to issues directly affecting student society members in their capacity as students of a particular college or university, with suitable exemplars cited as including campaigns for crèche places and improved streetlighting around campuses. These guidelines were invoked in the CVCP's report on *Extremism and Intolerance on Campus* (1998) and are widely perceived as

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having been particularly effective in silencing pro-Palestinian campaigning as well as sustaining racialised interventions against Islamic 'fundamentalism' on campus. Greenstone's 1996 Palestinian rights motion is more fruitfully located within this context rather than read as simply another manifestation of the assumed inherent capacity of Muslims for Antisemitism. It was frequently claimed, however, that the motion was simply an attempt by the Islamic Society to ban the university's Jewish Society. Indeed, this view was expressed to me during interview by Greenstone's Vice-Chancellor[10]. The difficulties of this reading of the incident were raised during interview by the union's main administrator, who claimed that this had merely been the latest in a series of running engagements between supporters of Israel and advocates of Palestinian rights over a number of years and which had seen both sides guilty of largely identical infractions against each other[11].

2.4 Palestinian rights; Muslim rights

It is thus significant to note that the 1996 motion did not propose to ban the Jewish Society. The motion actually sought to identify Zionism with racism – which, as Greenstone's Vice-Chancellor reminded me, was not a particularly novel move[12] – and from this basis to propose a ban on Zionist activities by student societies. This strategy did not only bear echoes of campaigns against Islamic 'fundamentalist' students and supporters of Palestinian rights, but it was also perfectly acceptable if read within the terms of the DfEE's 1995 *Guidelines to Students' Unions*. Thus, the 1996 motion did not so much demonstrate the incoherence of accommodating both Muslim and Jewish student needs in HEIs, but rather demonstrated the racialised discrepancies between approaches towards supporters of Israel and Zionists and advocates of Palestinian rights and Islamists.

In a very similar vein, *al Muhajiroun* stickers appeared in Greenstone Union building during the 1998-1999 academic session. These were politicised across campus as

an example of radical Islamist Antisemitism and were reported in the student newspaper as an indication of the threat to campus harmony posed by a group with links to an international network of Islamist terrorists. However, the stickers in question attacked the National Union of Students rather than Jewish students, asserting that the NUS was guilty of pandering to Zionism. In other words, it was a direct attack against the NUS' perceived partisanship and Islamophobia rather than a clear instance of Antisemitism and Homophobia, and the partisanship it referred to centred on lobbying of the NUS to strengthen its anti-'fundamentalist' campaigns by Israeli supporters and groups such as Outrage.

Greenstone's 2002 Palestinian rights motion also centred on similar racialised inequalities. It should be noted that the motion was tabled only three months after the National Union of Students made its first ever noteworthy stand against Islamophobia in its annual conference. This stand took the form of a statement condemning Islamophobia that was appended to yet another motion committing the NUS to fighting against 'fundamentalist' Islamic infiltration of universities. This campaign marked a significant *volte face* on the part of the NUS, which had only two months earlier responded to the rising tide of Islamophobic hate crimes that greeted the September 11th attacks by issuing yet more warnings of Islamic 'fundamentalism'. As a consequence of this the NUS was attacked by Swanton University Students' Union in a public statement for being irresponsible by targeting Muslim students on the basis of empirically unsound warnings of 'fundamentalism'. These criticisms were echoed by the President of Cambridge Union, who condemned the NUS for pandering to racist scaremongering about 'fundamentalist' activities while singularly failing to offer any practical guidance on the facilitation of harmonious inter-group relations[13]. It seems plausible that these public criticisms – the first of their kind targeting NUS Islamophobia – played a role in the NUS' about turn on the question of Islamophobia. However, the Union of Jewish Students also claims some responsibility for the NUS' 'anti-Islamophobia' campaign (Sakol/UJS 2001). What emerges most forcefully from this campaign against Islamophobia is that it appears

to have been tagged onto the back of yet more scaremongering about Islamic 'fundamentalism' as much as a justification for the NUS' continued campaigning against the 'fundamentalists' as a stand against Islamophobia. In practice, therefore, the NUS' stance on Islamophobia is at best ambiguous, for it appears to hold that it is not only possible but desirable to condemn the articulation of Islam with politics while still managing to effectively challenge Islamophobia. This definition of Islamophobia stands in stark contrast to the NUS' definition of Antisemitism. The NUS has been at the forefront of attempts to redefine Antisemitism in such a way as to render all criticisms of Zionism and Israel Antisemitic. The difficulties of adopting contradictory approaches towards Islamophobia and Antisemitism cannot be overlooked as major contributing factors to the Greenstone University Palestinian rights motion of February 2002.

The significance of this racialised discrepancy between the NUS' definitions of Islamophobia and Antisemitism is illustrated by the wording of the motion. Just as the 1996 motion highlighted racialised discrepancies in approaches towards Islamism and Zionism and, by implication, towards Islamophobia and Antisemitsm, the lynchpin of the 2002 motion was the assertion that it is not necessarily Antisemitic to engage in principled political criticism of Israel and Zionism. This again suggests that Greenstone's 2002 Palestinian rights motion should not be seen as a simple conflict between two incompatible ethnic or racial groups (Muslims and Jews) any more than it should be seen as an example of Islamic 'fundamentalism'. Rather, Palestinian rights campaigners were simply seeking to exercise the same right to free speech – support for Palestinian self-determination – already exercised by Greenstone's Jewish Society, which has enshrined its support for Zionism and Israel in its constitution. By mobilising in support of Palestinian rights in this way, campaigners were not advocating the complete destruction of Israel or the silencing of the Jewish Society. For the conflict between Palestinian rights campaigners and supporters of Israel in Greenstone University did not mark a zero-sum face-off between inescapably Antisemitic advocates of an Islamic order and Jewish defenders of

tolerance and victims of persecution. Rather, it was through this conflict that tensions arising from the NUS' incoherent and racialised approach to equal opportunities were being played out. As a consequence, it is worth turning to a closer consideration of the NUS' definition of Antisemitism before re-reading the emergence of conflict between Muslim and Jewish students in Greenstone University.

3 Islamophobia, Antisemitism

One way of reading Greenstone's Palestinian rights motion is to view it as a manifestation of the assumed inherent capacity of Muslims for Antisemitism. Thus, campaigners' references to the murder of civilians (including children) by members of the IDF were disingenuously represented as attempts to brand Jewish students as "baby killers" during debates surrounding the motion[14]. This argument enjoys continued popularity among supporters of Zionism. For example, Ariel Sharon – a man wont to compare Arabs with Hitler[15] – caused further outrage when he justified attempts to coax French Jews to Israel through the argument that Antisemitism is inherent to Arabs[16]. The difficulties of this approach are difficult to ignore. In fact, it is clear that the Greenstone Palestinian rights motion was not Antisemitic. It involved the simple expression of support for Palestinian self-determination based on political principle. However, it is clear that accounting for the motion as nothing more than an instance of essential Muslim Antisemitism serves two purposes. First, it serves to elide any consideration of the contingency of the political itself since it leaves us only able to consider political campaigning in support of Palestine or Israel in terms of assumed primordial ethnic and essential cultural determinants. Second, it results in increased levels of Islamophobia in order to defend against Antisemitism.

These difficulties are in fact functions of the definitions of Islamophobia and Antisemitism that were being contested in debates surrounding Greenstone University's Palestinian rights motion. At stake was not whether or not Antisemitism

was introduced to campus through the proxy of support for Palestinian self-determination. In fact, the lynchpin of the case in support of the motion was the claim that it is not Antisemitic to criticise Israeli treatment of the Palestinians. At the same time, opposition to the motion was only coherent if one first bought into the idea that any criticism of Israel or Zionism is by definition Antisemitic.

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3.1 Islamophobia and Antisemitism, a comparative perspective

Since it is clear that at stake in the Greenstone Palestinian rights motion were contrasting definitions of Islamophobia and Antisemitism, it is interesting to consider parallels between these two manifestations of racialised discourse. One of the biggest difficulties surrounding the surrounding the study of Muslims in Britain emerges from contrasting approaches towards Islamophobia and other forms of racialised discourse. It is particularly noteworthy that while Jews are protected under the Race Relations Act (1976), Muslims have been repeatedly forced to mobilise for access to even the vaguest of concessions to legal protection. Such difficulties are exacerbated by inadequate consideration of Antisemitism in much of the literature on racism (Solomos & Back 2000: 10) and the emerging literature on recent racist violence in Europe has largely ignored Antisemitism (Iganski 1999). We should therefore not be too shocked to learn that the National Union of Students has adopted contradictory approaches to Islamophobia and Antisemitism. While the NUS has actively campaigned against political projects that articulate Islam with politics, its approach to Antisemitism has increasingly centred on the notion that any criticism of political projects that articulate Judaism with politics is by definition Antisemitic. As a consequence we find ourselves in the paradoxical position that, while Antisemitism is frequently elided from studies of racialised discourse more broadly, it is often possible to represent Islam and Muslims without fear of sanction in ways that would be deemed Antisemitic if applied to Jews and Judaism (Hussein 2002: 244, Said 1997: xi-xii, Shaheen 2001: 6, 9).

Notwithstanding these complicating factors – and the important contextual differences between traditional Antisemitism emerging parallel to modernity and contemporary Islamophobia emerging from the de-centring of the west – it is possible to draw parallels between Antisemitism and Islamophobia, as we have already seen. For example, Adorno and Horkheimer's suggestion that "the gentile sees equality, humanity, in his difference from the Jew, but this induces a feeling of antagonism and alien being" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2000: 211) could equally be applied to Islamophobia. Likewise, 'Arab' responses to Israeli comparisons between Arabs, Muslims, and Nazis frequently hinge on locating Antisemitism as a legacy of the European enlightenment and racist colonial subjugation (see, for example, Habibi 1998), while there is a simultaneous recognition of the association between Zionnism and Orientalist discourse of colonisation. From this we can only infer that, despite the obvious contextual differences between Antisemitism and Islamophobia – the latter emerging in the period following independence from racist colonial subjugation – both emerge from the hegemonic project of the West. Before we can proceed to discuss conflicts between Muslim and Jewish students in Greenstone University relating to Antisemitism, it is therefore useful to consider how we can best understand Antisemitism and Islamophobia.

Both are based on the assumption that the world is divided into quite distinct groups that are not only frequently identifiable as such through certain cosmetic features (*kippa, hijab...*) but also through a series of behavioural traits (Muslim and Jewish ritual crime, for example) that are assumed to be manifestations of distinctive group identity. Or, to put it slightly differently, both Antisemitism and Islamophobia are forms of racialised discourse. Islamophobia and contemporary forms of Antisemitism are cultural rather than biological forms of racism and avoid "essentialist understandings of primitiveness and permanent inferiority...[by] defining culture as a way of life ... [and pathologising] 'racial' groups in terms of their cultural tendencies (e.g. as lazy, dangerous, etc.), while at the same time encouraging mobile individuals

to shed cultural impediments and assimilate into the dominant culture" (Durrheim and Dixon 2001: 93).

3.2 "Antizionism" as Antisemitism

Given the obvious parallels between Islamophobia and Antisemitism it is clearly important to consider the usefulness of the definition of the contested definition of Antisemitism that was so central to the Greenstone motion. For the lynchpin of the Palestinian rights motion was that it is not Antisemitic to criticise Israel or Zionism, while the motion's opponents were insistent that such criticisms are by definition Antisemitic. Clearly there is some value in this definition of Antisemitism. That criticisms of Zionism can be Antisemitic is inescapable. After all, in the wake of the 1939-1945 imperial wars, official British anti-Zionist propaganda involved representing those fighting for the Jewish state as being infernally cunning and without scruple (Kochavi 2001: 293 – 308). Clearly, criticism of Zionism can be Antisemitic just as criticism of Islamism can be Islamophobic. Nevertheless, the contention that all criticism of Zionism is by definition Antisemitic does not logically follow from this. This point is particularly important in a comparative context since, while the NUS (2000) has demonstrated its weddedness to the idea that all criticisms of Zionism are Antisemitic, it remains convinced that no definition of Islamophobia should preclude campaigning against politics predicated around appeals to Islamic metaphors. The idea that one cannot criticise Israel or Zionism without being considered Antisemitic is thus worthy of further exploration.

A useful acid test of whether or not particular criticisms of a given political project can be considered unacceptable would be to consider the ways in which identities are conceptualised within such criticisms. For example, since dominant student campaigning against Islamist activities plays to racialised pathologies of Muslim and ethnicised minority youth while extending an essentialist reading of Muslim identities.

By the same standard it would be both logical and consistent to suggest that if a particular criticism of Zionism or Israel presupposes an essential Jewishness, then it can best be understood as Antisemitic. For example, if particular Israeli state practices identified as objects of concern are characterised as manifestations of essential Jewishness more broadly, then it is clear that we are dealing with Antisemitism rather than acceptable principled criticism.

This definition of Antisemitism raises a peculiar tension within the argument that all criticisms of Zionism and Israel are by definition Antisemitic. For it is clear that this argument is based on the logics of essentialism. Thus, essential Zionism and essential Israel are manifestations of some assumed essential Jewishness. It is only through these logics of essentialism that opponents of the Greenstone Palestinian rights motion were able to argue that campaigning literature referring to the killing of Palestinian children by Ariel Sharon (Sabra and Chatila were cited by the campaigners) and the IDF (numerous examples were offered) were in fact attempts to describe all Jews as "baby killers". Although it would be ridiculous to suggest that Antisemitism not once surfaced among supporters of the Palestinian rights motion, it is clear that the characterisation of the motion as Antisemitic per se is only sustainable within the extremely problematic logics of essentialism. The difficulties of accepting such logics are inescapable, as the Islamic Human Rights Commission (2000) has noted. Any attempt to view essential Zionism as a natural manifestation of essential Jewishness elides difference among Jews, resulting in the assumption that Jewish critics of Israeli policy are "self-hating Jews", as well as eliding difference among and between Zionists, some of whom appeal to Zionism in order to justify ethnic cleansing while others appeal to more secular readings of Zionism in advocating peaceful solution with the Palestinians.

A parallel problem emerging from this essentialism is that it is clear we are being asked to find a racialised reading of political behaviour credible. There is nothing particularly novel about this move. For example, Thatcherism was posited as a

natural reflection of essential Englishness. As a consequence of this, it is most fruitful to locate campaigning to conflate criticism of Zionism with Antisemitism in Greenstone University within the context of the consolidation of a very specific political project. Thus claims that the Palestinian rights motion was by its very definition Antisemitic had far more to do with the preoccupations of supporters of Zionism than with anything inherent to Jewish and Muslim students or the content of the motion itself. However, the wider effects of circulating a racialised reading of political behaviour are worthy of further consideration.

3.3 Institutionalising racialisation in Greenstone University

The notion that any criticism of Zionism or Israel is by definition Antisemitic is clearly based on racialised logics. Although these logics were not formally codified in Greenstone's charter and statutes, this does not amount to compelling evidence against their institutionalisation within the secular, liberal institution that is Greenstone University. In order to explore this it is first necessary to explore what I mean by institutionalisation. One of the most striking features of debates surrounding the Greenstone Palestinian rights motion was the implicit assumption that this liberal institution was by nature neutral and impartial and that permitting the continuation of partisan debates in support of Palestinian rights would disrupt that very impartiality. Such an argument depends largely on a disaggregated reading of the institution itself as, in the final analysis, little more than a morally and politically neutral physical fabric within which a range of activities capable of maintaining or subverting its essential neutrality can take place. Assumptions such as this cannot be convincing, and not merely because of the various tropes invested in the construction of university histories and identities. I therefore find it more useful to theorise the institution of Greenstone University as a text which makes itself available for the theorisation of numerous possibilities of knowing while also becoming a slate on which specific knowledges can be written in specific ways through specific

practices[17]. Thus, contrary to the impression one often gains from studies of institutional power relations, the institution is not merely a site within which relations of power are played out, but is rather a locus of such exercises. The institution is not merely a place for work or study but also a means of becoming.

In other words, like all other institutions, Greenstone University diagnoses, classifies, interrogates, and examines various forms of knowledge through its habitualised practices. These routinised interventions are manifestations of the knowledges and normalising power relations inscribed in the institutionalisation of Greenstone University. Thus, what gives Greenstone its particular identity as Greenstone University is not simply its name, staff, courses offered, or even its geographical location. What gives Greenstone University its particularity is a function of the ways in which the power-knowledge dualism have been and continue to be exercised through its routine professional practices; activities that normalise members of the institution to the assumed 'realities' of life in the institution.

As a consequence of this, when we speak of the institutionalisation of particular discourses – let us exemplify racism – within an institution such as Greenstone, we are not merely speaking of the continuation of practices that betray the presence of an individual or collective way of doing things that is racist. Rather, such questions go to the very heart of institutional identity. Institutionalised practices therefore reflect a juncture between views that are hegemonic in society and within a particular institution. They become institutionalised through their habitualisation. Thus, even though a university can articulate Equal Opportunities policies and the like, it is through the daily rituals of life in the institution that institutionalised racism will become manifested. As a consequence, it is perfectly plausible for the racialised logics underpinning the 'Antizionism=Antisemitism' argument to be institutionalised within Greenstone University even if they are not formally codified through institutional statute.

Indicators of the hegemony of these racialised logics in Greenstone University can be found in institutional readings of political contests involving Jewish and Muslim students. For example, during a students' union Antiracism week in 1999-2000, the Islamic Society organised an information stand condemning a range of manifestations of racialised discourse – including racism carried out by Muslims under the auspices of the Nation of Islam. However, following rabble-rousing at the stand by a number of militant Zionists, rumours swiftly spread across the campus that the Islamic Society was distributing Antisemitic hate literature. In fact, the Islamic Society had merely displayed a leaflet drawing attention to racism experienced by Palestinians. Nevertheless, rumours of 'fundamentalist' hate crime spread like bush-fire, leaving modified variants of themselves at every point of contact. Mainstream Jewish student leaders in the university understandably intervened and very reasonably requested a union investigation into the incident. It was subsequently discovered that the Islamic Society had not contravened any laws or statutes of the university or union. However, this conclusion was not reached with sufficient haste to prevent mischievous interventions by a number of concerned parties, none of whom had even seen the Islamic Society's supposedly offensive leaflet on Palestinian rights. The union received angry phonecalls from national student campaigners and even from barristers based in London, all demanding that action be taken against the Islamic Society. Equally alarming was the intervention of a member of university staff who demanded similar actions and threatened that unless these were forthcoming the university would invoke appropriate punitive sanctions against the Islamic Society[18]. Clearly, as far as the university administration was concerned, the Islamic Society's criticism of Israeli treatment of Palestinians was by its very definition an instance of Antisemitic hate crime, even though this decision was entirely partial and empirically unsound. On another occasion, a Residential Tutor in one of Greenstone's halls of residence was ordered to organise a debate on current affairs. This responsibility was swiftly revoked when the Tutor suggested a debate on the peace process, on the grounds that the presence of Muslim students in the hall of residence would lead to Antisemitism if such a debate were to be permitted[19].

A final telling indicator of the extent to which the conflation of criticisms of Zionism with anti-Semitism had become institutionalised occurred when the Vice-Chancellor criticised as unacceptable a prior attempt by the Islamic Society to critically engage with racism against Palestinians[20]. Clearly, the idea that any criticism of Zionism or Israel is by definition Antisemitic had become sufficiently entrenched within Greenstone University that it came as second nature to automatically assume any visible Muslim politicisation in support of Palestinian rights to be acts of inescapable Antisemitism.

3.4 Racialising Greenstone University

Outcomes from the institutionalisation of the 'Antizionism=Antisemitism' argument in Greenstone University were unsurprisingly racialised. For example, the direct outcome from the Antiracism week incident of the 1999-2000 academic session was the temporary disenfranchisement of Muslim students who, though ultimately found innocent of any wrongdoing, nevertheless lost the opportunity to participate in the union's Antiracism event. This incident contributed to the broader racialisation of student politics in Greenstone University which was evident throughout my fieldwork. Unsurprisingly, major points of conflict occurred over the extent of political power that the Islamic Society could be permitted to wield, given that it was implicitly assumed all political activity by Muslim students carried with it the likelihood of Antisemitism. In its recent history the Islamic Society had been subjected to various restrictions on its level of political enfranchisement. Once these restrictions had been lifted, from 1997-1998 onwards the society focused its efforts on winning a block vote in union hustings, although one former member of the society claimed that the union significantly underestimated the number of Muslims on campus in order to oppose the extension of this privilege to the Islamic Society[21]. When this right was finally won, the Islamic Society found itself participating in student politics by forming

strategic alliances with various political figures on campus willing to identify themselves to the society as opponents of Islamophobia.

This racialisation of student politics did not only impact upon the franchise of the . Islamic Society and the sorts of issues and strategies it was forced to adopt in order to protect Muslim students, but was also felt on the campus more broadly. For example, during the Students' Union elections in 1998-1999, I repeatedly heard non-Muslim students passing sarcastic remarks about the "Islamics" in reference to the society and its allies[22]. On one occasion during 1999-2000 this atmosphere of unspoken racialisation erupted into outright violence when Amin, a postgraduate student visibly identifiable as an Arab Muslim attempted to exercise his franchise in the elections. Having rushed from a lecture to vote, the student was carrying a bundle of papers – probably lecture notes – of such a presumably mundane nature that ballot officers were not deterred from taking the student's roll number and handing him the appropriate ballot papers. Union security staff did not take such a lenient view, however, and accused the student of either attempting to rig the ballot or distribute unauthorised and inciteful materials. Given the history of racialisation on campus it would not be unreasonable to conjecture that the latter charge was a shorthand reference to Antisemitic hate literature. When the student protested his innocence he was assaulted by security staff and forcibly ejected from the union building. His subsequent complaint to the union was pre-empted with claims from elected officers of the union that he would be branded a "trouble maker" and his future academic career jeopardised by pursuing his complaint[23]. Clearly, the common sense assumption of elected officers and union security staff was that this visibly ethnicised, visibly Muslim student must be guilty of distributing hate literature simply by dint of his participation in student politics.

As this Islamophobic assault attested, the racialisation of student politics in Greenstone University also had a direct bearing on a range of practices as well as on the racialisation of space. As a consequence it comes as no great surprise to

discover that Greenstone University played host to an alarming number of Islamophobic assaults, most of which were symbolically sited in or around the students' union building at times of formal political activity, and most of which symbolically targeted *hijab* wearing Muslim women. Such incidents ranged from incidents of verbal harassment and spitting to physical assaults, generally targeting the *hijab* or involving the use of alcohol[24]. These incidents were not restricted to female student victims, with a male student having received death threats from a militant Zionist angry at his support for Palestinians[25], and a female staff member in a related institution having been subjected to similar forms of harassment for her pro-Palestinian activism[26]. Neither were these incidents limited to the union. On one occasion a *hijab* wearing PhD student was subjected to ongoing harassment in a Greenstone University hall of residence. These hate crimes eventually gave way to a physical assault against the student in question during the 1999-2000 academic session. The institutional response to this incident was shocking, for while the victim was re-housed in alternative accommodation for her own protection, no punitive measures against the perpetrators of the assault were taken. This was not the end of the student's experience of Islamophobia in Greenstone's halls of residence, for she was verbally assaulted as a "fucking Muslim" and a "fucking fundamentalist" in her new hall during the 2001-2002 academic session while carrying out her work as a Residential Tutor by responding to complaints of noise from an impromptu party in the hall[27].

Clearly, the circulation of racialised readings of political behaviour in Greenstone University was also having a direct impact on broader patterns of social behaviour, and the campus was becoming increasingly racialised. This racialisation was perhaps most alarmingly reflected in the circulation of a memo advocating racialised segregation of university-owned accommodation during 1998-1999 in order to "protect" Jewish students from their "Moslem" peers. The memo's appeals to engrained racialised fears were such that it even predicted great tragedy if no such segregation were to be introduced to the university. The author of the memo was a

Rabbi with links to the university as one of its faith advisers[28], and it is revealing that the memo emerged to form a lynchpin of a broader campaign for segregated 'Kosher' accommodation in Greenstone University. Tellingly, there is evidence to suggest that the concerns raised in the memo were indeed seriously debated in the university despite the fact that the memo was politically motivated and only compelling if based on the primacy of racialised logics over empirical evidence[29].

Yet even though Muslim students in Greenstone University were far more likely to be victims than perpetrators of hate crimes, Islamophobic assumptions appeared to govern institutional interventions. For example, during the 2000-2001 session, as Ramadan – the 'holy month' of fasting, prayer, and contemplation – approached, a hall of residence Warden reported to me that a recent gathering of colleagues had centred on ways of ensuring that abstinence was not accompanied by 'fundamentalist' hate crimes against non-Muslims in university-owned accommodation. For not the first time in Greenstone University, the Islamophobia underpinning this was supplemented by other manifestations of racialisation, with discussants attempting to define which secular ethnicities produced the most 'extreme' Muslims[30].

3.5 'Anti-Zionism'=Antisemitism and the spread of Antisemitism in Greenstone University

Clearly, the circulation of racialised readings of agency and the political gave way to a broader racialisation of social and spatial relations in Greenstone University and exacerbated Islamophobia. However, given the obvious parallels between Islamophobia and Antisemitism, it remains extremely puzzling that there are those who believe that playing to other manifestations of racialised discourse is likely to be a successful strategy for challenging Antisemitism. To illustrate this it is worth returning to the only compelling evidence of Muslim violence on campus against

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Jewish students that I was able to uncover. Intriguingly, the incident to which I now turn centres on the Antisemitism of an employee of a London-based university who, far from being an Islamist, is a non-practising Muslim, and who is reported to have also expressed a number of Islamophobic and racist comments[31]. His Antisemitism was reflected in a number of extremely dismissive and offensive remarks about Jewish students, as well as in boasts of having been engaged in a difference of opinion over the Palestine-Israel conflict with a Jewish student which resulted in the supporter of Israel being beaten up[32]. On the one hand this is precisely the sort of incident that demonstrates the possibility of opposition to Zionism being bound up in Antisemitism. However, on the other hand, far from presenting evidence of the need to challenge Antisemitism through appeals to Islamophobia, this incident demonstrates that in fact, where one finds other forms of racialised discourses (such as Islamophobia), one is also likely to discover Antisemitism.

These boasts of involvement in an Antisemitic hate crime are also significant since they illustrate a useful means of gauging the institutionalisation of racialised logics. The individual concerned – let us call him Abid – works in the field of Equal Opportunities and the public face he presents to colleagues in his institution is of a committed antiracist with a background in political campaigning (including trade unionism). Abid expressed the various racist and sexist views he held to junior colleagues in informal settings – during non-professional conversations, while smoking through the office window, in the university refectory.

Canteen culture in Greenstone University was marked by far greater prevalence of Islamophobia than in any of the other case study universities. Time and again I observed or was involved in conversations that revolved around the expression of Islamophobic views by a range of non-Muslim students and staff. Such views expressed by staff variously sought to offer explanations for everything from the way in which Muslim students contribute to seminar discussions to their broader political

practices and assumed racism towards non-Muslims. The institutional hold of such Islamophobic views was further reflected in the expression of Islamophobia through other habitualised and routine human practices in Greenstone University, and most notably, through toilet habits. In only one other British university have I witnessed more Islamophobic graffiti in toilet cubicles than in Greenstone University[33].

What was particularly significant about the ritualistic expression of Islamophobic views in Greenstone University was that the spectre of Antisemitism was never far from sight. For example, Islamophobic graffiti in a toilet cubicle in the university library was amended to be applicable also to Jews. In a similar vein, I witnessed a white European researcher – currently working for the United Nations – attempt to insult a Muslim colleague by calling him "a tight-fisted Jew"[34]. This statement was clearly both Antisemitic and Islamophobic since it was based on the racist assumption that Antisemitism is so inherent to Muslim identities that the gravest act of Islamophobia possible would include Antisemitism. Clearly, the racialisation of Greenstone University did not only have implications for Muslim staff and students, but also for their Jewish peers. Undoubtedly some of this would be pre-existing Antisemitism. However, it was also clear that the resurgence of Antisemitism across the university did owe something to the widespread circulation of racialised readings of political behaviour that appear to have been led by supporters of Zionism. While discussions about the Middle East conflict in other universities generally proceeded along perfectly acceptable lines, in Greenstone University they were frequently inescapably racialised. Thus, I repeatedly observed conversations that involved struggles for Palestinian self-determination as well as specific terrorist attacks against Israeli targets being explained through recourse to strategies of cultural essentialism. However, the same was true of many discussions about Israel between non-Muslims observed during my fieldwork. One typical example involved an apparently unpleasant Jewish staff member being described by a colleague as "being more used to shooting at Palestinians than speaking politely to people"[35]. On another occasion, a staff member referred to Jewish students "rolling up to university

in their tanks with M16 rifles over their shoulders"[36]. In no other university did I witness such open Antisemitism. But in no other university was the 'Zionism=essential Jewishness' argument able to enjoy such an institutional hold. Clearly, this argument had its uses in silencing principled criticisms of Israel. However, the natural corollary of hegemonising this racialised reading of political behaviour was the sedimentation of an assumed inherent link between the articulation of Jewish identities generally and specific atrocities carried out by the IDF. When combined with the valorisation of Islamophobia, this re-authorisation of racialised logics can only culminate in increased levels of Antisemitism as it has done in Greenstone University.

4 'Anti-Zionism'=Antisemitism and defective westerners

Attempts to represent the Greenstone Palestinian rights motion as inescapably Antisemitic are based on implicit acceptance of the idea that the essential, disruptive potential of Muslims towards 'extremism' and Antisemitism was central to the incident. Such ideas serve a broader purpose in signifying the position of Muslims within liberal universities as being generally hostile towards members of other groups. However, this approach remains paradoxical since it is clear that by drawing from racialised logics it also re-authorises Antisemitism as well as Islamophobia. Since the emphasis of this approach lies in extending a racialised definition of racism – through which racialised logics underpinning this argument are clearly paradoxical since it is clear that by they re-authorise rather than challenge various forms of racism including Antisemitism.

In fact, being played out through Greenstone's tensions over the Palestine-Israel dispute are two contrasting accounts of agency and political behaviour. On the one hand we have a rather loose alliance largely composed of Muslim and socialist students, whose account emphasises the need to de-essentialise readings of

individual agency and, by doing so, to make a coherent stand against the pervasion of racialised discourses such as (although not restricted to) Islamophobia and the racism experienced by Palestinians. On the other hand, we have a rather loose alliance between those on the traditional political right and (mainly Jewish) supporters of Zionism. Their accounting for identities and political agency is predicated around appeals to cultural essentialism and a racialised reading of the political. As a consequence its chief effect is to construct principled political campaigning in support of Palestinian rights as a terrifying manifestation of the assumed inherent capacity of Muslims towards Antisemitic hate crimes.

This account is reinforced by its appeals to prevailing discourses of Eurocentrism and Islamophobia. As we have seen, these characterise Muslims as being inherently disposed to some cultural and psychological deficiencies over which they have no control. At the same time, they work to construct Muslims as defective whitemales. As a consequence, it follows that Muslim political mobilisation in support of Palestinian rights can be understood as a direct throwback to western European pasts by implicitly invoking a tangle of narratives relating to medieval blood libels, nineteenth century Antisemitism, and Nazism. It follows from this that the struggle to deny Muslim students (among others) the right to express the same support for Palestinian self-determination as is open to those championing Israeli self-determination is not merely a defence against Antisemitism but also a defence of white western modernity against the backwardness and deficiency of Muslims. Thus, campus debates on the Palestine-Israel conflict are also attempts to pathologise Muslims and exclude articulations of Muslim identities from what is considered to be reasonable, normal, and natural, and to permit them to be articulated only as marginalised forms of social life that cannot be considered at all legitimate or even defensible.

In this context it is also significant that the reliance on racialised readings of the political also serves to overdetermine principled political contests over Palestinian

rights into an assumed face-off between Muslims and Jews. One of the chief effects of this overdetermination is to re-authorise the racialised discrepancy between definitions of Islamophobia and Antisemitism so dominant in the arenas of formal student politics. We are left only to assume that since this assumed zero-sum face-off between Muslims and Jews is caused by Muslim deficiencies, the only just response must be to suspend consideration of Islamophobia in order to protect against Antisemitism. As a consequence, this discourse is particularly effective in racialising broader patterns of social relations on campus. Once we assume that conflict involving Muslim and Jewish students is the result of an inbuilt predisposition to Antisemitism on the part of Muslim students, then we are immediately also returned to a rather Powellian political terrain in which it is the presence of the immigrants (here, Muslims) which gives rise to the inevitability of ethnic conflict. Thus, the only possible response to avert rivers of blood can be racialised segregation. In this light, the Rabbi's memo advocating an Apartheid-style arrangement in Greenstone University halls of residence in order to avert murder of Jews by "Muslims" is clearly located within the logics of racialisation rather than the logics of Equal Opportunities which it purported to serve.

The racialisation of Greenstone University has nothing whatsoever to do with the assumed natural tendency of Jews towards particular forms of political discourse or the assumed inherent predisposition of Muslims to Antisemitism. The racialisation of Greenstone University was tied to social practices and structures working to marginalise Muslim students and institutionalise the possibility of conflict between Muslim and Jewish students. It should be of no surprise that while this racialisation was successful in placing obstacles to enfranchisement before Greenstone's Muslims (and other principled supporters of Palestinian rights), it also undermined efforts to eradicate Antisemitism. This is because the logics of the 'Zionism=essential Jewishness' argument were the essentialist logics of Antisemitism itself. No discourses are monolithic or bounded off from one another by impenetrable structures. It thus followed that the interplay between prior discourses of

Antisemitism and the racialised logics of anti-Palestinian rights demonstrators created an environment in which, while the phantom Muslim menace was being denounced and mobilised against, those non-Muslims in Greenstone University who held Antisemitic views were free to go about their business and express their offensive views secure in the knowledge that the racialised definition of Antisemitism pursued in the institution left them immune to closer scrutiny. By the same token, the institutionalisation of racialised readings of political behaviour that underpinned engagements with Antisemitism in Greenstone University valorised the logics of essentialism which underpin Antisemitism. As a consequence, pro-Zionist campaigning in Greenstone University did not only succeed in racialising the campus in a way that would solely affect Muslim students, but also in creating a broader environment within which Antisemitism could thrive.

5 Conclusion

Recent incidents of tension between supporters of Israel and Palestinian rights in Greenstone University have had nothing at all to do with an essentialist idea of Islam and its assumed inherent capacity for mobilising Muslims around Antisemitism. All too often do we hear that the defining feature of political activities involving Muslim students is a desire to perpetrate hate crimes against members of other groups. In fact, my fieldwork findings from Greenstone University suggest that militant Zionists are no less guilty than militant Islamists of undertaking hate crimes against members of other groups. Instances of Muslim-Jewish student tensions and conflict in Greenstone University illustrate the difficulties of assuming that social and political identities can be convincingly represented through recourse to the logics of essentialism or racialisation. By encouraging us to understand complex positional political engagements in these terms, dominant readings of Muslim political activity in Greenstone University obscure the exercises of power through which Muslim students are constructed as deviant and threatening. Such readings also elide any

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scope for consideration of the contingency of political behaviour or of the relationship between various forms of racialised discourse. This approach may well permit the silencing of a great many political engagements in support of basic Palestinian rights such as self-determination, but it cannot provide the basis of a coherent engagement with inter-group conflict or racism in any of its manifestations.

In fact the persistence of tension between Muslim and Jewish students in Greenstone University is a consequence of the institutionalisation of racialised logics in the university, which construct any visible political activities by Muslims as examples of racism or extremism and institutionalise the potential for Muslim-Jewish conflict. In this light, the discursive practices surrounding incidents such as the Palestinian rights motion are highly revealing: the Islamophobic violence, the rumours, the arbitrary judgments of culpability in various acts of extremism, the articulation of racialised discourse through the ritualised currencies of even the most seemingly innocent of everyday behaviour (toilet, eating...) – all represent not only the practices through which Muslims are constructed through hegemonic discourse if Greenstone University but also the ways in which the institution accounts for its own identity. Muslim students who mobilised in support of the Palestinian rights motion were not only supporting the Palestinians and campaigning against the Islamophobia of the university but were also engaging in acts of resistance against the racist institution itself.

Muslim students in Greenstone University occupy a space from which it is possible to launch effective critique of institutional inequalities and racism. Thus, while they are constructed as engaging in pre-modern forms of ethnic mobilisation predicated around irrational hatreds and superstitions, Greenstone's politically active Muslims are able to extend progressive and far reaching critiques of the ideological currencies articulated through the institution's accounting for itself and the means of becoming it presents for others. The greatest threat facing inter-group harmony in Greenstone

University is not posed by the political mobilisation of Muslim students but rather by the failure of the institution to take note of the concerns raised by Muslims.

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[1] See, for example, Barry Hugill, 'Campus fears over 'anti-Semitic' lecturer: Students call for investigation after university's appointment of academic linked to extremist Muslim sect', *The Observer*, 17th March 1996

[2] The lecturer concerned was a member of the *Murabitoun* sect, a *Sufi* group. Although the *Murabitoun* do emphasise their commitment to campaigning on important political questions, it is important to draw a distinction between *Sufi* orders and Islamist groups. The term *Sufi* is derived from the Arabic term for 'wool', in recognition of the humble ways expected of *Sufis*. *Sufism* is concerned largely with questions of spirituality, one's ability to control the desires of the *nafs*, and one's relationship with Allah. *Sufism* is not primarily concerned with political questions, although this is not to say that *Sufis* are completely disinterested in politics. Islamism, on the other hand, is predicated around political concerns. This distinction is not merely superficial. For example, during fieldwork it was clear that Islamist and *Sufi* activities among Muslim students were markedly different. Islamist campaigning focused on a range of overtly political issues such as the Palestine-Israel conflict and the sanctions against Iraq but focusing usually on claims of corruption and apathy among the leadership in the traditional heartlands of Islam and campaigning to re-establish the institution of *Khalifah*. *Sufi* campaigning focused on questions of religious practice and spirituality, although *Sufi* students were also politically vocal. The distinction between *Sufi* and Islamist students was also reflected in hostility towards *Sufis* by Islamists. The vast majority of Islamist students I encountered during my fieldwork were of *Salafi* beliefs and remained strongly opposed to *Sufis*, sometimes even pejoratively terming them *Naqshbandi* and deviant. Islamist groups such as *al Muhajiroun* and *Hizb ut-Tahrir* were definitely in the minority among the Islamist students I encountered during my fieldwork. Attitudes among members of both of these groups towards *Sufism* were often more tolerant. This may partly be explained by the fact that other Islamists encountered during my research came from a variety of backgrounds both in terms of age, previous Islamic adherence, and national, linguistic, ethnic and cultural heritages. However, all the *al Muhajiroun* and *Hizb ut-Tahrir* members I encountered during fieldwork had a lower age profile (generally 18-24) and were all of South Asian Muslim heritage, and in particular from *Sufi* – oriented *Barelvi* backgrounds. Many – but not all – such students were vocal in their criticism of *Barelvi* beliefs and practices, although not to the same extent as other Islamist students, and I encountered none who were particularly vocal about *Sufis* generally.

[3] Justin Cohen, 'Students Fight Bitter Battle', February 28th 2002, http://www.totallyjewish.com

[4] Board of Deputies press release http://www.bod.org.uk/cgi-bin/archive/archive.pl?id=366

[5] Noted during interview, June 1999.

[6] For example, Jewish Chronicle, 8th November 2002, 'Campus protest' by Nicola Cappin

[7] London Jewish News 8th November 2002, 'Students under fire'

[8] Jewish Telegraph, 8th November 2002

[9] For example, during the 1998-1999 and 1999-2000 academic sessions, there were very real debates continuing between Muslims in Greenstone University over the Islamic Society's commitment to challenging Islamophobia through Students' Union politics. Opponents of this strategy were generally drawn from those vigorously adhering to *Salafi* interpretations of Islam, although the tiny number of *al Muhajiroun* and *Hizb ut-Tahrir* supporters in the university also included vocal opponents of the Islamic Society's strategy.

[10] Interview, June 1999.

[11] Unrecorded interview, summer 1999. The administrator further alleged that supporters of Israel and supporters of Palestinian rights had both been equally guilty of the same range of infractions against each other, and significantly noted that the Jewish Society had been as guilty of seeking sanctions against the Islamic Society as the Islamic Society had been of seeking sanctions against the Jewish Society.

[12] During interview in June 1999 the Vice-Chancellor noted that similar moves were made under the 'no platform to racism' campaigns of the 1980s.

[13] *Cambridge University Students Union (CUSU)*, Varsity report by James Birchall, 19th October 2001

[14] See, for example, Justin Cohen, 'Students Fight Bitter Battle', 28th February 2002, http://www.totallyjewish.com/students/news/?disp_feature=rcbOo0

[15] For example, Phil Reeves ('Sharon appeals to America not to 'appease' Arabs', *The Independent* 5th October 2001) notes that "Ariel Sharon...last night ratcheted up Middle East tensions to perilous new levels with an astonishing outburst in which he compared Arab states with Hitler's Third Reich, and appealed to the United States not to repeat the mistakes made by Europe by appeasing the Nazis".

[16] Sharon said, "there are around six million Arabs [in France], and [French] Jewry could find itself facing great danger"Yair Ettinger, 'Sharon angers Paris with charge of racism', *Ha'aretz Daily*, 25th February 2002

[17] I acknowledge my debt to Baez (2002) whose definition of the academy is noteworthy: "the figure of the academy itself presents a text for theorizing about the possibilities of knowing and the stage it sets for agency or foreclosure. If the academy's *raison d'être* is the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, then this purpose sets the stage both for agency (when that knowledge is known and used) *and* foreclosure (when that knowledge is withheld). Confidentiality seems at first glance antithetical to institutions and professions that pursue knowledge because the review of the products of that pursuit—research, scholarship, and the evaluation of faculty members—occurs in secret, at least until the review decision is made. Thus, if the academy furthers the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, how may its use of confidentiality be reconciled with this other, perhaps more fundamental, concern? Is there a paradox here? That is, does confidentiality—the withholding of a "procedural" kind of knowledge, i.e., how *decisions* associated with the products of knowledge are made—further the search for a "substantive" kind of knowledge?" (Baez 2002: 175).

[18] This version of events was reported to me by two elected officers of the Students' Union independently of each other, by the President of the Islamic Society, and by a Muslim student who had been present at the stand when the first signs of trouble emerged with the arrival of Zionist supporters who were reported as being abusive towards the Muslims on the stand.

[19] In December 2000 the Senior Tutor who revoked these duties explained to me her decision to do so on the grounds that the hall contained a significant number of Muslim students but only two Israeli students and that therefore any such debate would result in Muslim Antisemitism. In fact, a straw poll of the hall revealed that there were two Israeli students in the hall out of a total of just over 400 students, although there was no reliable data on whether any other residents were also Jewish. By speaking with hall of residence security staff and a Residential Tutor, it transpired that there were around a dozen Muslims in the hall, including those staying on a temporary basis while attending short courses in Greenstone University. Of those dozen students, none were active in the Islamic Society, one was by his own admission a nominal Muslim, and no more than two or three appear to have been strongly practicing Muslims. It was therefore remarkable that the decision could be made that these dozen or so Muslims could be lumped together as a monolithic threat to Jews in the hall and liable to engage in Antisemitism at the first possible opportunity.

[20] During interview in June 1999.

[21] Suleiman, during conversation in August 1999. The same point was also made to me by Abid on a number of occasions.

[22] I also recall reading a piece in the student newspaper referring to 'the Islamics' during the 1998-1999 session.

[23] I must note that I was actively involved in this case. Amin, the victim of the assault approached me on the evening it had occurred seeking advice on how to make a complaint. The physical signs of the ordeal to which he had been subjected were such that I advised him and his friend to immediately photograph the injuries he had sustained as evidence of what had happened. The injuries were visible cuts and bruising to the face and hands. I am aware of the ethical difficulties attendant on being closely involved in the case, although I feel that I also had an ethical responsibility to this victim of assault to provide impartial support and advice. I must also clarify that there were absolutely no indications that the student concerned posed a danger to other members of the university. He was a state employee from a Middle Eastern country in which Islamists face considerable suspicion from the authorities. Moreover, the student concerned was actively involved in the organization of social activities including parties in one of Greenstone's halls of residence – hardly the behaviour one would expect from an Islamist. The student concerned also counted among his friends an Israeli former soldier. It was inconceivable that such an individual could be guilty of the crimes of which he was accused by union security guards.

[24] These incidents were reported to me by a number of Muslim students during pilot facti-finding fieldwork in the 1997-1998 academic session. During the 2001-2002 session, five students from Greenstone University also informed me on separate occasions that an article in the student newspaper had

acknowledged that Muslim women campaigning against the sanctions on Iraq and supporting Palestinian rights had been spat at and verbally abused, although I was unable to obtain a copy of the article in question.

[25] Arif, Students' Union elected officer, reported on a number of occasions that he had received these threats during the 1996-1997 academic session.

[26] Reported to me by Aisha, PhD student under the staff member concerned, summer 2002.

[27] Aisha, PhD student, Palestinian, early thirties, reported to me during May and June 2002. Incidentally, I first met Aisha on a Sunday during June 2000 when she visited the hall of residence to which she was ultimately transferred following the racist assault she had suffered. It was on that occasion that Aisha shared with me her experiences.

[28] The memo was passed to me by a Muslim who had sat on a committee at which the memo was discussed. I do not have permission to cite the memo and, given its racist nature, I am unlikely to gain such clearance. Therefore I do not quote directly from the memo for ethical reasons and do not cite it in my bibliography.

[29] This information was provided to me by Iannis, a Warden of one of Greenstone University's halls of residence during August 2000 academic session. Iannis reported to me on one a discussion of the memo that had taken place at a wardens' conference in the university. I must note that Iannis had a reputation for untruthfulness and I also frequently found it extremely difficult to distinguish between truth and fiction in much of what Iannis told me. However, I am inclined to believe his reports of the memo having been discussed along with broader campaigns for *Kosher* accommodation since Iannis had no prior knowledge that I was aware of the memo.

[30] Antonio, Italian, early 30s, reported this to me during November 2000.

[31] For example, Shehla (British South Asian Muslim, early twenties, working under Abid), reported to me that as soon as she had made Abid aware that she identified herself as a Muslim rather than as simply Asian, Abid began quizzing her on whether or not she was homophobic or extremist. Fareeda (British South Asian Muslim, mid twenties, working under Abid) also reported racist and sexist comments about African-Caribbean women being passed by Abid. These reports passed to me during November 2002.

[32] These boasts were made to me on two occasions during October 2002. On the second occasion, I was accompanied by Lynne (Tanzanian-Ugandan dual national with right of residence in Britain, mid twenties, working under Abid).

[33] I observed a considerable amount of Islamophobic graffiti in a toilet cubicle in a London-based HEI between October and December 2002. Some of this graffiti was obviously produced by Hindu Nationalist sympathizers since it made explicit reference to Kashmir. The origins of the remainder of this graffiti can only be surmised at, although white racism remains the obvious and most plausible explanation. Again, this graffiti was not only Islamophobic in nature but also frequently implicated other forms of racism, sexism, and homophobia.

[34] Francesco, Italian, early thirties, researcher and subsequently Project Officer and Warden of one of Greenstone's halls of residence, comments expressed during May 1999.

[35] Peter, white, late thirties, lecturer, comment passed to me during informal conversation during May 2001.

[36] This conversation was overheard in the university refectory, November 2000. I assumed that the person who passed the comment was a staff member due to dress and age and the fact that the individual concerned (white male, early forties), was with a number of other people including two I knew to be members of lecturing staff, having seen them around the university regularly. However, it is possible that he was not a staff member.

Part Three – Whiteness and Islamophobia in the University

Chapter 6 – White racism and the NUS

1 Introduction

On the basis of my fieldwork in institutions such as Greenstone University, it appears that far from discouraging the spread of Islamism in universities, dominant engagements with 'Islamic fundamentalism' on campus have actually racialised university campuses in ways that create conditions of widespread Islamophobia favourable to Islamist activities. However, to this recognition must also be added the caveat that what I recognise as Islamism is quantitatively different from what is commonly described as 'fundamentalism' on the part of Muslim students. While the reports and warnings issued by the National Union of Students tend to emphasise hate crimes, harassment, and violence against members of other minorities, what I have witnessed in the case study universities is better described as a range of campaigns undertaken by both nominalist and Islamist Muslims in order to challenge Islamophobia on campus as well as to support a range of political causes including, for example, Palestinian rights. Much as this may disrupt dominant pathologies of Muslim students and liberal sensibilities concerning inter-group tolerance, we should be clear that Islamist appeals to Muslim students are certainly not predicated around promises of murdering Jews or supporting terrorism, that Muslim students are subjected to entrenched Islamophobia, and that there is absolutely no empirically reliable data to suggest that Muslim hate crimes pose anything approaching a significant threat to universities.

This still leaves us no closer to understanding quite why it is that unreliable talk of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' should apparently appeal to so many different groups and individuals, and in particular quite why it should so successfully unite white liberal university staff members, NUS 'progressives', and members of minority

groups (such as certain Jewish supporters of Israel) in an overtly racist campaign against Muslim students. Neither does it assist us in understanding quite where all of these discussions of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' emerge from. It is with such questions that I am concerned in this chapter.

One way of approaching these questions would be to draw out the vested ideological and political interests at stake in this discourse. This would certainly help explain quite how it is that, even more than Islamists, the main beneficiaries of this NUS-sponsored demonology are actually other religious 'fundamentalisms' and secular 'extremisms' ranging from centrist-right and hard-right Zionists to Hindu Nationalists and even the British National Party. However, it is clear that dominant representations of Muslim students deploy 'Islam' and 'Muslim' as symbols of opposition to (and exclusion from) the very fabric of Britain and Britishness by fixing them in terms of inherent disposition towards 'fundamentalism'. Thus, it seems useful in this chapter to explore this discourse in terms of its appeals to whiteness and Britishness. First, however, having already begun to bottle some of the NUS' formula for Islamophobia, it makes sense to begin with a little agitation in order to see what sort of whitish residues rise to the top...

2 Patterns of Muslim crime in universities

One need not be an avid reader of airport news-stand murder mysteries in order to recognise that a particularly useful sleuthing strategy involves divining exactly what it is that, to borrow from Sayyid & Zac (1998), sutures the criminal to the crime. Unfortunately, when it comes to allegations of Muslim crime on campus, the dominant approach appears to involve the racialisation central to the CVCP's suggestion that we instead identify groups of potential perpetrators by first ascertaining the similarities that suture particular individuals to previously known or suspected felons. Given the racialisation that overshadows discussions of Muslim students, I thus find it useful to begin by considering an alternative approach and

attempting to divine from the polemical reports of Muslim student transgression a coherent pattern of infractions, to test whether or not any such pattern is consistent with a unitary perpetrator type (institutional or individual), and to begin unravelling what makes all this talk of 'fundamentalism' quite so appealing to so many different campaigning groups.

2.1 Muslim students and hoaxes

To underline the difficulties accompanying warnings of Muslim crime on campus it is first worth highlighting the obvious mendacity of much that we are told. This seems particularly significant since, as I chased the rainbow's end of 'fundamentalism' allegations during my fieldwork, it quickly became clear that they were not all that they seemed. I discussed some such incidents in chapters four and five, although I often did so on the basis of quite specific malicious and racist accusations of 'fundamentalism' such as emerged in the Greenstone University hall of residence in response to the short-term protectionism of a staff member, or in the context of attempts to centre Greenstone's Jewish Society and sustain its right to engage in pro-Israeli political activities. What I did not discuss were the obvious empirical difficulties with broader warnings of Muslim student 'fundamentalism', other than within the terms of my critique of the polemical deployment of 'fundamentalism'.

In fact, it became extremely clear during my fieldwork that many of the warnings of 'fundamentalist' activity that were finding their way to me were thoroughly problematic. Typical of these were a number of warnings that reached me between May 1999 and March 2000. These warnings fell into two categories – those alleging Nuremburg-style rallies involving forced mass conversion of young Hindu women that were said to have just happened, and those alleging that such events had been planned and were imminent[1]. It goes without saying that none of these warnings ever actually coincided with any such or similar event – or even with any large scale

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gathering organised by any Islamist groups active in Britain. The problems raised by such warnings were underlined by the general sense of disbelief expressed by Muslim students as I attempted to get to the bottom of these rumours. It wasn't just that respondents from across the four case study universities were questioning the tenuousness of my grasp of the real, but also that they truly did not have the foggiest idea of what on earth I was talking about. Mass forced conversions? My Muslim respondents simply did not know whether to laugh or cry when confronted with these reports of ritual crime by Muslim students.

And then there were also the respondents from a city in the midlands from whose testimony we can reasonably infer the circulation of fake *Hizb ut-Tahrir* leaflets (possibly by far right white racists) to whip up Islamophobia and exploit rivalries and division between different ethnic groups. Why, asked respondents, would members of *Hizb ut-Tahrir* misspell and misuse key Islamic terms and even fail to spell the group's name consistently with other *Hizb ut-Tahrir* literature? Why had no Muslim known to them – including the local organiser of *al Muhajiroun* – seen the leaflets until they were publicised in the local media? Why should leaflets purporting to provide advice to Muslim youth only be distributed to non-Muslims and only in non-Muslim areas, yet never be encountered by Muslims known to them? Why on earth would practising Muslims advocate treatment of other people forbidden in Islam? Why on earth would women of all people – a significant proportion of *Hizb ut-Tahrir*'s local membership – advocate sex crimes against other women? And why did the police take no further action despite the fact that *Hizb ut-Tahrir*'s local organiser was known to Special Branch officers?[2] Clearly, things did not add up, and the parallels to older Antisemitic libels were inescapable.

2.2 Hallmarking Muslim crime

In exploring allegations of Muslim student infraction it seems particularly useful to begin with a brief consideration of sexualised crimes. After all, concerns relating to sexual purity and repression generally loom large in popular accounts of 'fundamentalism' (see, for example, Macey 1999) and are reflected in reports of Muslim student homophobia as well as in implicit references to allegations of women being coerced to wear *hijab* by male Muslim students. To these points we must also add an unverifiable report from Finchton University of *al Muhajiroun* leaflets attacking white women as promiscuous "bitches" and "whores"[3]. Clearly, this context indicates a pattern of Muslim student crimes that focuses on 'fundamentalist' preoccupations with the control and repression of sexuality. These are patterns of crime and infraction consistent with perpetrators riven with insecurities and sexual fears.

It therefore emerges as rather puzzling to learn that when it comes to Sikh women, the 'fundamentalists' apparently prefer to dupe their victims into pre-marital sexual relations in order to convert them. In other words, far from being presented with an image of 'fundamentalists' as sexually repressed puritans, we are now asked to conceive of them in terms of hyper-sexualisation and general licentiousness. Thus, reports of Muslim student crime against Sikh women completely contradict the general picture provided by allegations of sexual repression by 'fundamentalist' students and begin to make it extremely difficult to recognise the emergence of any coherent pattern of Muslim student crimes.

These difficulties are exacerbated by reports of Muslim crimes against Jewish and Hindu students. Thus, it appears that despite the sociological similarities between Hindu and Sikh students, 'fundamentalists' apparently do not find Hindu women to their sexual tastes and prefer instead to forcibly convert them. Usually compared to the Nuremburg rallies, the events at which Muslim students are said to hold these forced conversions are, if anything, curiously closer to representations of mass rallies

held by the Indian *Khilafat* movement during the early 1920s and from which was later to emerge a Muslim self-determination movement to rupture the assumed essential unity of the subcontinent. It seems curious that, while reports of Muslim transgression against Hindu and Sikh students emphasise the targeting of women rather than men, there are such significant discrepancies between the crimes reported. This paradox is underlined by the fact that it appears that Muslim students appear completely immune to the charms of Jewish women, instead preferring to target them only as Jews (rather than as women) and to advocate their complete annihilation. It would be clearly misleading to suppose that it is possible to infer from these reports a consistent pattern of crimes against women.

Emerging from these difficulties are further contradictions. For example, we are asked to find it credible that Muslim student 'fundamentalists' are motivated by a desire to convert both Hindu and Sikh women to Islam. Closer examination reveals that it is still impossible to reasonably infer a coherent pattern of Muslim crime since the alleged methods chosen are clearly very different, with the significant cunning involved in conversion attempts against Sikh women replaced with brute force and violence in the case of Hindu women. It also seems curious that apparently Muslim students are not similarly committed to converting other groups on campus. Quite why Sikh and Hindu women should be targeted but not Sikh and Hindu men remains unexplained, as does the question of quite why it is that Muslim students should apparently routinely target Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual men and women and white women with hatred and violence but not with conversion. Even more puzzling is that we are presumably talking about the activities of students deeply committed to Islam who, in the light of their apparent hostility towards Hindus and Sikhs, could reasonably be assumed to feel closer in Islamic terms to Jews as 'People of the Book'. However, notwithstanding their apparent zeal for forced conversions, we are asked to find it credible that Muslim students are disinclined to convert rather than murder their Jewish peers.

Even acknowledging the contingent nature of the political itself, it is clear that these reports of ritual crimes by Muslim students do not betray a coherent pattern of criminal activity among these contradictory reports. Clearly, such reports cannot form the basis of the sort of procedural definitions of 'fundamentalism' so beloved of the NUS and CVCP since we cannot even divine from them a coherent pattern of criminal activity consistent with a unitary perpetrator type (individual or institutional) in the figure of the Muslim student 'fundamentalist'. Of course, this is not to suggest that such crimes have never taken place, but rather to underline the uselessness of attempting to conceptualise them through racialised notions of 'extremism' and 'fundamentalism' and to emphasise the centrality of rumour and polemic to what we are generally told about Muslim students. Of equal importance is to highlight the relationship between these racialised concepts and the widespread emergence of Islamophobic hoaxes in universities.

2.3 'Fundamentalism' and hoaxing

A notable feature of discussions about 'fundamentalism' in Britain is that, despite the existence in the public domain of evidence of entirely spurious allegations of Muslim 'extremism' and 'fundamentalism'[4], such cases are rarely acknowledged even by those engaging with Islamophobia. For example, when the President of Cambridge Union took issue with NUS warnings of 'fundamentalist' activities in universities in October 2001, he did not bother to question the voracity of the NUS' claims but instead extended a critique of the NUS' references to "Muslim" and "Islamic" "extremism" that were serving to demonises Muslims broadly. In fact, the only public criticism of the accuracy of widespread reports of Muslim student crime to emerge in recent years took the form of a press release from Swanton Union in which the NUS was criticised for its empirically unsound allegations of 'fundamentalist' recruitment in the university. This is a worrying oversight since it is clear that, irrespective of their obvious salaciousness, empirically unsound reports of 'fundamentalism' circulate as

rumour, seep into the collective imaginary as truthful representations of the Muslim threat, and valorise prevailing moral panics about Muslims while contributing to the body of knowledge about Muslim students more broadly. What we need, then, is a means of theorising these false allegations of Muslim infraction.

To illustrate the difficulties of ignoring hoaxing as a discursive strategy it is worth turning to Elizabeth Poole's recent work on media representations of Muslims in Britain (2002). Poole's work is certainly sympathetic to Muslims facing Islamophobia in Britain and she manages to produce one of the more far-reaching academic explorations of Islamophobia. Underlining this promise are Poole's hints that she leans towards anti-foundationalism and thus, by extension, that she rejects the notion that representations of Muslims and 'fundamentalism' are immutably tied to underlying truths. A closer reading of Poole's work reveals, however, a number of conceptual difficulties that undermine the usefulness of her work. Most obviously, Poole seems to ignore the possibility that some of what we are told about groups such as *al Muhajiroun* may only enjoy tenuous claims of voracity. It therefore follows that Poole's discussion of media representations of *al Muhajiroun* leader Omar Bakri focuses on stylistic conventions and representational strategies through which can be introduced "anti-Muslim racism that would be unacceptable elsewhere" (*ibid.*: 147). Nowhere in this is there any space for consideration of the difficulties emerging from unsustainable allegations of 'fundamentalist' activities other than the assumption that the main difficulty must lie not with Islamophobic hoaxing but rather with the broader framing of media reports with references to crude caricatures of 'fundamentalist' figures such as Bakri. Thus, Poole remains largely concerned with representative strategies of decontextualisation (*ibid.*: 148), homogeneity (*ibid.*: 149), and categorization (*ibid.*), only briefly touching upon the difficulties with the sources used in journalistic accounts of 'fundamentalism' in Britain (*ibid.*: 175).

Clearly Poole's work cannot form the basis of a convincing exploration of the difficulties emerging from hoax reports of Muslim student crimes. In fact there are

three reasons for this difficulty. First, it is clear that Poole's work is dogged by conceptual difficulties. Poole's understanding of discourse theory is not without its problems[5] and her rather eclectic conceptual vocabulary combining both discourse theory and discourse analysis[6] makes it impossible to adequately conceptualise questions of ideology without veering off into an a conceptual hinterland of reality and illusion[7], as well as informing a rather curious approach to post-structuralism in which problematic positivist assumptions of the world as comprised of distinct essences give way to a muddled implicit conceptualisation of the world being instead constituted of distinct, unitary, and bounded entities[8]. As a consequence of these difficulties, Poole's analysis can be of use only as a broader exploration of media Islamophobia. Thus Poole's work cannot form the basis of a convincing account of the reasons why certain members of ethnicised minority groups should be willing to buy into the logics of white racist representations of Muslims. Likewise, within the terms of Poole's well-meaning but ultimately muddled conceptual vocabulary, it is not possible to conceive of Islamophobic hoaxes through any terms other than a truth/falsehood binarism, thus rendering us unable to consider the usefulness of the hoax in constructing particular realities.

Second, Poole's emphasis on the framing and strategies of Islamophobia in media reports is problematic. Despite acknowledging the empirical problems emerging from the sources from which journalistic accounts draw[9] and extending a clear account of the ways in which reporting of Islam and Muslims plays to broader racialised agendas, there is no space in Poole's analysis for a consideration of the role of rumour and racist hoax in the circulation of reports of Muslim crime in Britain. This is partly a consequence of Poole's preferred strategy of emphasising the framing and strategy of media reports. It is also a consequence of Poole's broader conceptual difficulties. Thus, having reduced 'Islam' to an ideological construct subject to the workings of problematic notions of what Poole sees as 'discourse'/'counter-discourse', Poole fails to adequately elaborate on the discursive construction of the west. Thus, we are left with a rather muddled conceptualisation of Islamophobia

which we are told is, in some (unspecified) ways consistent with centuries-old antagonisms towards Islam while nevertheless being in some (unspecified) ways distinct and different. With no adequate means of distinguishing between racism, Islamophobia, Orientalism, Eurocentrism, or older discourses (such as the Crusades), Poole's work cannot form the basis of a convincing reading of the relationship between hegemonic notions of 'whiteness' or 'Britishness' with Islamophobia. Likewise, Poole's problematic understanding of discourse does not lend itself to a convincing account of the ways in which numerous discourses (e.g. Hindu Nationalism, Zionism...) can be linked by and penetrate Islamophobic discourse in order to articulate new variants of Islamophobia, since by Poole's definition, discourses are bounded, unilinear, and distinct.

Third, it is clear that what emerges from Poole's work is a problematic reading of 'fundamentalism'. Although Poole acknowledges the problematic origins of the term 'fundamentalism' she fails to reject it as a coherent analytical category, instead rather meekly suggesting that "Fundamentalism has been inappropriately applied in the press to a variety of political groups and governments with differing goals and beliefs that go by the name of Islam, with the result that they have been homogenized under the same label, which has allowed them to be constructed discursively in almost identical ways" (ibid.: 140-141). From this we can only infer that Poole understands two things from 'fundamentalism'. Clearly, Poole sees 'fundamentalism' in largely existential terms: it refers to an existential truth and can therefore be correctly or incorrectly applied depending on the essences of a particular project which it is invoked to describe. However, Poole also sees in the "inappropriate" application of 'fundamentalism' its operation as a floating signifier capable of being lent to various applications. That these two assumptions are contradictory goes without saying.

Clearly, work such as Poole's can only have limited use in accounting for the emergence of Islamophobic hoaxing in reports of Muslim student crime, neither being able to account for the usefulness of hoaxing strategies nor being able to

convincingly explain the apparent paradox of members of minority groups buying into the white racist logics of Islamophobia. Emerging from the conceptual difficulties I have briefly noted here, are two difficulties worth noting. First, as I have already argued, there is a fundamental difficulty with the way in which 'fundamentalism' is conceptualised. Second, there is a fundamental difficulty with the ways in which identities, and in particular notions of 'whiteness' and 'Britishness' are theorised.

2.4 Hoaxing and 'fundamentalism'

I term unreliable reports such of Muslim student crime Islamophobic hoaxes in acknowledgement of the broader literature on the racial hoax as a mode of racism that demonises entire peoples and effectively renders them victims of "a daily onslaught of Black crime stories played out in the media, which unfailingly portray Blacks [or, in this case, Muslims] as ignorant and criminal" (Russell 1996). This demonisation – theorised as spirit-murder by Patricia Williams (1987) – of course serves important functions and suggests that, to borrow from Ransby (1996), eradication of inter-group conflict on university campuses is a less important objective than "containment and control of a potentially rebellious population"[10]. As Russell (1998: 77) notes, the success of racial hoaxes is a reflection of the willingness of society to believe tales of Black criminality. As we have already seen, Islamophobic hoaxes function like others in underlining the need for "swift, harsh, and certain punishment" (Russell 1996), acting in terms described by Wievorka (1995: 75) as a "catalytic element" in acts of Islamophobic violence – Wievorka actually mentions pogroms and lynchings – that "binds the participants around a mythic narrative" (ibid.)

It is widely accepted that racial hoaxes in general can only be understand by exploring their articulation against the collective social imaginary of whiteness (see, for example, Russell 1996, Williams 1987). However, in the light of the difficulties in

adequately conceptualising the articulation of Muslim identities noted in chapter four, it is also clear that they fulfil another important conceptual function since – like Antisemitic hoaxes such as the Orléans rumous of the late 1960s – they construct and fix meanings where traditional modes of signification can no longer be relied upon, and providing "the classic embodiment...of the conflict or contradiction between tradition and modernity, or between particularism and universalism...[serving] as the scapegoat which enables this type of tension to be resolved mythically" through the scapegoat of the figure who "lives in the heart of the city and yet...is alien" (Wievorka 1995: 50). In the context of higher education, it is clear that the figure of the 'fundamentalist' – for which, read: one visibly articulating a Muslim identity – forms the lynchpin of the whole manoeuvre. It is also clear from my analysis so far that the Islamophobic rumour emerges in British universities quite when it does in response to the disruption of traditional modes of symbolisation and signification by the articulation of explicitly Muslim identities.

The reason I chose to theorise 'fundamentalism' as an essentially contested concept rather than as a floating signifier was that this move allows us far more scope to adequately conceptualise what is at stake in the deployment of 'fundamentalism' as a marker for the presence of those describing themselves as Muslims and in the narration of Islamophobic hoaxes about 'fundamentalists' in British universities. We have already seen that an essentially contested concept is subject to profound and lasting disputes, full final resolution of which is impossible. These disputes are largely functions of the conceptual vocabularies at stake in the deployment of the concept. However, an essentially contested concept does not only lay bare the contingency of particular conceptual and representational strategies but also the general conceptions of society and social relations implicated and at stake in the deployment of the concept itself.

In this light it is worth noting that the obvious similarities between different representations the Muslim student 'menace' also overshadow a number of very

different uses to which 'fundamentalism' is applied. To illustrate this, it is worth considering what is at stake in the right-wing Hindu Nationalist *Hindu Vivek Kendra*'s deployment of 'fundamentalism' and its own circulation of empirically unsound hoaxes. The HVK raises its own concerns about alleged forced conversions of Hindu women by 'fundamentalist' Muslims in British universities because "since Bangladesh has been declared as Islamic Republic, use of force to convert the Hindus is sanctioned by the hierarchy in gross violation of human rights...these converts are forcibly dictated to declare vociferously that the Hindu faith contained so many ills and evils...there is no machinery or movement amongst the Hindus to put an end to this regressive trend...The Hindu and Sikh girls, including the members of the Hindu and Sikh families who had to flee under the cover of darkness leaving behind their ancestral homes and kith and kin killed by the Muslim Zealots in Pakistan and Bangladesh, are still haunted by these perpetrators of crime with extra zeal in foreign lands..."[11].

It goes without saying that the HVK's references to large scale forced mass conversions of Hindu women in British universities are extremely unreliable to say the least[12] and certainly overstated beyond reasonable credulity[13][14]. They thus fall directly within the frame of the Islamophobic hoaxes I am largely concerned with here. It is also perfectly clear that the HVK's claims are intelligible only within the terms of Hindu Nationalist discourse and its obsession with the disruption of the assumed essential unity of India by partition and the emergence of a politics predicated around appeals to Islamic metaphors in the subcontinent. Dominant representations of the assumed threat to Hindu women posed by Muslim students focus on mass rallies and, in doing so, immediately direct us back to the mass mobilisation of Muslims at precisely such events over the three decades preceding partition. Likewise, the HVK's use of this Islamophobic scaremongering to mobilise Hindus around Hindu Nationalist discourse is inescapable.

It is also clear that the contradictions between different representations of the assumed nature and extent of the Muslim threat are explicable through a recognition of the various vested interests in their respective deployments of 'fundamentalism'. It is clear that when we talk about the Muslim threat to Hindu women on campus we are really talking about the scandalous emergence of Pakistan to rupture the assumed essential unity of the subcontinent, that when we talk about the sexual threat of Muslim students to Sikh women we are really talking about partition, and that when we talk about Muslim students plotting to murder Jewish students we are really talking about a combination of the Holocaust and the Palestinian suicide bombers. When we talk about 'fundamentalists' we are also talking about the scandal of members of socially excluded ethnicised minorities exercising their franchise. The Islamophobic hoax is a strategy for recuperation and the 'fundamentalist' is the figure on whose body a number of 'pure' identities are inscribed (the Jew, the Hindu, the white liberal...). What we are not talking about in any of these instances are Muslim students in British universities. It therefore behoves us to consider more fully some alternative ways of talking about the assumed Muslim threat to universities and, in the light of the general contradictions we have already seen to try to find out what unifies them and what, other than a reliance on invocations of 'fundamentalism', they share with white racist representations of Muslims.

3 White racism and warnings of Muslim student 'fundamentalism'

Having already noted some of the contradictions in dominant representations of the Muslim student threat I now find it useful to explore the difficulties these raise by turning to a comparative reading of three different recently circulated warnings of Muslim 'fundamentalism' in Britain. Perhaps by exploring the similarities between them it will be possible to account for the ways in which empirically unsound accounts surface and to explain quite why it should be that certain members of

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minority groups have been so willing to buy into white racist notions of Muslim menace. In this section I therefore extend readings of three different warnings: an anonymous warning to Sikh youth, a far-right white racist warning circulated by the British National Party, and an article warning of the Muslim problem on the website of the Union of Jewish Students. It goes without saying that none of these warnings can be seen as being at all representative of the views held more broadly by Sikhs, whites, and Jews in Britain. However, these warnings are worthy of consideration for three reasons. First, they are illustrative of a particular mode of campaigning on the Muslim menace involving appeals to a broader context of racialised moral panics about Muslim students. As such, they seep into the imaginary and contribute to the body of knowledge on the 'Muslim threat' to universities that so dominates NUS-led racialised interventions. Second, all three warnings invoke the same range of issues alluded to in NUS campaigns on the Muslim question, demonstrating the ability of NUS polemics on 'fundamentalism' to effectively forge links across demographics and political projects and plumb seemingly unbridgeable chasms. Third, as will become apparent throughout my reading, there are inescapable parallels between these representations.

3.1 The anonymous warning: Muslim men and Sikh women

The difficulties raised by mainstream student campaigning on the Muslim menace and the problems reflected by the emergence of Islamophobic hoaxing are illustrated by an email I received in March 2002 warning of sexualised crimes against Sikh women committed by Muslim youth. The email is not, of course, the work of the British Organisation of Sikh Students which, despite its support for the NUS' polemical campaigns against 'fundamentalists', has an unquestionable track record of committed antiracist campaigning. What is perhaps most interesting about the email is that subsequent variations include subtle changes of content as well as improved spelling and grammar, thus illustrating the dangers of assuming that

reports of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' are immutably tied to some underlying truth.

As we have come to expect from warnings of 'fundamentalist' activities, this warning contains all the necessary parachute clauses, including the claim that "THIS IS NOT A HATE LITERATURE BUT ONE OF AWARENESS". Of course, this assertion is immediately contradicted by the assertion that "THERE IS A SMALL MINORITY OF MUSLIMS THAT IS NOT LIKE THIS", as well as by the clearly racialised nature of the warning. The email begins by deploying examples of crimes against Sikhs which, from their general tenor, could reasonably be viewed as the work of Pakistani nationalists and criminals rather than of observant Muslims or Islamists. For example, an attack against Sikhs for waving an Indian flag clearly involves a locus on rival readings of the nation; if Islam was a decisive factor in the assault it would be fair to suggest a different range of preoccupations would be reflected in the incident. Likewise, it is fair to suggest that involvement in drugs and prostitution is a criminal problem rather than a specifically Muslim problem – although I note Marie Macey (1999) feels otherwise – and that it is hardly convincing to suggest Islamist involvement in sexual racketeering.

By referring to these as characteristically 'Muslim' crimes, the email fixes its representation of Muslims as criminalised, and thus valorises the logics of racist pathology discussed in chapter four. The email then proceeds to discuss alleged 'fundamentalist' infractions through a slippage which marks forms of secular and Islamist crimes as being fundamentally indistinguishable and interchangeable, thus blurring the distinction between Islamists, Muslims, and Pakistanis, say, and reinforcing the idea that even the nominally Muslim are criminalised and threatening. There follow a number of claims that can only be described as completely incredulous, including the assertion that *Hizb ut-Tahrir* infiltrates criminal gangs in order to encourage them to desecrate Gurdwaras. Equally absurd is the suggestion that *Hizb ut-Tahrir* not only runs a pirate radio station (note the subversive

connotations) but also has its own "PUNISHMENT CELL", established to respond with violence to reports of relationships between Muslim women and non-Muslim men. Why the group should require criminals to desecrate places of worship if it already has hit squads to knock off members of rival religions is not, of course, explored. Such claims are utterly fantastical, although they are highly symbolic in bridging questions of Muslim criminal activity, subversion, and terrorism through parallel (and contradictory) references to terrorist group structure and discipline and to criminalised street gang activity.

As if the contradictory allusions to Islamic 'fundamentalists' as *Mafiosi* or IRA –like in structure are incapable of communicating just how threatening and alien they are, the email implies *al Muhajiroun's* leader really to be Mr Big, while returning to tried and tested tropes of white racism:

"YOUTHS HAVE BEEN INSTRUCTED TO INFILTRATE ANY AND EVERY ORGANIZATION AND POSITION OF AUTHORITY THEY CAN. THEY HAVE ALSO BEEN TOLD TO KEEP THEIR ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALIST SECRET AND SUBTLY OUR COMMUNITY [*sic*] FROM A POSITION WITHIN THESE ORGANIZATIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, THEY HAVE HAVE [*sic*] BEEN DIRECTED TO JOIN STUDENT UNION BODIES, THE MEDIA, ANTI-RACIST GROUPS COMMUNITY GROUPS, COUNCILS AND POLITICAL PARTIES"

Within these logics any public presence of Muslims in mainstream institutions is reducible to 'fundamentalist' infiltration. Thus, alleged electoral malpractice by Pakistanis in Manchester must be something more than a simple question of corruption: "CAN YOU IMAGINE A BRITISH M.P. DEMANDING ISLAMIC LAW AND DEATH TO RUSHDIE? THAT IS WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THEY HAD NOT BEE STOPPED [*sic*]". To cement the idea of Muslims infiltrating democratic institutions in order to overthrow the state parallels are drawn with the subversive presence of the Muslim Parliament which, the email alleges, "PASSED A RESOLUTION

DEMANDING THAT THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT MAKE IT ILLEGAL FOR MUSLIM WOMEN TO MARRY NON-MUSLIM [sic]. IT ALSO CALLED FOR THE BANNING OF CONVERSIONS OF MUSLIMS TO OTHER FAITHS. ANY MUSLIM WHO DID CONVERT WAS TO BE STONED TO DEATH ACCORDING ISLAMIC TRADITION".

Emerging from the email are representations of Muslims as essentially criminalised, threatening the established order, and directly opposed to the assumed essential values and institutions of Britishness itself. The obvious parallels with racist representations of Black youth criminality cannot be ignored, and it is significant that far from being represented as minorities, Muslims are represented as being inherently powerful and in search of power, money, and domination. A further parallel emerges with both NUS representations of 'fundamentalism' and white racism through the suggestion that, far from being victims of Islamophobia, Muslims manipulate fears of racism experienced by members of other minority groups in order to succeed in their plot for world domination: "IF THE PERSON HAS A STRONGLY ANTI-WHITE ATTITUDE, THEN THEY WILL STIR UP RACIAL HATRED AGAINST WHITES EVEN MORE BY TALKING ABOUT PAST WHITE INJUSTICES AGAINST THEM. THIS POLICY HAS BEEN USED EFFECTIVELY WITH AFRO-CARIBBEAN'S [sic], WITH WHOM THEY TALK ABOUT THE SLAVE TRADE AND GIVE MALCOLM X AS ROLE MODEL [sic]".

The main focus of the email is, however, the idea that Muslims mainly present a sexual threat. This threat is represented in impossible absurd terms that parallel NUS representations of the shape-shifting 'fundamentalists':

"CERTAIN MUSLIM MEN HAVE TAKEN TO WEARING KARA (SIKH STEEL BRACELET) AT BHANGRA GIGS WITH THE AIM OF SPECIFICALLY SEEKING TO MEET HINDU AND SIKH GIRLS. WHEN MEETING THE GIRLS, THESE PEOPLE IDENTIFY THEMSELVES IN SUCH A WAY THAT

THE GIRL DOES NOT REALIZE THAT THEY ARE MUSLIM, FOR EXAMPLE BY SHORTENING THE NAME MOHAMMED TO MOHAN. THEY FORM RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE GIRL AND BEGIN THE SLOW PATH TO CONVERSION".

Subsequent versions of the email warning contain a modified version of this claim in which it is alleged that Muslims do not just introduce themselves using Sikh names but that "the new method that they are employing is to change their names by deed poll to Mohan singh and Balraj singh, they add surnames on to Gill and Haver are two of there favourites [sic]. Please check the person you are going to marry and there credentials through your parents or close relatives NAMES MEAN NOTHING THERE ARE BEING CHANGED BY DEED POLL IT ONLY COSTS THEM A COUPLE OF HUNDRED POUNDS, SUPPLIED BY THEY'RE FANATICAL ELDERS [sic]". As if to underline the extent of this sexual threat, the stealing of Sikh women by 'fundamentalists' is related to questions of the very survival of the Sikh faith itself. Thus, "HUNDREDS OF REPORTED AND VERIFIED CONVERSIONS IN THE LAST FEW YEARS DOZENS OF CASES WERE REPORTED IN OCTOBER 1995 ALONE, WHEN THE NEW ACADEMIC YEAR STARTED MANY THEN ALSO CONVERTED [sic]". So sexually predatory are Muslim men that the Sikh women they get their hands on are apparently not only converted to Islam but also completely defiled sexually:

"A MARRIED INDIAN WOMEN, STARTED DRINKING, PAKISTANIS TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THIS, PUT HER ON DRUGS, SHE WAS MARRIED WITH A CHILD, AND MUSLIMS TOOK DIRTY PICTURES OF HER AND USED THESE TO BLACKMAIL HER AND THEN CONVERT AND LEAVE HER HUSBAND [sic]. THESE ARE TRUE STORIES HAPPENING IN UK. LAST YEAR IN BIRMGINHAM 3 YOUNG INDIAN GIRLS WHO WERE PUT ON DRUGS BY MUSLIMS WERE MADE TO GO INTO PROSTITUTION!!!!!"

With 'fundamentalists' apparently so threatening, the emergence of the vigilante narrative is unsurprising. Thus, "SHER-E-PUNJAB FOUND OUT ABOUT THIS AND DEALT WITH THIS MATTER IN THE MOST APPROPRIATE WAY!!!!! THE FLATS WHERE THESE PAKIS WERE STAYING AND THE PAKIS THEMSELVES WERE SMASHED!!!!!" The most effective response to this sexual threat is, however, the symbolic emasculation of the 'fundamentalist' by describing circumcision as a man having "HALF HIS GENITALS CUT OFF".

Throughout, the email is riddled with claims that are either completely fictitious, based on racist urban rumours, or which involved extrapolating from individual incidents a general rule of thumb for understanding and assessing the nature and extent of the Muslim menace. But perhaps the most intriguing feature of this warning is that is appears to be directed at three different audiences. First, the warning is clearly intended for a Sikh audience, even concluding with the following advice to Sikh students: "TAKE NOTE OF THIS NEWSLETTER, AND DISTRIBUTE IT TO AS MANY FELLOW INDIANS AS YOU CAN". It also advises "MUSLIMS EVEN USE BLACK MAGIC TO TRY AND CONVERT PEOPLE. THIS IS FACT! SO DON'T TAKE ANYTHING OBJECT, FOOD, GIFT FROM A MUSLIM!!! [sic]" The email also urges Sikh students to maintain respect for their religion and ensure that activities organised by Sikh student societies are clearly marked as such.

Second, the warning also appears to target a non-Sikh audience. Thus, the email twice explains that Karas are "STEEL BRACELETS" and "SIKH STEEL BRACELET", something that the majority of Sikh and Hindu students would already know. References in the text to the whipping up of anti-white racism by Muslims would suggest that the email involves an appeal to white racist fears of swamping and white victimhood. In this context it is worth noting that some of the email's content bears a remarkable similarity to an Islamophobic article produced by white racists and posted on a far-right website[15], a copy of which I subsequently also found linked and posted on a Sikh internet discussion board[16].

Third, it also seems that the email warning targets campaigners and policy makers in the higher education sector. Thus, "THE EXACT STRATEGY FOR PREVENTING US FROM OBTAINING HIGHER EDUCATION HAS NOT YET BEEN LEAKED BUT THE HARASSMENT AND BULLYING HINDU AND SIKH STUDENTS AT SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES [sic]...IS BOUND TO BE A PART OF IT. AFTER ALL HOW CAN ANYONE WORK IN PLACES OF SUCH STRESS?" Even if this is not a direct appeal to policy makers and practitioners in the sector, it is at the very least a direct appeal to dominant narratives on British Muslims and higher education. What remains perhaps most puzzling is why, when organisations such as the NUS discuss hate speech, they always ignore literature such as this in their efforts to engage with the alleged transgressions of Muslim students.

3.2 The white racist warning – the BNP speaks

In the light of the appeals of this anonymous warning to white racist tropes it is now worth exploring the position of the far-right racist British National Party on Muslim students. An article by BNP leader Nick Griffin entitled 'Behind the race riots'[17] bears useful testimony to the ability of dominant readings of Muslim students to link groups and individuals from across the political spectrum. Griffin's article begins by referring to an earlier piece on the history of the conflict in Northern Ireland, in order to support his assertion that "multi-racial societies are inherently unstable". This also contextualises his perceptions of the threatening and divisive presence of Muslims in Britain in a way that clearly parallels the anonymous warning's allusions to typically IRA disciplinary structures. Interestingly, Griffin falls short of the level of racism expressed in the warning to Sikh students, acknowledging that "we know from our limited contacts with moderate Muslim leaders that some of them have also been doing their bit to calm things down", and instead focusing on "certain Islamic

fundamentalists". Thus, Griffin's attempt to demonstrate the acceptable credentials of his article have much in common with NUS justifications.

Proceeding from this, Griffin attempts to position the BNP's racist rhetoric as being amenable to the needs of Hindus and Sikhs, noting in particular that "following my comments during the Newsnight interview with Jeremy Paxman, in which I pointed out that this summers' riots have been by Muslims rather than by Asians, I have been contacted by several Sikhs who greatly appreciated the fact that I had made the distinction". Later, Griffin attempts to strategically enwhiten Sikhs by asserting that "they have sent me leaflets circulating in areas such as Southall warning about Muslim efforts to trick and convert Sikh or Hindu girls, and about 'punishment cells' of young thugs who are trained to beat up Unbelievers who try to go out with Muslim girls. One of these concludes with a warning about the Muslim fundamentalist groups which say that "they aim to make France an Islamic Republic by the year 2015, and Britain by 2025 through conversions, immigration and high Muslim birth rates. They must be stopped" ".

The credibility of Griffin's claims to have been contacted by members of any minority ethnic group in Britain must be questioned. However, it is significant to note that, as with NUS warnings and the anonymous warning to Sikh students, the BNP article bases itself entirely on assertions and unproven allegations of 'fundamentalist' activity rather than on up to date, reliable empirical data. It is also significant that Griffin not only raises issues of concern to the NUS in much the same terms, but also that emerging questions concerning the relationship between Griffin's article and the anonymous warning to Sikh students demonstrate the ways in which dominant racist narratives on Muslim students are capable of forging links between concerns of groups who one would otherwise suppose to be extremely unlikely allies. Griffin thus proceeds to argue that "it's not just the BNP saying that there is a drive by well-financed and strongly supported Muslim fundamentalists to turn Britain into an Islamic state. Sikhs and Hindus are saying the same thing". Clearly, Griffin's

strategy involves supplementing his essentialised picture of Muslims with a caricature of essential Hindus and Sikhs in order to create the impression that his Islamophobic bile is true and to suggest, through his references to Sikhs and Hindus, that racism is not implicated in his argument.

Although far more moderate in tone than the warning of sexualised crimes against Sikh women, Griffin's piece does share with it a focus on representing Muslims not as possible victims of discrimination but rather as an extremely powerful bloc with access to significant resources intent on exercising power over and oppressing others. Another shared concern emerges from Griffin's claim that "by their very nature these people ['fundamentalists'] tend to be secretive and avoid exposure outside their own community". This directly parallels the claim of the anonymous warning to Sikh students, which claims to provide information on "secret" views held by Muslims attempting to infiltrate society.

The final parallel between the pieces emerges from the idea that Muslims infiltrate community groups and anti-racist organisations. In Griffin's piece this assertion is reflected in the claim that "the Anti-'Nazi' League has held three major demonstrations this year...Each has been billed as an 'anti-racist' event, but each has ended up with hundreds of young Muslims being wound up by the speakers and then going on the rampage, attacking innocent bystanders and police". The consequence of this is persuading "young Muslims to organise physically against a non-existent threat, and subsequently to turn on ordinary whites and the police". This is particularly interesting, since it is clear that again Muslims are being portrayed as inherently powerful (rather than as a minority and as victims of racism), and the anonymous warning's concerns of white victimhood are reflected.

3.3 A view from student politics: Union of Jewish Students on 'fundamentalism'

A third piece of campaigning literature on the Muslim question worthy of some exploration takes the form of an article written by Union of Jewish Students campaigner Mark Ross, and placed on the UJS website. The article is rather grandly titled 'Keeping the Peace at Freshers' Fayres [*sic*]'[18], and thus contextualises Ross' claim to be a defender of multicultural and multifaith harmony rather than an Islamophobe. Notwithstanding this, it is clear that Ross' piece has strong parallels with the anonymous warning and the BNP article. Like the first two examples of campaigning literature, Ross' right-wing credentials are firmly established. Thus, according to Ross, the practice of situating a university Jewish Society between an Islamic Society stand and the Socialist Workers Party is to be criticised. As an aside, it is worth wondering exactly how Ross proposes to 'keep the peace' between student groups if his preferred method of spatial organisation apparently involves racially and politically segregating campuses to keep socialists and Islamic Societies away from Jewish Societies. Ross' right-wing credentials are underlined by his suggestion that "perhaps the past eleven months of troubles in the Middle East will cause the far Left Wing to side with Islamic fanatics", a suggestion combining a ridiculous caricature of socialists with an essentialist reading of Muslims. As with the first two warnings, the 'fundamentalist' threat is thus conflated with generally leftist politics.

This move undermines the credibility of Ross' claims to be a good multiculturalist, for it goes without saying that there are obvious parallels with older Antisemitic tropes of Jews as communist plotters and 'Red kikes'. In fact, like the author of the anonymous warning and Nick Griffin, Ross could be read as partly basing his multiculturalist credentials on a variation of the old tokenist 'some of my friends are darkies' argument[19]. Clearly, this approach leads Ross into the same trap as Nick Griffin and the author of the anonymous warning. Merely stating that not all Muslims

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are 'extremists' cannot be equivalent to a de-essentialisation since it merely reinforces the racialised logics grounding an assumed inherent link between Muslims and 'extremism' by leaving no space for any other mode of conceiving of Muslims. For example, were one to suggest that the vast majority of Jewish students in a particular university are 'moderates' and not at all disposed to the murder of babies, this would clearly valorise rather than challenge vile Antisemitism. Thus it comes as no surprise to find Ross proceeding to suggest that 'extremism' and 'fundamentalism' actually *are* hardwired into Muslims:

"Rarely do you find Union I-Socs [Islamic Societies] run by extremists (it gets very difficult to set up societies which are blatantly racist. Could you imagine their application form for society status? Qu. 14 Which students will be members of your society?...Ans. 14: No Jews, No Gays, No Disbelievers, No moderate Muslims, No Hindus, otherwise all are welcome)"

The implication of this statement is clearly that Muslim students do not shun 'extremism' on grounds of principle but only on grounds of narrow self interest. Thus, we are left only to assume that 'extremism' is in fact a collection of practices inherent to Muslims. In this light it is also significant to note the writer's obvious distaste at the prospect of situating Islamic and Jewish societies in close proximity at freshers' fairs, a suggestion that I would find equally racist/Islamophobic/anti-Semitic and distasteful whether expressed by a Muslim or by a Jewish student – or by anybody else for that matter.

Clearly, Ross is not so much defining 'extremism' as defining Muslims as being inherently disposed to 'extremism'. As Ross' article unfolds, however, it is clear that his preferred definition of 'extremism' is predicated not only on including in this category those typically viewed as 'extremists' – *al Muhajiroun* and the BNP, for example – but also on including those who are generally most likely to disagree on principle with the generally pro-Israeli political inclinations of the UJS – for example,

the Socialist Workers Party and Islamic societies. Thus we are to assume that there is no great difference between offering principled support for the cause of Palestinian self-determination and advocating hate crimes against Jewish students.

From this it thus follows that Muslim students and what Ross crudely terms "the far left" must somehow be aligned with groups such as the British National Party. It is no surprise, then, to learn that Ross claims to have witnessed the apparently appalling spectacle of a Jewish Society being threatened by its location between SWP and Islamic societies and directly opposite "the British National Student Society". This is, of course, ludicrous, and not only for the startlingly obvious reasons of empirical reliability of his observation[20]. It is clearly absurd to suggest that Muslims and leftists are at all likely to find common cause with far right white racists. After all, the BNP has increasingly sought to garner support by appealing to entrenched Islamophobia, Muslims are not only targeted for their religion but also for their skin colour, and that what Ross terms "the far left" is hardly likely to be any more fond of far right racists than are Muslims. Equally significant is that despite listing some of the UJS' allies in campaigns against the BNP, no mention is made of Muslim students. Presumably Ross has neither visited Finchton University – where, as I noted in the chapter four, it was Muslims, Blacks and Asians who led antiracist campaigns – nor post-industrial northern towns such as Burnley and Oldham where Muslims quite literally fought for the streets against white racists. Having blurred the distinctions between leftists and "the far left", Ross' anaemic reading of politics and racist understanding of Muslims leads him to further blur the distinctions between the left, Muslims, the "far left", radical Islamists, and the far right, eliding any mention of Muslim and leftist opposition to the far right.

Ross' polemic swiftly reaches the point of absurdity when he claims that 'fundamentalists' are so well organised that they know exactly when Jewish students leave for lunch breaks. Apparently, this knowledge is not born of a rudimentary knowledge of dietary habits in Britain combined with passable eyesight, but is rather

engendered through the training they receive. Ross' preferred representation of 'fundamentalists' does not only centre around their inherent power, but also around what must presumable approach supernatural prowess. This mystification of 'fundamentalists' is unlikely to form the basis of any coherent attempt to challenge 'extremism', although it does play nicely to the broader mood of moral panics and tabloid-style sensationalism about the Muslim threat. One can only marvel at the type of fieldwork Ross must have carried out to provide us with such specific information on the inner workings of Omar Bakri's organisation – which apparently doesn't know whether it is fascist or Trotskyite – that contrasts so sharply with the views of my own fieldwork respondents[21]. In the end, though, the empirical weaknesses of Ross' assumption-driven polemic are completely immaterial, for Ross swiftly contradicts himself by arguing that the 'fundamentalists' are actually so disorganised – and apparently so ill-committed to their cause – that they have an annoying habit of disappearing for prayers never to return, in yet another of his questionable anecdotes[22][23].

Ross' argument is clearly racialised. It reinforces common-sense assumptions and rhetorical assertions the usefulness and credibility of which cannot be taken for granted. Like the BNP and anonymous Sikh warning, Ross' work invokes the now familiar anti-Muslim vigilante narrative as a means of meting out rough justice to the 'fundamentalist'[24] without considering the implications of this for his own claims to be a responsible, law-abiding student committed to peacefully resolving inter-group tensions and without considering its implications for his broader claims to be a *bona fide* multiculturalist[25]. Clearly, this is again a piece that has much in common not only with the NUS' Islamophobic rhetoric, but also with far right white racist discourse.

3.4 Warnings of 'fundamentalism' and white racism

Notwithstanding the obviously contradictory nature of the largely polemical and frequently politically motivated allegations of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' to

which we have become accustomed, it is clear that a number of similarities emerge between these discrepant reports and warnings of Muslim 'extremism' on campus. These similarities are framed by the broader parallels between the BNP article and NUS campaigning literature which, it seems, informs Nick Griffin's diatribe against Muslims. I now need to explore how these similarities can be theorised, since it is clear that the stance adopted by the National Union of Students and the UJS against far right groups such as the BNP is one of unequivocal rejection, despite the obvious parallels between their representations of Muslims. How, then, can we account for the ability of ethnicised minority individuals such as the author of the anonymous Sikh warning and Mark Ross to buy into the white racist logics of the British National Party? And how can we account for the NUS' willingness to buy into BNP logics despite its campaigning against the far right? For the remainder of this chapter it is with these questions that I am primarily concerned, for it is clear that we can only understand the effectiveness of the Islamophobic hoax and the dangers of the NUS-sponsored demonisation of Muslim students by considering such questions.

4 Theorising whiteness and student politics

Exploring the parallels between BNP representations of 'fundamentalism' and those of mainstream student campaigners in the NUS is important since it is clear that both espouse segregationist concerns. In NUS speak the BNP is usually signified through metaphors such as 'far right', 'fascist', 'oppressive', or 'neo-fascist'. The logics of this operation work in two ways. First, it represents a symbolic rejection of BNP style racism, fixing far right politics as somehow transgressing the bounds of normalcy and decency and marking them as 'extremist'. Second, this move also effects a disaffiliation of far right discourse from mainstream representations of race, nation, and identities. Thus, we are not only asked to conceive of the BNP as espousing a range of views that are as transgressive and unrepresentative as they are unpalatable, but we are also asked to accept the commonsense idea that the BNP

stands for very different things from 'mainstream' political parties and organisations. At the same time we are implicitly asked to accept the notion that the BNP appeals to very different people than do 'mainstream' parties and organisations. Thus, not only are racists symbolically expunged but so are racist practices. Before we can convincingly account for the racialisation of student politics and the ability of political campaigners such as Mark Ross to valorise white racist concerns, we first need to establish why it should be that the NUS actually can buy into the logics of the BNP despite its claims to oppose white racism.

4.1 Building bridges: the far right and mainstream politics

The tendency to draw a strong distinction between far right racialised politics and those of more 'liberal' leaning groups is not necessarily helpful. Empirically, it is challenged by the fact that the BNP and its National Front predecessor have contested politics by appealing precisely to people such as you and I (assuming, of course, that we both support traditional established political parties). It is not particularly helpful to assume that the British National Party, the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands, Jorg Haidar's Austrian Freedom Party, and Pim Fortuyn's Dutch far-rightists are simply analogous to some reductionist representation of Mosley's Blackshirts or even Hitler's Nazis. For even these political movements also sought to garner support by appealing precisely to people such as you and I. Clearly, far right white racist groups such as the BNP espouse extremist views. But the BNP is nonetheless a modern parliamentary political party. And, as Pim Fortuyn's Dutch rightists' appeals to gay rights while demonising Muslim 'immigrants' demonstrate, far right white racist political parties are eminently able to gain parliamentary seats by appealing to people such as you and I, and all those people like us in liberal leaning organisations like the NUS, even championing the rights of groups and individuals traditionally demonised, oppressed, and even slaughtered by Europe's extreme right.

During the 1970s the BNP's predecessor National Front appealed to whites by stressing themes of disenchantment and betrayal of whites by the established parties including, surprisingly, the generally racist Conservatives. During the 1980s the party's support was, of course, eroded by a number of factors (internal divisions, organised Antiracist mobilisation...). An important and often forgotten factor in the decline of the NF was that, just as it had previously appealed to racists dissatisfied with the main political parties, the far right was now weakened by the Thatcherite hegemonisation of a new vision of what it meant to be British and the ability of Thatcherism to appeal to NF supporters on the traditional grounds of white racism (fears of immigrant swamping...)

The far-right's initial responses to this involved attempts to introduce further distance between the NF and the main political parties, while simultaneously retreating into notions of primordial national identity and purity through alliance politics and invocation of Celtic symbolism (Gabriel 1997: 159). More recently, the National Front's successor British National Party has gained ground by repositioning itself closer to the traditional established political parties, recoding its articulations of whiteness to enable many of its views to find "a niche within the platforms of respectable political parties" (Gabriel ibid.: 160). Thus, while publicly criticising the Dutch far right for its appeals to assumed essential liberal values such as tolerance, current BNP leader Nick Griffin has repositioned the party in order to distance itself from its traditional image of racial hatred, referring to its views as 'racial realism' rather than racism. The absurdity of suggesting that the BNP only appeals to swastika-wielding thugs is clear from its increasingly successful recent appeals to followers of mainstream political parties on a political terrain that frames similarities between the BNP's representations of 'race' and nation and those of the 'mainstream' political parties. As Griffin notes of the similarities between his views and those of Labour Home Secretary David Blunkett, "if Blunkett deports one asylum seeker, we can deport all of them"[26]. In other words, the main difference between the

BNP and Tony Blair's Labour government is merely one of degree rather than political principle. Through this approach the BNP has made an impact in council elections in the traditional Labour strongholds of the post-industrial north not because it contests politics on a radically different terrain, but rather because it appeals to supporters of the main political parties in terms readily intelligible to them, and configures its appeals to 'ordinary voters' around themes of contemporary concern (community development, the countryside, European integration, the Muslim threat...).

Within the context of student politics, it is clear that not only has the British National Party sought to garner support by invoking the NUS' anti-'fundamentalist' campaigning rhetoric, but also that the NUS has found itself sharing the same ground as the British National Party despite its claims to the contrary.

4.2 Liberal whiteness, the BNP and the NUS

The assumption that we should necessarily assume an unbridgeable gap between liberal-leaning organisations such as the NUS and far right white racists such as the British National Party is also problematic since it ignores the emergence of liberal whiteness. For it is clear that there are parallels between Nick Griffin's attempts to distance the BNP from perceptions of racism and what he calls "purist race freaks"[27], and the NUS' tendency to position itself as necessarily distanced from the extremism of this far right party. The strategy both employ is perhaps best theorised by Howard Winant (1997), who describes it as the 'dualism' of whiteness in these Eurocentric days following the dislocation of the decentring of the west. Winant's 'white dualism' is a split subjectivity "between disaffiliation from white supremacist practices and disavowal of the ongoing reformation of white power and one's benefit from it – [which] is constitutive of contemporary white racial reformation" (Wiegman 1999: 119). Thus, while liberal whiteness "depends on defining others for its own self-

definition...[it] also depends on a definition of racism which exonerates itself" (Gabriel 1998: 61) or, in the case of the NUS, depending on racialised definitions of racism that enable it to perpetuate racist exclusions and demonisation while exonerating itself as being committed to antiracism, as I noted in chapter four.

This split subjectivity is all too clear from the BNP's attempts to distance itself from racism and appeal to presumed "assimilated" ethnic groups (Hindus, Sikhs, some African-Caribbeans[28]), while simultaneously reaffirming the primacy of its concerns for maintaining white power. In NUS narratives on Muslim students it is similarly reflected in the deployment of 'far right' and 'extremist' as markers of racism proper to disaffiliate the NUS from white racism while simultaneously refusing to take criticism of its Islamophobia seriously, failing to redress the racialised inequalities its interventions valorise and perpetuate, and representing the nation as a closed system of differences through the exclusion of the socially excluded and relatively unassimilated (presumed unassimilable) Muslims. Like the BNP, the NUS represents whiteness "as attuned to racial equality and justice while so aggressively solidifying its advantage", invoking a " 'liberal whiteness,' a color-blind moral sameness whose reinvestment in...[the nation] rehabilitates the national narrative of democratic progress", and like all "projects, no matter how fundamentally neoracist or antiracist...[framing itself] within the official national discourse of integrationist equality" (Wiegman 1999). We would be mistaken to view the politics of racism as the exclusive domain of 'extremist' hate groups, since the discourse of racialisation and division they articulate remains an important part of 'mainstream' ideology and action. Groups such as the BNP do not exist in Britain simply as a consequence of the lunacy of their racist leadership or as a reflection of the glories of free speech and democracy. They exist because, somehow, it is still plausible for them to exist in our racialised liberal society.

4.3 Bearing the standard: the NUS and the BNP

The marked similarities between BNP narratives on 'fundamentalism' and those of the National Union of Students clearly should not be a source of great surprise. As I noted in chapter four, there has certainly been no shortage of warnings concerning the racist and Islamophobic path the NUS has chosen to tread in pursuing its dangerous course of racialised interventions on 'extremism'. The similarities between the positions of the BNP and the NUS – and the BNP's ability to deploy information apparently gained through NUS campaigning literature – are a testament not only to the BNP's willingness to tactically reposition itself but also to the possibilities opened by the NUS' representations of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' to break down traditional barriers and successfully appeal to the standard bearers of far right racism in Britain.

5 Whiteness and minorities

Once we accept that there is no need to be overtly surprised at the distinct parallels between far right white racist discourse and the NUS' racialised campaigning against 'fundamentalist' students, then we are faced with a further complication. How can we account for the willingness of members of ethnicised minorities – themselves victims of racism – to buy into the logics of white racism and Islamophobia by demonising Muslim students and even participating in the circulation of Islamophobic hoaxes? This question is important, for it is clear that Jewish people in Britain are extremely aware of their minority status (Lappin 1997) as was illustrated when Rebecca, a Swanton University staff member, noted during interview that her excellent track record in supporting Muslim students and challenging Islamophobia was informed by a strong sense of empathy with Muslims that she harboured as a minority herself (Jewish woman)[29]. Shouldn't we thus expect other minority members to follow Rebecca's lead and challenge racism and Islamophobia rather than valorising it?

Such an assumption would, however, be impossible without two prior conceptual moves. First, we would have to accept an essentialised reading of ethnicised minority identities, a proposition we cannot find credible for obvious reasons. Second, we would have to accept we would also have to accept the assumption that whiteness is an ontic status. In the light of my unfolding exploration of whiteness, it is with the second of these assumptions that I am primarily concerned in the remainder of this chapter. Were we to assume whiteness to be ontic, we could reasonably assume to find ourselves considering questions emerging from the ways in which discourses of whiteness have historically excluded Jews as well as those – like Hindus, Sikhs, African-Caribbeans, and Muslims – more commonly considered non-white. The disingenuity of such an approach should, of course, be clear from our recognition of the changing ways in which whiteness is articulated. For, once we accept the logics that discourses of whiteness have historically served to exclude members of various minority groups, it is clearly just as important to consider the ways in which ethnicised minorities can be enwhitened and included through the workings of such discourse.

An established literature notes how anti-Irish racism in the United States eventually gave way to the "whitening" of Irish – through enhanced economic status and enfranchisement – in exchange for votes (Gabriel 1998: 133). Clearly, when we speak of whiteness we are speaking not of an ontic status but rather of one historically constructed as being capable of transcending the (assumed) physically white body (Dyer 1997: 23). Whiteness – particularly during these Eurocentric times – is a project that contingently enwhitens various groups and individuals not only in order to construct 'non-westerners' as defective whitemales but also, as Dyer notes (1997: 9), to underline the assumed universality of whiteness and to allow those already enwhitened to "construct the world in their image". In order to explore quite how it should be that the UJS' Mark Ross and the Sikh author of the anonymous warning to Sikh students could be thus enwhitened, it is therefore worth considering

in greater detail the notions of whiteness and Britishness that are central to their representations of the Muslim threat.

5.1 Socio-economic status and whiteness

One of the most marked features of contemporary Islamophobia in Britain is, as I have already noted, the idea that the 'fundamentalist' threat is somehow related to social exclusion. One reason why this popular pathology is so appealing when it comes to discussions of Muslim students is because, notwithstanding the broader lack of empirical data on Muslims in Britain, one point that cannot be doubted is that the vast majority of Muslim students in Britain are drawn from among the most socially excluded sectors of society. For example, in 1999, only 30% of Pakistani pupils and 30% of Bangladeshi pupils – both groups likely to contain significant numbers of people articulating themselves as Muslim – achieved five or more GCSEs at grades C and above in comparison with 50% of white pupils and 62% of Indian pupils. 40% of Pakistani and Bangaldeshi households live in overcrowded housing, while unemployment among working age Bangladeshi and Pakistani people stood at 23% and 20% respectively in 1998, in contrast with 5.8% unemployment among whites and an average of 13% unemployment among ethnic minorities[30].

The contrasts between Muslims in Britain and members of other ethnicised minorities are perhaps best highlighted by turning to Jewish people who, as Lappin (1997) notes, are often extremely aware of their position as members of an ethnicised minority. In this light it is worth recalling the argument of the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (1999) that "in general, Jews in Britain do not experience the same levels of discrimination as other, more visible, ethnic groups, despite small increases in the number of anti-Semitic incidents reported. Public expressions of anti-Semitic attitudes are largely confined to the political fringe, either far right or Islamist". Furthermore, in a North American context, the Anti-Defamation League (1997)

asserts that "gone are the days of quotas limiting the number of Jewish students at our nation's top colleges and universities...Jewish faculty have thrived at many of the nation's top institutions, both as teachers and administrators. Institutionalized discrimination against Jews is a thing of the past. Jewish students and faculty are now found in great numbers at elite universities which once resisted their presence. A majority of Ivy League universities and many others now have or have had Jewish presidents. There are few if any positions in American higher education that are not open to Jewish talent". Even discounting the ADL's extremely problematic suggestion that institutionalised Antisemitism is a thing of the past and taking into account the obvious cross-Atlantic contextual differences, the contrasts with the position of Muslims in higher education could not be greater: one Muslim middle manager from four case study universities is about as apt an indictment of institutionalised Islamophobia in HEIs as one is likely to find. In this light it is worth noting Braithwaite, Silverstein & Shah's discussion of a roundtable of minority students (1997). "Black and Muslim resentment of Jewish power and influence" is not merely Antisemitic as suggested (*ibid.*), but is also paradoxically a reflection of the gulf separating Jewish staff and students from their Black and Muslim peers in terms of access to elite status and privilege in the academy.

5.2 Whiteness as privilege

In this the ADL's reference to the United States as 'our nation' (*ibid.*) is significant, since it reflects the extent to which, despite their minority status and the persistence of Antisemitism, Jews can be strategically enwhitened and identify themselves with the privileged status of whiteness and national belonging. This is because social exclusion experienced by Muslims is not merely a symptom of engrained racism and Islamophobia, but simultaneously a marker of Muslim identities as threatening and alien. This is perhaps best illustrated by returning to dominant representations of the Muslim student threat that, as we saw in chapter four, link social exclusion with the

otherness of the 'fundamentalists'. It is therefore significant that what we see in the anonymous warning to Sikh students with all its spurious claims of Muslim infiltration in order to prevent the further upward mobility of Sikhs are definitions of whiteness and Britishness that are predicated around socio-economic status. Thus, the Muslim threat is related both to Muslim hatred of whites (an assumption reinforced through reference to African-Caribbean converts to Islam) and to the lowness of Muslims in socio-economic terms, a trope that not only reinforces the Eurocentric notion of Muslims as defective whitemales, but which is also an alternative marker for the lowness of Muslim behaviour.

This choice of metaphors is not accidental. For example, it is worth noting that Griffin's BNP article raises the same concerns, extending definitions of whiteness and Britishness that are predicated around socio-economic rather than phenotypal racial indicators. Thus, Griffin has also argued that "the tendency within the nationalist movement is to think within terms of multiracialism, but the debate will be about multiculturalism. All the West Indians I met in Oldham, and you could count them on one hand, were voting for the BNP. To an absolute purist that's anathema. That's silly to me because one percent of our genes are from Africa. We've already assimilated a proportion and it hasn't had the terrible effects that the purist race freaks talk about"[31]. Thus, the whiteness that the BNP speak of is related not to ontic characteristics, but rather to other capacities such as the ability of members of different ethnicised minority groups to "assimilate" – or in other words, to strategically buy into the logics of whiteness in order to obtain improved access to citizenship rights and greater economic status. In this context, it is significant that Griffin's justification of Islamophobia also has a similar concern: "We can put up with the blacks. The question of Islam is another matter. They convert the lowest groups wherever they go."[32] Thus, contemporary discourse of whiteness focuses on the ability to strategically enwhiten certain members of certain ethnicised minority groups based on their presumed levels of socio-economic status, while the refusal to

enwhiten Muslims is directly related to their 'lowness' in socio-economic terms, and thus to their inassimilability.

The parallels with the NUS' conflation of the alien and threatening Muslims with social exclusion are obvious. However, it is also worth noting that among defenders of Israeli state discourse similar concerns emerge. Thus, to Raphael Israeli (2001) – a Zionist with Islamophobic views very much in the Daniel Pipes mould – the resurgence of Antisemitism in Europe is "initiated and executed mainly by locally nationalized Arab or Muslim immigrants, long established or recent arrivals, legal or illegal"[33]. The alien political practices the immigrants bring with them result only in the further infiltration of the country "as they have learned to translate their numbers into political clout and to make their political support conditional on their support...Muslim/Arab communities...often use their leverage to clamor for easing immigration controls on their kin" (ibid.), thus disrupting the polite middle class politics of the countries hosting these alien 'fundamentalists' Thus, as they begin to "assiduously assert their views...they also begin to erode the longer established and highly regarded local Jewish communities which usually wield a very visible influence in the economic and cultural domains" (ibid.). Moreover, "while Jewish support for Israel is normally dignified and within the boundaries of law and legitimate dissent and demonstration in democratic societies, the Muslim newcomers, who are not versed in these niceties upon their arrival, tend to perpetuate the tradition of violence and open outrage that they bring with them from their countries of origin" (ibid.). In narratives such as this, the Muslim problem is the problem of the unassimilable immigrant whose backwardness and low levels of socio-economic attainment contrast starkly with those of the Jew as the minority assimilable into whiteness and national belonging and underpin the disruption not only of the racialised practices of whiteness and nationhood and polite, middle class ways of doing politics. Moreover, with Antisemitism conflated with the immigrant problem, Jews are aligned with whiteness.

There is nothing particularly new or innovative about the alignment of members of ethnicised minorities with whiteness in the pursuit of racist agendas. It is, after all, barely a decade since Jean Marie Le Pen appointed an African-Caribbean Frenchwoman as his spokesperson and, as Gabriel (1998: 126) reminds us, it is not unknown for complex white racist discourse to persuade "some black people to identify with a 'white' cause".

5.3 Whiteness and the political right

Another way of exploring the strategic enwhitening of some ethnicised minority group members is to explore some of the political interests vested in campaigns against Muslim students. This is an important question since there can be little doubt about the historical significance of right wing politics in the constitution of whiteness. Nearly all works on racism will at some point refer us to the iconic racists of the mainstream political right as well as to the generally pro-'establishment' rightist leaning areas of state delivery such as criminal justice that have been so central to the perpetuation of racialised inequalities in Britain. It is also clear that having failed to convincingly engage with its own institutionalised Islamophobia, the NUS' most forceful stands on the question of racialised inequality have taken the form of campaigning against right wing groups such as the British National Party. Thus we are generally expected to assumed that, when it comes to Muslim students, the fundamental political faultline in universities pits the Muslim 'extremists' on one side against a rather loosely defined alliance of centrists, 'moderates', and liberals (including LGB, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, and white students and led by the NUS) on the other.

This assumption is not without difficulties, for it is clear that the logics of de-essentialisation require us to abandon the notion that the Muslim 'extremists' and whole cohorts of other monolithic student blocs (LGB, Jewish...) are ranged against each other in a zero-sum face-off. In fact, it is clear that the political antagonisms

being played out pit certain, quite specific, political interest groups and campaigners against others. In fact, on close examination the notion of a fairly 'liberal' bloc opposing Muslim 'extremism' swiftly evaporates. For example, during my travels around Finchton, Fowlerstone, Greenstone, and Swanton universities it became clear that Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual campaigners were not perceived by my respondents as the main movers in the demonisation of Muslim students, even though one *al Muhajiroun* leaflet distributed in Greenstone Union had implicitly referred to Gay rights groups' support for NUS witch-hunts against 'fundamentalists'. Some practising Muslim respondents counterpointed disapproval of homosexuality against very high commendations of LGB rights campaigners while noting that there was nothing that pitted them against a monolithic notion of 'Muslims'[34], even if they did generally acknowledge that they would not themselves choose to be Gay. Indeed, a number of former Finchton University students and staff members spoke extremely highly of a former Palestinian Muslim President of the Islamic Society during the late 1980s, who had apparently joined the LGB Society in order to promote good relations between the two groups. Possibly these perceptions were due to the fact that there is a far greater likelihood of finding Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual Muslims than finding Hindu Nationalist or Zionist Muslims. Another explanation can be found in the sense among many of my respondents that while LGB campaigners had often supported broader racialised campaigns against Muslims, they were not seen as the primary movers behind such campaigns and generally campaigned very specifically against groups such as *al Muhajiroun* – through strategies such as leafleting and picketing conferences and rallies held by the group – rather than launching a broader assault against Muslims *generally*. Indeed, it is worth contrasting the NUS' response to the rising tide of Islamophobic attacks after 11th September 2001 with that of LGB rights campaigners[35]. In June 2002 the Chicago-based LGB rights movement The Chicago Anti-Bashing Network (CABN) began campaigning against the upsurge in anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia following the attacks of 11th September 2001. Perhaps the most interesting feature of CABN's engagement with Islamophobia was the contribution of Gay Palestinian-American Muslim journalist Mubarak Dahir, who

noted that "today Arabs and Muslims have become the new communists, the ones to fear, to loathe"[36].

Dahir's words are extremely significant for they illustrate the disingenuousness of assuming a monolithic 'Islam' to be pitted against a similarly monolithic bloc of 'moderates' comprising more or less everybody else. Dahir's words also illustrate the creeping conflation of Muslim identities with Communism which has led many to wrongly assume that Muslims are simply 'the new enemy' following the end of the Cold War. This conflation of Muslimness with Communism is not merely a move of convenience but plays into a broader articulation of whiteness with generally right-of-centre politics that represents Muslims in terms analogous to older forms of Antisemitism as Communist infiltrators. It is thus significant to note that the three different representations of Muslim threat discussed earlier in this chapter all share this concern – the anonymous warning through its references to Muslim infiltration of the Labour Party and antiracist organisations, the BNP article through its similar conflation of the Muslim threat with the dangers of antiracism, and Mark Ross' UJS article through its crude but absurd allegations of "the far left" and the 'fundamentalists' infiltrating each other. This move – conflating the Muslim threat *with left-wing politics* – *demonstrates* that the anonymous racist and Mark Ross share with Nick Griffin definition of whiteness that is based on practices rather than phenotypal markers. Thus, minority members such as Mark Ross are able to buy into the logics of whiteness regardless of their status as minorities. Thus, both Ross and the BNP have very similar things to say about Muslim students – even similarly justifying their multiculturalist credentials – with the only ostensible difference being that Ross offers to challenge the BNP threat as well as the Muslim threat.

This implicit conflation of right-wing politics with whiteness and Britishness consolidates the disenfranchisement and demonisation of Muslim students in two main ways. First, it leaves Muslim students facing a rather ragged band of opponents all united by their right-wing politics. This is significant because the main

beneficiaries of NUS campaigning against the 'fundamentalist' menace are groups and individuals on the political right ranging from centrist right Zionists such as Mark Ross to hard right Zionists, the white far right, and right wing Hindu Nationalists such as the *Hindu Vivek Kendra* and *Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh*[37], as well as isolated racists like the author of the anonymous warning critiqued earlier in this chapter. Indeed, of the main political engagements of the 2001-2002 session involving Muslim students only a tiny handful of isolated cases involved groups such as *al Muhajiroun* pitted against entire student groups; the vast majority involved coalition campaigning in support of the cause of Palestinian self-determination by Muslim and socialist students and opposed by supporters of Zionism. The successful over-determination of such conflicts into a broader racialised dispute

Second, the identification of the alien Muslim 'threat' with leftist infiltration also necessitates some consideration of the broader context of higher education. It should come as no surprise to learn that the increasing fortification of universities against Muslim infiltration has coincided with the entrenchment of new-right fiscal principles in the sector. For example, the Department for Employment and Education's 1995 *Guidelines for Student Unions* has represented one of the most powerful tools for further racialising universities and disenfranchising Muslim students through terrifyingly restrictive recommendations on acceptable political activity by student societies. These guidelines were not produced in a political vacuum but emerged from the hegemony of new right principles championing free market values and attempting to erode politicisation in the public sector. Examples analogous to the DfEE's 1995 guidelines include attempts by the Education Reform Act (1988) to "erode the LEA's political control over education" (Troyna 1993: 73) and Section 27 of the Local Government Act which banned local councils from issuing publicity materials that could be deemed political. I am willing to go so far as to suggest, without even invoking my respondents, that the DfEE's guidelines have only been noticeably invoked in order to silence political activities involving Muslim students, including attempts to support the cause of Palestinian self-determination. I also

suggest that one would be hard pressed to find, say, a Jewish Society falling foul of the DfEE's recommendations on account of its support for the state of Israel. One reason for this racialised discrepancy is because right of centre political campaigners are not only strategically enwhitened but also aligned with the HE establishment.

5.4 Ethnicised student campaigners and whiteness

It is clear that both the anonymous author of the Sikh warning of Islamic 'fundamentalism' and Mark Ross buy into the logics of whiteness by defining whiteness and Britishness as an aggregate of statuses and practices that cannot in themselves be viewed as decisive in determining the nature of 'Britishness' or 'whiteness' but which have sufficiently long histories of investment with disaggregated markers of 'whiteness' and national belonging for us to know exactly what is meant by them – particularly within the context of a broader demonisation of Muslim students. It is also significant that the incoherence of most discussions of Muslim student 'fundamentalism' is reflected by the contradictory ways in which we are asked to assume that, while Muslims are the dispossessed, the unassimilable, the socially excluded in wider society – and therefore, marked as 'alien' and threatening to Britishness – they are at the same time represented as inherently powerful and threatening, particularly in the context of universities. This move is, of course, a favoured strategy of white racism, since it involves what Stacey has problematically termed 'discursive reversal' (Stacey 1991: 288). What Stacey means by this is the representation of the comparatively powerless as inherently powerful. Thus, even though we must raise the obvious conceptual difficulties with Stacey's unilinear definition of power[38], it is nevertheless significant to note that contemporary Islamophobic discourse emphasises the Muslims as inherently powerful and threatening in contrast to white (and strategically enwhitened) groups who are very much represented as relatively powerless and threatened by Muslims. In this there are clear parallels with other forms of racialised discourse, including Antisemitism.

6 Conclusion

All these spurious notions of 'fundamentalists' infiltrating both mainstream left of centre and "far left" organisations leave me very much in mind of the defeat of Ramsay MacDonald's Labour Party in 1924 in the wake of the Zinoviev affair. The leaking of Zinoviev's letter promoting revolution to *The Daily Mail* contributed directly to Conservative victory. Zinoviev himself pointed out fundamental errors in the letter that no credible Communist would have produced[39], although the damage was already done and the forgery able to appear convincing to those with only a caricatured understanding of leftists and eastern Europeans. Likewise, Islamophobic hoaxes that so often centre around notions of ritual rape and bloodletting find their natural parallels in incidents of Antisemitism such as the Dreyfus and Beilis cases and the Orléans rumour. The thing about most reports of Muslim crime is that they are proceed from dubious empirical origins to seemingly take on a life of their own, becoming subtly changed with each retelling and finding their way both into official demonologies of Muslims and patterns of formal intervention. In doing so they do not so much cloud our understanding of the continued problems of white racism in British universities as shape it, while valorising contemporary ideological projects of whiteness – such as *Islamophobia* and *Eurocentrism* – in liberal universities. Islamophobic hoaxes invoke particular knowledges of essentialist agency and racialised social relations in order to suture chasms that would traditionally be perceived as unbridgeable, allying Hindu Nationalists, white liberal student politicians, supporters of Zionism, and the far right in defence of an Islamophobic politics of whiteness and racialised privilege.

The dominance of widespread, unproblematised assumptions concerning a natural link between Muslim students and crime illustrates the extent to which white racism is able to reinvent itself and forge links between seemingly disparate discourses.

Whiteness is neither something that appeals only to those with seemingly 'white' skins – whatever those may look like – and nor is it something subject solely to appeals by far right white racists in the David Copeland mould. The disaffiliation of whiteness from practices of white racism and privilege involved in the extension of these simplistic and polemical accounts of 'extremism' only serve to obfuscate the conditions in which white racism and Islamophobia are articulated in universities and to defer meaningful engagement with these problems on the part of organisations such as the NUS. Thus, the NUS and the BNP find themselves occupying more or less identical ground when it comes to Muslims.

Not only do the NUS' campaigns against white racism lose all credibility as a consequence of these difficulties, but so too does its racialised approach to dealing with 'extremism' and 'fundamentalism'. For it is clear that the NUS' approach is inescapably based on essentialism. Thus, the NUS assumes that members of minority groups (with the exception of Muslims) cannot possibly buy into the logics of white racism because they are, essentially, 'non-white'. Thus, the NUS assumes that the claims of Hindu Nationalists and Zionists (for example) to truly represent all members of particular, essential ethnicised constituencies are valid. As a consequence, the NUS remains blissfully unaware that the main political faultline in universities when it comes to Muslims is not one that ranges the 'fundamentalists' against Hindus, Jews, and Sikhs in general. Far from it; the vast majority of Hindu, Sikh and Jewish students have probably never even met a member of al Muhajiroun. Despite repeated engagements against 'fundamentalism', during the 2001-2002 session only a tiny handful of extremely isolated incidents in British universities involved members of groups such as al Muhajiroun. The main political engagements involving Muslim students during this time involved loose alliances of Palestinian rights campaigners pitted against loose alliances of Zionist supporters. 'Fundamentalism' remains, however, the most effective means of discrediting all principled political activities likely to involve Muslim students, and it is through Islamophobic hoaxes and widely circulated rumours of ritual crimes by

'fundamentalists' that not only whiteness is policed against the 'lowness' and general political leftism of today's alien infiltrators but also that a range of inner fears and preoccupations find their resolution through the scapegoating of some mythologised and mystified essential Muslim 'fundamentalist'.

Muslim students cannot be convincingly demonstrated to be general enemies of Hindu, Sikh, or Jewish students[40]. Rather, we can only understand political activities involving Muslim students by abandoning the use of dehistoricised and polemical contested concepts such as 'fundamentalism'. Muslim students need to be understood within the context of contingent political activities by a range of interest groups in universities. Attempting to fix Muslim political agency around essential nodes of 'infiltration', 'lowness', 'backwardness', and 'communist infiltration' will *succeed only in missing both the conditions in which Islamists* are able to successfully appeal to Muslim students in a broader context of Islamophobic scaremongering and demonisation. Thus, despite almost a decade of campaigning against the 'fundamentalist' problem, the uselessness of the NUS' approach is reflected in the fact that we still see annual scares and campaigns on 'the Muslim question'. From this we can infer two things. First, that the NUS' interventions have clearly failed. Second, that all this talk of 'fundamentalism' actually serves other symbolic purposes, some of which may relate to attempts to mobilise particular political constituencies (Hindu Nationalists, Zionists, 'white' 'British'...) and some of which may involve the resolution of other political tensions.

The most ironic thing about the NUS' racialised engagements with 'fundamentalism' and 'extremism' when, in practice, it is Muslim students broadly who will pay the price for its efforts, is that in its eagerness to deal with what has been carefully packaged and sold as a widespread threat to universities the NUS has actually found itself lending an ear to 'fundamentalists' of other religious persuasions. The NUS' claims of liberalism and tolerance are undermined by its partisan dealings, and any last vestiges of credibility in its engagements with far right white racism are erased with

the realisation that, when all is said and done, the NUS' views on what has become in practice 'the Muslim question' almost directly echo those of the racist British National Party which is widely acknowledged to be focusing on Islamophobia, as well as paralleling the views of non-Muslim 'fundamentalist' groups. As a consequence, it is now pertinent to turn to a case study of Muslim-Jewish tension in a specific institutional context in order to further explore the relationships between contradictory definitions of Islamophobia and Antisemitism within the context of the racialisation of a university and the contemporary politics of whiteness.

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[1] For example, the first time I encountered one of these warnings was in a telephone call in May 1999 from Nina, a PhD student exploring Hindu youth in Britain.

[2] It was through Iqbal (former student of Greenstone University, mid 20s, and from the city in question) that I heard about the problems with the fake *Hizb ut-Tahrir* leaflets during a telephone conversation in August 2002. Through Iqbal I made contact with a number of other respondents reiterating his concerns.

[3] These reports were made to me by Peter, a manager in Finchton University during August 1999. What was interesting was that current and former Muslim students had been more than willing to share with me their knowledge of infractions undertaken by *al Muhajiroun* members during the 1997-1998 academic session, including an occasion when a female Sikh student accompanying a Muslim friend to an Islamic Society event was abusively ordered by a member of *al Muhajiroun* to leave and not return until she had converted to Islam and begun wearing *hijab*. However, infractions reported to me by Peter focused on the distribution of literature by the group branding white women "whores" and "bitches" and death threats made against a Lesbian member of the Students' Union Executive, including one threat allegedly nailed to the front door of her house and necessitating police protection. As willing as current and former Muslim students in Finchton were to discuss with me the period of intense *al Muhajiroun* activity that occurred in 1997-1998, all my respondents were mystified by mention of the crimes that Peter informed me of, either suggesting that the university and police had managed to keep these incidents extremely low-key, or that Peter's version of events was perhaps unreliable.

[4] The case of Imran Chaudhry and the *Socialist Worker* report on the NUS' 1995 Annual Conference mentioned in chapter four are cases in point, as are more recent legal cases including that of Lotfi Raissi, cleared in 2002 of terrorist links after being arrested at the behest of the United States based on the slimmest of evidence – a photograph of Raissi with his visibly ethnicised, visibly Muslim and entirely innocent cousin was held to be a photograph of Raissi with a terrorist mastermind – and held in Belmarsh high security prison in south London, suffering racial abuse and finding the lives of his whole family were destroyed as a result of this terrible miscarriage of justice.

[5] For example, by referring to a *Mail on Sunday* article as a discourse in its own right (*ibid.*: 115), Poole demonstrates a rather problematic understanding of discourse theory.

[6] For example, Poole's initial intimations of a discourse theory approach is swiftly replaced by a discourse analysis approach (*ibid.*: 102). It goes without saying that discourse analysis and discourse theory do not necessarily involve complementary conceptual vocabularies. The difficulties of this are illustrated by Poole's concern for "structural transformations" in texts (*ibid.*: 103)

[7] For example, Poole's preferred definition of ideology (drawn from Sapsford & Abbott 1996) is "as 'a coherent set of propositions about what people and/or social institutions are like and how they ought to be – generally presented to one group of people that certain behaviours are in their own interests and concealing the fact that they are more so in the interests of another, more powerful group', it can be usefully incorporated into Foucault's notion of discourse as an expression of ideology, 'a framework within which ideas are formulated' (Sapsford & Jupp 1996: 332)". Two difficulties emerge from this. First, it is clear that far from talking about different attempts to interpolate the real, Poole is primarily concerned with reality itself, and in this case, with the disguising of reality (to fool people into believing certain ideas are in their own best interests) rather than in the ways that realities are constructed. Thus, the epistemological difficulties of Poole's detour into Foucaultian territory are clear. Second, from this it is also clear that Poole's definition of ideology is a medial position vacillating between Foucault (who she deploys) and Althusseran notions of ideology as our imaginary relationships between our real conditions of being. This is, of course, also contradicted by Poole's own acknowledgement that ideology in fact goes further than merely thought and is implicated in the linguistic and behavioural choices we make. It is also not a position that can be reconciled within the post-structuralist reading that Poole intimates toward the start of her work, since it is clear that notions of the reality of one's conditions of existence cannot be reconciled within a post-structuralist conceptual vocabulary.

[8] For example, Poole concerns herself with examples of what she terms "counter discourse" (*ibid.*: 124) which is, of course, a problematic assertion that requires prior acceptance of the assumption that discourses are bounded entities that do not penetrate one another and further that they are directional and unilinear in their functioning. Such ideas are problematic and, of course, contradict her earlier allusions to post-structuralism.

[9] For example, Poole acknowledges that journalists tend to revisit 'familiar faces' for information on Muslims (2002: 97).

[10] Ransby's subsequent comment is, in this context, extremely symbolic: "Paranthetically, this type of community-wide punishment is reminiscent of the treatment meted out to Palestinian communities during the *intifada* in which whole neighbourhoods were razed as retribution against rock-throwing youths" (*op. cit.*)

[11] Hindu Vivek Kendra, 'Secularism Extra-Ordinary' by Ramen Bando published London n.d.: Sahitya Porishad, also disseminated on HVK website (http://hvk.org/specialrepo/seo/index.html) (noted on web June 2002).

[12] For example, the HVK and the anonymous warning to Sikh students are only able to suggest that "dozens of cases reported" have surfaced and to base their assertions on baseless rumour than on any reliable indicators that these "dozens of cases reported" are to be believed.

[13] For example, the HVK refers to the conversion of a Sikh girl at a *Hizb ut-Tahrir* conference in 1994 and the conversion of two Hindu women by *Hizb ut-Tahrir* members in Trafalgar Square during August 1995. No convincing evidence as to whether or not coercion was involved in any of these three cases is presented. Neither can we reliably assume that the experiences of three young women are representative of a large-scale problem.

[14] It is worth noting that during fieldwork far more cases of Muslim students being victims of violence, harassment, abuse, and coercion in the four case study universities than of Muslims victimizing Hindu and Sikh students. This is not to suggest that there was never any tension between Hindu, Sikh and Muslim students in the four case study universities, but rather to note that a contextualized reading is called for. For example, Islamophobia was central to the highly symbolic forms of blackmail and coercion that a female Sikh postgraduate student from Greenstone University subjected a Muslim male postgraduate student from a nearby university between September 2000 and March 2002. Likewise, respondents from Finchton University recalled some tensions a number of years earlier when a Bhangra gig advertised as an 'Asian Love Party' was advertised with posters clearly displaying Allah and Mohammed in Arabic. In Finchton University a number of close friendships and relationships involving Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs were reported, with no signs that any of these involved coercion. Reports also surfaced of a Hindu student converting to Islam in Finchton University a number of years ago, although there were no signs that she had ever been involved in a relationship with a Muslim man or that she had been subjected to coercion by Muslims, although respondents did suggest that she had been disowned by her family for consorting with Muslims and converting to Islam. The only verifiable incident involving the targeting of Hindu or Sikh women by Muslim students in Finchton University occurred during the 1997-1998 session when a Sikh student attended an Islamic Society event with a Muslim friend and was told by a Muslim male attending the event to leave and return only when wearing *hijab*. During the 2000-2001 session a Hindu postgraduate student in Greenstone University did report experiencing hostility and racist jokes from a small group of Muslim students while studying in a college of further education some years earlier. In Swanton University, Muslim students reported working closely with Hindu and Sikh students despite facing some hostility. In order to dredge up these examples of tension took extensive investigation. Incidents such as these cannot be viewed as being in any way indicative of a widespread threat to Hindu and Sikh students by Muslims in British universities and to suggest otherwise is extremely irresponsible.

[15] http://www.crossofsaintgeorge.com/ disc1/0000120b.htm, noted during November 2001.

[16] http://www.sikhnet.com/Sikhnet/discussion.nsf/78f5a2ff8906d1788725657c00732d6c/B4F71D1F9D6247 6187256AF3006DB1A6?OpenDocument

[17] Article found on the British National Party website, summer 2002, http://www.bnp.org.uk

[18] http://www.ujs-online.co.uk/magazine_freshers_01_keeping_peace.htm

[19] For example, "at Middlesex University, I made friends with the Afro- Caribbean Society.."). Having established his multicultural credentials, Ross then turns to a variation on the 'not all Blacks are criminals' theme: "at QMUL, where there is a massive Islamic community, mostly very moderate and friendly, there were five different Islamic Societies represented at the Fresher's Fayre. All of them came together to deal with a large Al Muhajiroun delegation which had formed outside the Union building. **At the end of the day, the Ahmaddi Muslim Society presented the J-Soc. with one of the books they had been giving out to their students, it was entitled 'A Message of Peace'**".

[20] I find two main difficulties with Ross' anecdote. First, I feel it is rather too far-fetched to be viewed as credible. For example, during my own fieldwork I never once encountered such a group as the British National Student Society. I can only assume by this that Ross is not referring to the British National Society for Aid to Victims of War, but rather to what is more commonly known to the rest of us as the British National Student Association, and which is part of the youth wing of the far right racist British National Party. It also seems rather too much of a coincidence to find all four of these societies situated within spitting distance of each other in a union freshers' fair, particularly since the British National Party has been banned from university campuses and by the NUS almost as frequently as *al Muhajiroun* and *Hizb ut-Tahrir* have been.

[21] Ross' representation of 'fundamentalist' student activity certainly contrasts with the description of student *al Muhajiroun* activists provided for my by Bilal as "a bunch of eighteen year old kids who sit around talking *bakhwaas* [rubbish] in kebab shops for a year and a half and waving their banners like the Third World First mob and then learn enough about Islam to realise the pure silliness of *al Muhajiroun*". Bilal (former student of Greenstone University, mid '20s, during telephone interview June 14th 2002).

[22] Even when Ross does suggest that 'fundamentalists' are, in fact, humans who can be engaged in dialogue, it is to deploy the anecdote of seeing *al Muhajiroun* members happily chatting away with union officers, an incident that certainly is not consistent with the broader experiences of even 'moderate' Muslim respondents in universities like Finchton and Greenstone University being excluded and demonised as terrorist sponsors and criminals.

[23] For example, Ross refers to an *al Muhajiroun* flag being displayed by Islamic Society members in one university. What he omits to tell us – possibly through ignorance, in which case the uselessness of his exposé is underlined – is that there is actually no such thing as an *al Muhajiroun* flag any more than the star of David is the flag of the Stern Gang. What Ross refers to is in fact appealed to by the group because of its status as an Islamic banner and motif incorporating the first statement of faith ('There is no God except Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah') and thus recognisable to all observant Muslims (hence the group's appeals to it).

[24] "I wandered over to the Sikh Students, who were standing there in full "religious/battle" dress, perfect. I introduced myself as a Jewish Student. All of them listened intently as I told them that I was concerned about the I-Soc. stall. As it happened, a couple of them had been involved in B.O.S.S. and had worked alongside UJS in the past. Two of them stayed to man the stall. I had never seen three people so

surprised as the guys behind the Al Muhajiroun flag were when four big Sikh students brandishing ceremonial swords, shields and armour turned up and asked for some information and where they could sign up... Within about half an hour the Sikh students had returned to their stall and the I-Soc. representatives had packed up their boxes and were leaving".

[25] Thus, the dangerous Blackmale violence of the Muslims is dealt with through a hypermasculine intervention by 'big' sword-wielding Sikh students.

[26] Quoted in 'Flying the flag', Andrew Anthony, *The Observer Magazine*, 1st September 2002

[27] In *The Observer Magazine*, 1st September 2002

[28] For example, Griffin: "All the West Indians I met in Oldham, and you could count them on one hand, were voting for the BNP. To an absolute purist that's anathema. That's silly to me because one per cent of our genes are from Africa. We've already assimilated a proportion and it hasn't had the terrible effects that the purist race freaks talk about", in *The Observer Magazine*, 1st September 2002

[29] During interview, June 1999.

[30] Source, 'Disadvantage & discrimination in Britain today – the facts', Commission for Racial Equality (n.d.), http://www.cre.gov.uk

[31] In *The Observer Magazine*, 1st September 2002

[32] In *The Observer Magazine*, 1st September 2002

[33] No page number given for the Israeli reference since it was accessed electronically rather than in hard-copy.

[34] For example, in July 1999, Afsana (*hijab* wearing Masters student, early 20s, Greenstone University) told me during informal conversation of a website for Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Muslims that she had stumbled across and found most interesting and informative.

[35] The *NUS* responded, as I have already noted, by issuing empirically unsound warnings of Muslim student 'fundamentalism'.

[36] Dahir's words reported in Theory/Practice News & Letters, July 2002, http://www.newsandletters.org/Issues/2002/July/Gays_Jul02.htm (seen on internet September 2002).

[37] See, for example, the HSS' main print organ in Britain, *Sangh Sandesh Newsmagazine*, which (May-June 2000, Vol XI No 3) ran a shortened version of a *Guardian* article alleging *jihad* recruitment on campus as the main item under its 'News from the UK' section.

[38] Stacey's conceptualization of 'discursive reversal' (*op. cit.*) centres on the idea of dichotomous terms signifying a broader relationship of power being reversed. This presupposes that it is possible to represent the exercise of power as being fundamentally unilinear, with discursive reversal serving only to obscure such exercises of power and paradoxically reaffirm them by representing the objects of a particular power exercise as being its agents in order to justify continued exercise of power over them.

[39] For example, 'Third Communist International' was said to prove that this was not a letter produced by the Soviet government.

[40] I turn to the case of Jewish students in chapter six. With relation to Hindu and Sikh students it is worth noting that during fieldwork far more cases of Muslim students being victims of violence, harassment, abuse, and coercion in the four case study universities than of Muslims victimizing Hindu and Sikh students. This is not to suggest that there was never any tension between Hindu, Sikh and Muslim students in the four case study universities, but rather to note that a contextualized reading is called for. For example, Islamophobia was central to the highly symbolic forms of blackmail and coercion that a female Sikh postgraduate student from Greenstone University subjected a Muslim male postgraduate student from a nearby university between September 2000 and March 2002. Likewise, respondents from *Finchton University recalled some tensions a number of years earlier when a Bhangra gig advertised as an* 'Asian Love Party' was advertised with posters clearly displaying Allah and Mohammed in Arabic. In Finchton University a number of close friendships and relationships involving Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs were reported, with no signs that any of these involved coercion. Reports also surfaced of a Hindu student converting to Islam in Finchton University a number of years ago, although there were no signs that she had ever been involved in a relationship with a Muslim man or that she had been subjected to coercion by Muslims, although respondents did suggest that she had been disowned by her family for consorting with Muslims and converting to Islam. The only verifiable incident involving the targeting of Hindu *or* Sikh women by Muslim students in Finchton University occurred during the 1997-1998 session when a Sikh student attended an Islamic Society event with a Muslim friend and was told by a Muslim male attending the event to leave and return only when wearing *hijab*. During the 2000-2001 session a Hindu postgraduate student in Greenstone University did report experiencing hostility and racist jokes from a small group of Muslim students while studying in a college of further education some years earlier. In Swanton University, Muslim students reported working closely with Hindu and Sikh students despite facing some hostility. In order to dredge up these examples of tension took extensive investigation. Incidents such as these cannot be viewed as being in any way indicative of a widespread threat to Hindu and Sikh students by Muslims in British universities and to suggest otherwise is extremely irresponsible.

Chapter 7: White Governmentality, Muslim Students, and Equal Opportunities

1 Introduction

The unfolding politics of contemporary whiteness, as it is narrated through the university as a text, presents us with a contradiction in discussions about Muslim students and Islamophobic campaigns against Muslim student 'fundamentalism'. For it is clear that "in assessing the ethnic minority experiences [in higher education] and institutional efforts to improve these, it is important to recognise that some progress has been made" (Acland and Azmi 1998: 75). Indeed, as Gilliat-Ray (1999; 2000) has demonstrated, great efforts have been made to improve provisions for Muslim students. Most British universities have some system in place to help meet some of the most basic needs of Muslim students, such as prayer facilities. Fowlerstone University was the first in Britain to produce a Policy on Religious and Cultural Diversity, and a number of other universities have followed suit with similar policies. This is curious, for just as the past decade has witnessed increasing Islamophobia in British universities, it has also been marked by significant strides in multicultural provisions that have greatly benefited Muslims[1]. Greenstone University is an extremely racialised environment and yet even there can be found a plethora of policies and targeted initiatives designed to supplement its commitment to multiculturalism, ranging from targeted work with local inner-city schools to Equal Opportunities policies.

We have already seen how multiculturalism and anti-discriminatory concerns are frequently employed as justification for the need to clamp down on Muslim students in ever more heavy-handed and Islamophobic ways to 'protect' members of other minority groups from the 'fundamentalist' threat. This requires further exploration, for it is clearly paradoxical that increased Islamophobia should not only go hand in hand with multicultural gains but also be justified through the vocabulary of Equal Opportunities.

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Contradictions such as these can be explained in a number of ways. For example, attempts to deny rights and formal equality to Muslim students can be read on one level as functions of the liberal emphasis on rights that implies "granting new rights for some [means] a curtailment of freedom for others" (Gabriel 1997: 74). Likewise, the precedent maintained by successive governments – that Muslims be denied the same legislative protection as members of other groups – emerges into a forceful argument that to protect Muslims also involves protecting 'fundamentalist' sponsors of terrorism, a position implicated in zealous and racialised NUS and CVCP interventions on the 'Muslim problem'.

At this point in my thesis, I find it useful to turn to a broader discussion of power in higher education. This is important because the paradoxical nature of university equalities interventions is paralleled by the contradictions in dominant conceptualisations of questions of Muslims and power relations in contemporary Britain. For most discussions of the 'fundamentalist' menace focus on abuses of power – or what writers such as Chetan Bhatt (1998) prefer to term "authoritarianism" – by Muslims. However, scant attention is paid in these accounts to the exercise of power over Muslims. Thus, the NUS is able to conceptualise those traditionally perceived as victims of Muslim power abuses as being "oppressed groups" while failing to offer a coherent or credible definition of Islamophobia and largely ignoring the "oppression" of Muslim students in universities. Clearly, we are left dealing with a definition of power that is related to equalities delivery and which is not only subject to extremely selective deployment, but which is also inescapably crude, focusing on power as unilinear and analogous to simple authoritarianism. Since questions of power are implicit to my reading of multiculturalism as a project seeking to interpolate and regulate the encroachment of the empirical fact of diversity onto spaces deemed 'mainstream' or traditionally 'white', it is clear that in order to adequately explore these contradictions while fleshing out my earlier conceptualisation of

multiculturalism, I must elaborate on the ways in which I understand questions of power and Muslim students.

2 Muslim students and multiculturalism

The contradictory nature of formal equalities provisioning for Muslim students finds its reflection in questions around ethnicity data monitoring exercises. First, it is rather puzzling that while Muslims represent a significant minority in a great many universities, most university data monitoring exercises do not include a 'Muslim' category (Weller 1992), while those that do usually offer this recognition under a separate section on religion rather than ethnicity[2], thus reinforcing the perception of observant Muslims as deviating from an established liberal, secular norm and valorising the idea that Islam is simply an inflection on assumed primordial ethnicities. Secondly, it is rather puzzling that throughout my fieldwork I encountered a significant number of Muslim respondents who expressed grave reservations about the possibility of future data monitoring exercises recognising Muslim identities. This finding ostensibly flies in the face of my earlier reading of the difficulties of recognising and coherently conceptualising Muslim identities in the sector. It also flies in the face of the liberal emphasis on 'multiculturalism' as a simple manifestation of the empirical 'reality' of diversity that gives rise not only to an emphasis on effective data monitoring as a precursor to effective equalities delivery (see for example van Dyke 1998: 115-133) but also to the huge industry in structuralist, and heavily statistical accounts of 'race' and ethnicity (see, for example, Modood *et al* 1997). Before I can adequately explore the contradictory effects of formal equalities interventions on Muslim students' experiences, it is therefore necessary to explore and account for the apparent discrepancies that arise from these apparent Muslim student rejections of improved equal opportunities delivery. In doing so I will focus on two respondents who best exemplified the broader expression of such doubts by Muslim respondents: Arif and Junaid. I select both on the grounds of their relative

influence in student circles with their universities. At the time of fieldwork, Arif was an elected officer in Greenstone University, and Junaid was a prominent member of Swanton University's Islamic Society with extensive experience of dealing with university employees and union staff members in pursuit of improved provisions for Muslim students[3]. Equally significant is that while Arif's reservations about more representative data monitoring may have been influenced by the entrenched Islamophobia of Greenstone University, Junaid claimed that Swanton University was "very Muslim friendly", and it was difficult to find to more contrasting universities.

2.1 Data monitoring and knowledge of Muslim students

In expressing their reservations about the usefulness of data monitoring exercises, both Arif and Junaid expressed the view that, of all the problems informing the perpetuation of institutionalised Islamophobia, lack of knowledge about Muslim students is not a pressing difficulty. Clearly, the widespread circulation of simplistic and often misleading polemicisms about Islamic 'fundamentalism' by the NUS and political interest groups does demonstrate that, far from their being a dearth of knowledge about Muslim students, if anything our ability and willingness to challenge Islamophobia has been effectively undermined by a glut of knowledge. During fieldwork it quickly became evident that, burrowed away in the labyrinthine networks of institutional processes, there existed staff members in each of the four case study universities who were able to extend very focused guesstimates of Muslim student numbers in their respective institutions[4]. Furthermore, while reports would suggest the NUS is at times even incapable of distinguishing between al Muhajiroun and Hizb ut-Tahrir (let alone between radical Islamists and the majority of Muslim students), a substantial body of far more extensive and reliable knowledge was at the disposal of serious professionals across the four case study universities.

In Greenstone University there were reliable indications that staff were able to offer fairly precise estimates of Muslim student numbers, while one middle manager had sufficient knowledge about Islam and Muslims to understand that the nearest *mosque* would *not* be an *unacceptable* worship place *for* most Muslims on theological grounds[5]. Another staff member employed at middle management level engaged me in a lengthy discussion about the differences between *Salafi* and *Ikhwani* groups, as well as being disposed to refer to Muslim students' criticisms as *inqilab*, a term roughly translatable as 'coup' in Arabic or 'revolution' in Urdu[6]. A staff member in Swanton University with extensive experience of working with Muslim students was equally able to reach a remarkably precise estimate concerning the number of Muslim students. It also emerged during interview that she had sufficient *knowledge of Islam and Muslims* to differentiate between *Hizb ut-Tahrir* and *al Muhajiroun*, as well as being able to recognise when rigorous application of *Salafi* doctrine contradicted the general stance of the Islamic Society and went against the general tenor of traditional interpretations of Islam[7].

In Finchton University, knowledge resources built up by the institution were particularly noticeable, with one middle manager even informing me of the arrangements for Special Branch surveillance of the leadership of *al Muhajiroun*[8]. Another staff member in the same institution also taught me a thing or two about the political differences between Pakistani and Indian Gujarati Muslim communities, before embarking on a discussion of *Salafi* groups, *Tableegh-i-jamaat, al Muhajiroun,* and *Jamaat-i-Islami* [9]. The credibility of this respondent's knowledge was undermined when he alleged that the French academic Gilles Kepel is in fact in the employ of France's intelligence services, although it was clear that he had significant knowledge about Islam and Muslims and this had even been exercised in theological debates with Muslim students. Even Fowlerstone University, as marked by peaceful inter-group relations as it was, had a staff member in possession of extensive knowledge about Islam and Muslims, even if it was clear that this employee at least was extremely guarded in ensuring that his knowledge could not be appropriated by

colleagues in pursuit of Islamophobic agendas[10]. Clearly, it seems that Muslim students such as Arif and Junaid were not the only respondents who felt that the problem was not so much a lack of knowledge about Muslims as a broader difficulty concerning the way in which certain knowledges were constructed and the uses they were being put to in the service of Islamophobia.

2.2 *Salafiyyah*, Spooks, Surveillance

Clearly, both Arif and Junaid were justified in feeling that their respective universities were not faced with a dearth of knowledge about Muslim students. In fact, it was also clear that both these respondents also had a strong awareness of the broader patterns of surveillance to which Muslim students had been subjected in order to develop this knowledge. Junaid even noted that so effective were patterns of institutional surveillance of Muslim students that the Vice-Chancellor had greeted him by name on one occasion, noting that "good things" had been heard about Junaid. Muslim students, it seems, were under intensive scrutiny and stood out largely depending on whether they confirmed or confounded simplistic readings of Muslims as menacing, even in "Muslim friendly" universities such as Swanton. Perhaps most significant was that both respondents alluded to Special Branch activities in unrecorded asides following interview, and that both felt there was a blurring of distinctions between formal policing of Muslim students and ostensibly benign forms of university surveillance through routine procedure.

Arif's reference to Special Branch surveillance of Muslim students was a comment made in passing, and one that he refused to elaborate upon. However, other signs that forms of state surveillance were encroaching on campus were raised by a public lecture on Saudi Arabia during the 1998-1999 session. One respondent noted that, on discovering the speaker to be a well known dissident and *Salafi*, a number of Saudi students in attendance were forced to make very visible exits from the event

on the grounds that their attendance would be made known to Saudi embassy staff and that trouble would ensue[11].

Junaid's reports of state surveillance of Muslim students included a similar incident, when a majority Muslim country had been criticised for its human rights record in a *Khutba* held in the student mosque one Friday. As a result, Special Branch visited the student mosque and gave Junaid "a slap on the wrist" on the grounds that "inflammatory remarks" had been passed about the country in question. Junaid's explanation for this heavy-handed intervention was that the *Khutba* had been attended by a student in the employment of the state in question, who had immediately reported the incident to embassy staff. Embassy staff, it was suggested, had then passed the complaint to the British security services who had in turn arranged for Special Branch to visit the Islamic Society for reasons relating more to intra-state diplomatic relations than to anything particularly transgressive or offensive about the Islamic Society's critique of human rights in the state in question.

It was clear that respondents such as Arif and Junaid were aware of the rather tangled practices of policing through surveillance to which Muslim students can be subjected. Although there is clearly no reliable means of assessing the frequency with which incidents such as this occur, throughout my fieldwork I encountered claims concerning surveillance and intelligence activities on campus which nearly always referred to states such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey known to have strong diplomatic and strategic links with western countries[12]. These reports ranged from allegations by a white non-Muslim Palestinian rights campaigner that pro-Israeli student campaigning is often supported by intelligence provided by staff based in the Israeli embassy and coordinated by former IDF personnel[13] to claims that countries such as Saudi Arabia occasionally place security staff in universities in order to keep an eye on dissident or Islamist activity by nationals on campus[14].

These claims concerning the link between surveillance of Muslims and universities were given added strength by an interview with Peter, a middle manager in Finchton University, in which I was provided with extensive information on Special Branch surveillance of *al Muhajiroun*'s leadership and told of Special Branch activity on campus in the wake of a period of *al Muhajiroun* activity. So detailed was the information provided during this interview and that I enquired about the relationship between university senior management and Special Branch, only to be met with an awkward wall of silence and the statement that "I'm sorry, I've said too much already. I shouldn't have said any of this and won't say any more"[15]. Junaid claimed that he had strong reasons for believing that Special Branch officers were known to have provided information to the university on known or suspected Islamist activity in Swanton University. Junaid refused to elaborate on the reasons for this belief. It is perhaps worth noting that a Rebecca, a staff member alluded during interview to an incident in a prior year when she received information that *Hizb ut-Tahrir* was planning to target students in the area for recruitment, although she refused to clarify the source of this information[16].

For obvious reasons it is impossible either to gauge the extent to which forms of state surveillance of Muslim students do intrude on campus or to verify reports such as these. However, it became clear during my fieldwork that paranoia can be discounted as an explanation. Reports such as these provided no general indications of delusion or paranoia, and were generally very focused and consistent accounts. These were not far-fetched claims of prayer rooms being bugged or students being tailed by 'spooks' but allegations of state surveillance in precise contexts through a specific range of practices and for a range of reasons that are largely politically motivated. Such reports also contrasted starkly with the obviously paranoid claims of state surveillance made by Iannis, a white lecturer in Greenstone University[17]. This respondent claimed to have been followed by a threatening group of South African agents while working in another British university during the Apartheid years, as well as having been subjected to strange stops and checks while

driving his car immediately after returning from some of his many overseas trips. That this respondent's claims were laced with a strong dose of paranoia and at least a touch of fantasy was illustrated by other ludicrous claims he made to myself and others on a number of occasions: imprisonment in Chile, Egypt (under Nasser) and Greece for left-wing activities, witnessing the death of Nicos Poulantzas[18], leading the Athens Polytechnic uprising against the Papadopoulos regime and nearly being killed by a Greek tank, driving a Fiat Uno all the way to Palestine with a stash of loot destined for the Palestinian resistance hidden in a hollowed out car baby seat, smuggling bread into refugee camps and being shot (twice) by Israeli soldiers during the first *intifada* [19]. Clearly, Muslim student claims of state surveillance on campus differed considerably from paranoid delusions such as these, and frequently paralleled claims of Special Branch surveillance made by former Welsh Nationalist student activists whose reports I also received.

Whether or not these reports of security service surveillance of Muslim students are all entirely true or particularly representative of the broader picture of surveillance activities in universities is largely irrelevant. As Russell (1996) notes, "studies show that Blacks are more likely to believe race-related government conspiracy theories". Russell relates this to the "damaging effects the [racial] hoax has"[20]. We cannot understand reservations about improved data monitoring expressed by respondents such as Junaid and Arif without understanding either the broader practices of surveillance to which Muslims are subjected, or the broader context of racist practices (including racial hoaxes) that are reflected in reports of surveillance of Muslim students. In chapter six I theorized the Islamophobic hoax as a stabilizing strategy intended to fix representations of various identifications following the disruption to dominant modes of representation by the decentring of the west and the articulation of Muslim subjectivities that cannot be convincingly accounted for within the logics of the existing dominant paradigm. However, it is also clear that the Islamophobic hoax also serves surveillance functions, placing Muslims under the microscope. Furthermore, we cannot understand the reservations of respondents

such as Junaid and Arif without bearing in mind the broader context that gives rise to feelings of being subjected to surveillance among some Muslim students.

2.3 Routine procedure and surveillance

There was another reason why both Junaid and Arif expressed reservations about data monitoring as a means of challenging Islamophobia. Intriguingly, both respondents reported that files on Islamic Society activities were being maintained within their respective institutions. These reports were particularly alarming given that I know of no other student groups similarly subjected to such scrutiny, and that it is important to note the broader context of racialised scares and the pathologisation of Muslim students from which they emerged. Junaid's report proved easy to verify, with Rebecca - a Swanton staff member - noting independently during interview that she did maintain such a file. Although Rebecca claimed the file was maintained purely for routine professional reasons in order to keep track of Muslim provision requests, it is worth noting that Junaid was aware that other student groups were not subjected to such surveillance and complained to me that the Islamic Society had never been able to gain access to the file's contents.

Arif's claims were harder to verify, although since he was an elected officer of Greenstone Union, it seems reasonable to suggest that he must have had reasonable grounds for believing that the union's administrator had maintained a file on Islamic Society activity over the years, particularly considering the thoroughly Islamophobic environment that had been fostered in Greenstone through partisan and racialised interventions and uncritical acceptance of the NUS' problematic narratives on the 'fundamentalist' threat. It also seems reasonable to suggest that Arif's claims had some validity in the light of a private aside to me by a Warden of one of Greenstone's halls of residence during the 2000-2001 session[21]. With the holy month of *ramadhan* around the corner, a number of Wardens informally

discussed the challenges this posed to them. Despite *ramadhan* being a time of peace and worship among Muslims, the respondent reported to me that his colleagues decided the best course of action to involve "keeping an eye on" Muslim students, and particularly White and African-Caribbean converts, who were seen as being particularly likely to become 'extremists' and therefore in need of higher levels of surveillance. Similarly, during the 2001-2002 session one of Fowlerstone's middle managers reported that senior management in this extremely 'Muslim friendly' institution were advocating surveillance of Muslim students in order to prevent them from plotting terrorist atrocities in their prayer rooms[22].

Both Junaid and Arif were thus already of the opinion that routine administrative procedures analogous to ethnicity data monitoring were generating significant bodies of knowledge on Muslim students in a largely arbitrary manner and with little thought to issues of professional transparency. Both respondents also felt that the generation of these knowledges was related to the subjection of Muslim students to broader exercises of institutional power and surveillance. It is difficult to argue with their opinions, since it is clear that those advocating special surveillance of Muslim students in Greenstone and Fowlerstone Universities were clearly doing so on the basis of particularly knowledges of Muslims that they were already in possession of. Lack of information clearly was not the problem; the way in which these knowledges were generated was a far more pressing concern.

A significant area of concern lay in institutional estimates of Muslim student numbers, with both claiming that significant under-estimation was taking place and forming an important justification for attempts to control the level of provisioning available to Muslim students. According to Arif, significant under-estimation of Muslim student numbers was a central plank of union resistance to the Islamic Society receiving 'block voting' privileges during a period of recovery from almost total disenfranchisement[23].

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Both Junaid and Arif intimated that more accurate enumeration of Muslim student numbers was unlikely to improve provisions for Muslim students and challenge broader patterns of institutionalised Islamophobia since it was clear that debates and disagreements over Muslim student numbers were already subject to rhetorical deployment in order to underline the need to prevent too many provisions from being offered on the grounds that, irrespective of empirical correctness of estimates, Muslims still constitute a minority group whose needs can be marginalised whenever necessary. Possibly the clearest indication of this being the case occurred in Greenstone University, where an official university poster specifically addressing Jewish students was displayed around the campus as recently as the 1997-1998 session. The poster contained dates of Jewish religious festivals and advised Jewish students on how to gain examinations or assessment exemptions on those dates. No such poster addressing members of other groups has ever been displayed in the university, and it became clear during fieldwork in the 1999-2000 session that the university was aware of this discrepancy. Thus, when I rang the university administration to obtain a copy of the poster I was advised that no such poster had ever existed, and then that it had existed but had long since been lost when the computer system was upgraded. No sooner did I express my regret at the loss of this document reflecting significant good practice than I was promised a copy of the non-existent poster, which duly arrived by post complete with a compliment slip first thing the following morning[24]. As Arif noted[25]:

"Right, I remember clearly that back in 1994 we campaigned to have rights for exam exemption and we were told many times they were looking at it...They were looking at it and many of our Jewish colleagues were being exempted from their exams so we demanded an exemption and weren't given one. This year when a Muslim got elected on the executive via all channels within the University and after a short while they did exempt us but on certain conditions that an imam of the community would sign a certificate to say that.....the Muslim celebration is on a certain day."

Thus, even though there are considerably more Muslim than Jewish students in Greenstone University, questions of respective numerical size of the two communities bore no relation to patterns of provision, with the university showing itself willing to meet Jewish student needs while rejecting Muslim provisions on the grounds of their minority status[26].

The reservations of respondents such as Junaid and Arif towards more representative ethnicity data monitoring reflect a range of broader concerns about practices of routine surveillance and the generation of knowledge of Muslim students and their relationship with broader problems of institutionalised Islamophobia, moral panics frequently led by the NUS and right-wing political interest groups, and the failures of dominant models of liberal multiculturalism. Not only are Muslims in Britain frequently denied rights already accorded to others through appeals to the need to offer adequate protection to members of other groups, but we cannot understand the persistence of institutionalised Islamophobia in places like Greenstone University without first considering the broader relations of power implicated in formal attempts to symbolise the multicultural through routine administrative acts such as surveillance.

3 Re-reading multiculturalism and Muslim students

The liberal logics underpinning formal university equalities interventions require us to view multiculturalism as nothing more than a straightforward reflection of the empirical fact of diversity. These logics therefore place great emphasis on the role of ethnicity data monitoring which, we are to assume, is both a precursor to effective multiculturalist interventions and a benchmark against which successful interventions can be measured raising, for example, questions about the accessibility of universities to members of ethnicised minority groups. These are the logics through

which liberalism is sanitised and debates on institutionalised racism are polarised around an assumed natural distinction between racists and liberals cemented around a liberal/illiberal dichotomy. However, it is only possible to understand Muslim student reservations towards more effective Equalities interventions by further exploring formal multiculturalism and by doing so within the context of practices of surveillance and the exercise of power.

3.1 Power and multiculturalism

It is only possible to understand Muslim student reservations towards more effective and representative ethnicity data monitoring by first unpicking dominant readings of the question of power and Muslim students. That questions of power are somehow central to our understanding of Muslim students is clear from the literature. Informed largely by the literature on social movements, Women Against Fundamentalism writings and, more recently, the work of Chetan Bhatt (1998), emphasise power by conceptualising the increasing visibility of Muslim identities in Britain as an example of 'religious authoritarianism'. Thus, power is exercised by Islamic 'fundamentalists' in order to coerce members of other groups – notably, South Asian women – into submitting to exercise of male 'fundamentalist' power and abandoning their primordial ethnic identities in order to articulate themselves as being distinctly 'Muslim' and, in the case of women, wear *hijab*. Such arguments are central to the dominant literature on 'fundamentalism' in Britain, appeals by the far-right British National Party to Sikhs and Hindus in fighting 'Islamic fundamentalism', the anonymous warnings to Sikh students I discussed earlier, and to NUS interventions based on these anonymous racial hoaxes. They, and the racial hoaxes that underlie them, also find their representation in the CVCP's suggestion that coercion to religious conformity in dress is a hallmark of 'fundamentalism' in universities and the NUS' suggestion that a useful case study for training to facilitate challenges to hate crimes involves a Sikh woman being harassed by Muslim men in a union building.

Such ideas are also central to the NUS' suggestion that we should consider Hindu, Sikh, Jew, Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual students as being 'oppressed' groups on campus while Muslims are best only understood as being South Asian victims of racism in wider society.

Such accounts are clearly problematic, being based largely on empirically unsustainable hoaxes and moral panics, and underpinned by casual assumptions concerning the true and authentic nature of ethnic identities and the pathological and transgressive nature of Muslims. More importantly, they rely almost entirely upon an extremely crude reading of power as being conflated with 'authoritarianism'. In this they are not only conceptually weak but also outdated, since as Foucault's work demonstrates, the emergence of the 'modern' apparatus of governmentality is underpinned by a move away from power as authoritarianism to the deregulation of the apparatus of power and its exercise through multiple sites and involving surveillance and self-subjection rather than crude coercion and authoritarianism. The reliance on crude and anachronistic conceptualisations of power in dominant discussions of Muslims in Britain is thus linked to Islamophobia in two ways. First, it constructs Muslims as defective whitemales since it presumes that Muslims exercise power in a distinct way, implicitly racially recognisable by dint of its being analogous to older exercises of power as authoritarianism in western pasts. This helps explain the apparent anomaly of Chetan Bhatt rejecting Foucaultian analyses while simultaneously invoking them. Thus, the general impression of Muslims as being defective when marked on a western scale of teleology is maintained, with images of 'absolutism' supplemented by claims of Muslim 'authoritarianism'.

Second, it is also clear that incoherent racist representations of Muslims in Britain – and students in particular – being endowed with power over other groups belying their own status as minorities and victims of Islamophobia are held together by an emphasis on Muslims as being inherently powerful and disposed to the abuse of power over others. This move is therefore central to the techniques of what Stacey

(1991) theorises as discursive reversal – the representation of members of minority groups as being powerful and of whites as being comparatively powerless and victimised.

In fact, the difficulties of this type of crude conceptualisation of power are illustrated by the empirical weaknesses of the argument that, when discussing Muslim students, we should conceptualise power as being simply authoritarian and largely unilinear. What we are generally asked to consider as exemplars of Muslim student power abuses are more commonly acts perpetrated against Muslims than by them. Not only are there the obvious examples of heavy-handed formal surveillance of Muslim students underpinned by the racist assumption that Muslims are distinctly likely to engage in nefarious plotting, but there are also the obvious patterns of assault and harassment to which Muslim students in racist environments such as Greenstone University have been subject with routine impunity and terrifying frequency.

Such instances also include the pressure to which Muslim women in university environments are often subjected in order to remove *hijab*, a far more widespread problem than pressure to wear *hijab* or convert to Islam. Assaults against *hijab* wearing Muslim women – frequently in and around student unions – were the most common forms of Islamophobic hate crimes reported to me during my fieldwork. Pressure to remove *hijab* did not only involve racist violence, as the case of Zainab, a former Finchton University PhD student and part-time lecturer demonstrates. Being nicknamed "the ethnic delinquent" by staff members was a reference to the ways in which this assertive and highly intelligent *hijab* wearing woman belied the stereotypical expectations of her[27]. A former Finchton University lecturer also related to me during interview that staff Islamophobia was frequently manifested in discussions of *hijab* wearing Muslim students as though they were "somehow less intelligent and less assertive" than their white and non-visibly Muslim peers.

Shaida, an MPhil student from Greenstone University raised the same point during interview, arguing that preoccupations with *hijab* owed less to empirically sustainable problems of religious authoritarianism than to pressure to remove the *hijab* based on broader hegemonic norms of acceptable and 'normal' dress codes[28]:

"I don't feel any pressure to wear it [*hijab*]. I wear it every day when I go out as matter of course: its part of obedience to Allah. It's part of my life, of who I am, of who I wish to be. When I hear academics raising the question of 'why hijab?', I think about how absurd they would find it if I asked them why people wear ties. Why do people wear ties? It's this little rope like thing which wraps around the shirt collar. But why? Why? Why? It's all too absurd to me. I think my feelings on this matter are also fuelled by an irritation with the fact that academics and others can be ignorant enough to set themselves trivial questions. Asking 'trivial' questions can destroy ones understanding of peoples and their cultures...Following on from this point, it can also be said that it is not the case that there is more pressure to put on hijab; there is more pressure to take it off, where there is a lot of nitpicking and a need to state the reasons why you where it, see whether those reasons are accepted or challenged, win the case or be defeated."

This response is not merely a defence of the right to wear *hijab*, but more importantly a critique of the logics on which dominant constructions of Muslim student identities are based. Shaida was pointing out the incoherence of dominant readings of Muslim students as being guilty of 'authoritarian' abuses of power, and often groundless or widely exaggerated claims of Muslim students forcing women to wear *hijab*. As Shaida pointed out, Muslim women are in fact frequently the victims of exercises of power in universities that involve subtle forms of pressure to remove the *hijab*. Not only is it disingenuous to generally conceive of Muslims as being the abusers of authoritarian power – in coercing others to wear *hijab* – but it is also incoherent to read power as authoritarianism in this context. For the exercises of power to which

Muslim women are subjected in universities vary greatly in scope and complexity. Aside from the obvious examples of racist violence, Muslim women are more likely to be subjected to more subtle exercises of power involving sedimented norms through which racialised notions of 'Englishness', 'Britishness' are constructed and enacted in ways that are habitualised and seemingly benign but nonetheless offensive, racist, or concerned with exercise of normalising power.

In this light, power is best understood not as being unilinear or crudely authoritarian, but rather as being another name for "a complex strategical relationship in a particular society" (Foucault 1980a: 93), best understood as the "political technologies throughout the social body...[the function of which] sets up nonegalitarian, asymmetrical relations" (Foucault 1982: 185). Foucault's nuanced reading of power emphasises the way in which power as coercion or simple authoritarianism was supplanted by power as a web of disciplinary practices underpinned by processes of surveillance that are themselves bound up in the same strategies through which knowledge about man has been constructed more broadly. As Sarup (1993: 74) notes, "for Foucault...conceiving of power as repression, constraint or prohibition is inadequate: power 'produces reality; it 'produces domains of objects and rituals of truth'...the exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge".

2.2 White governmentality

The usefulness of employing Foucaultian conceptualisations of power in analyses of Islamism is reflected by the rather contradictory way in which, having already rejected Foucaultian analyses on arguably incoherent grounds, Chetan Bhatt actually punctuates his study of 'authoritarian' religious movements with concepts that he claims are derived from Foucault's work. In fact, the incoherence of Bhatt's crude definition of power as authoritarianism and his attempt to explore this by contradictorily deploying Foucault to an end incompatible with the inspirational

analyses he produced preclude Bhatt from any meaningful contributions to the study of what Foucault terms governmentality.

Governmentality emerges from prior practices of authoritarianism and repression along with broader transformations making a move from "the ruler...[as] individualized and the mass...anonymous" to "the bureaucracy...[as] anonymous and the subject...[as] individualized" (Sarup 1993: 76). Governmentality is a strategy or system "of thinking about the nature or practice of government...capable of making some form of that activity thinkable and practicable both to its practitioners and to those upon whom it was practised" (Gordon 1991: 3). This entails the deregulation or dispersal of power relations to multiple interfacing nodes in order to secure what Foucault terms 'the conduct of conduct', determining "who can govern, what governing is and what or who is governed" (Hesse 1997: 99). In this context, surveillance becomes central to the exercise of disciplinary power, and Foucault recognises in the Panopticon a means for inculcating in subjects strategies for their own self-surveillance and creating "subjects responsible for their own subjection" (Sarup 1993: 76), by inculcating in subjects an awareness of being subjected to surveillance and inducing in them a willingness to subject themselves to surveillance in order to ensure compliance with hegemonic norms.

Two studies of governmentality that stand out as being particularly relevant to the experiences of Muslim students are Hesse's work on 'white governmentality' (1997) and Grant's work (1997) on governmentality in higher education. Hesse identifies racism as a "relation of regulating the subordination or excommunication of the 'other'" within the context of a white governmentality "which valorises 'whiteness' in the conduct of European activities as the source of legislative culture and the conduct of 'non-white/non-European' as variously a threat, a resource, a fantasy or an epigone to be regulated by that culture" (1997: 99). As Hesse notes, "what is remarkable about this is not so much its entrenched institution in the regime of modernity, but that its extremely mundane routinisation in the social encounters of

everyday life in Britain seems to pass through the discourse of social science unnoticed even by the super-critical sensitivities of postmodern thought" (*ibid.*).

Barbara Grant's work is one of the more interesting recent Foucaultian interventions in the literature on higher education. This growing means of analysing power relations in universities includes recent interventions of curriculum development (see, for example, Fitzgerald 1996), and even discussions of the normalising exercise of disciplinary power through Research Assessment Exercises (Broadhead and Howard 1998). This growing body of literature is important, for as Foucault acknowledges, education is a key site through which governmentality is exercised. Grant's work (1997) offers an insight into the Panopticon-like functions of routine university administrative structures and procedures in regulating the spatial and temporal schemes within which identities are articulated on campus and, in doing so, requiring that students participate in their own surveillance, and inscribing normalising disciplinary categories of 'good student' / 'bad student'.

Taken together the interventions of Grant and Hesse can provide an extremely useful basis from which to explore the paradoxical relationship between racism and formal liberal equal opportunities practices by focusing on the disciplinary practices of whiteness and extending a more nuanced reading of power relations involving Muslim students. Dominant liberal models of equal opportunities and multiculturalism are techniques through which a racialised, instrumentalist rationality is enacted, working to construct and regulate the social body in terms of inclusion and exclusion and with reference to hegemonic notions of national identity, 'mainstream' culture, and 'race' and ethnic relations. Formal multiculturalism regulates and orders the social body and groups within it, treating as a datum for surveillance and governance the ethnic 'fact' of diversity.

Practices of population monitoring to which ethnicity data monitoring is analogous emerged as a central technique of governmentality, and it is extremely symbolic that

August Comte originally desired to call study of statistics 'social mechanics' (Hacking 1991: 181). Study of populations is central to governmentality, and demographic studies represent a process through which positivist eurocentric assumptions of instrumentalism rationality are applied to the exercise of power and the construction of subjectivities. As Hacking (1991: 183) notes, "the disciplines of the body that he [Foucault] describes in his work on the prison and on sexuality form 'an entire micro-power concerned with the body', and match up with 'comprehensive measures, statistical assessments and interventions' which are aimed at the body politic, and the social body. One need not subscribe fully to this model to see that statistics of populations and of deviancy form an integral part of the industrial state". Thus, statistical demographic studies represent one means through which bodies are subjected to surveillance, diagnosed as particular cases, and governed. These practices cannot be disentangled from the vested ideological concerns of modern western capitalist society and the requirements of governmentality.

The positivistic research methods underpinning demographic surveys base identity categories on those *anticipated* in the sample. Not only does this involve the inescapable tensions between "social categories of identity and self-identification", but is also an inescapably normative project based on the representation of contingent identities as being *a priori* truths concerning the true order of identities and the social body. In this light, the failure of most universities to incorporate 'Muslim' categories on ethnicity data monitoring forms is not merely an unfortunate oversight but is directly related to the exercise of white governmentality already discussed through which articulations of Muslim identities are constructed as being inherently deviant and transgressive. It is unsurprising, then, that respondents such as Arif and Junaid should express reservations about more 'representative' ethnicity monitoring exercises. After all, they had a strong awareness of the practices of surveillance and disciplinary power to which Muslim students are subjected. More to the point, they recognised the usefulness of ethnicity data monitoring exercises as a technique of governmentality. Data monitoring exercises do not merely provide "additional data

about the effectiveness of course-specific and university-wide educational practices on specific groups of students" (van Dyke 1998: 131-132), they also form the building blocks of subsequent attempts to interpolate the empirical fact of diversity into patterns of provision and govern the encroachment of empirical multiculturalism onto spaces deemed 'mainstream' and traditionally 'white'. In the remainder of this chapter, I shall consider how this is so.

2.3 Knowledge, diagnosis, power

I argued earlier that dominant models of liberal multiculturalism can best be understood as attempts to interpolate the empirical fact of diversity into a pattern of provisions that is as much concerned with regulating the degree to which experiences deemed minority ethnic are able to encroach spaces designated as 'mainstream' and white as it is about providing for the needs of ethnicised minorities. This is because dominant models of liberal multiculturalism can best be understood as sites of governmentality, regulating relations of power between 'white' and 'non-white', constructing knowledges on different ethnic groups, and regulating inclusion/exclusion of the ethnicised 'other'. Clearly, ethnicity data monitoring exercises of the type viewed with reservations by Junaid and Arif are centrally implicated in the exercise of disciplinary power from this node, and not least because statistical demographic measurements generally form the basis from which multiculturalism proceeds in interpolating the empirical fact of diversity into a regulatory pattern of provisions and routine surveillance practices. Indeed, it is worth noting that during colonial times, census data was central to the exercise of governmentality and the construction of colonial and later postcolonial subjectivities (Owen 1996). Indeed, as Allborn (1999) notes, "historians have long since learned to tread carefully when using certain categories of census data...such work has revealed many census categories to be prone, in the past, to ideological manipulation or short-sightedness". As Hacking (1991: 183) notes, "the disciplines of the body that

he [Foucault] describes...form 'an entire micro-power, concerned with the body', and match up with 'comprehensive measures, statistical assessments and interventions' which are aimed at the body politic, the social body".

Ethnicity data monitoring exercises form one of the building blocks of a racialised institution or society since they form the basis on which knowledges of ethnicised minorities – and their identities themselves – will be constructed, and establish the parameters of subsequent exercises of white governmentality through formal liberal multiculturalism. They also establish what in Foucaultian terms can be seen as the objective capacities of different subject groups for subjection and resistance to the exercise of disciplinary power. Thus, the most important point that was being made in the reservations towards improved data monitoring expressed by respondents such as Junaid and Arif was the idea that the ascription of formal 'minority' status to Muslim students was central to broader regulation of power between Muslims and 'white' 'European' students. The diagnosis of Muslim students as a numerically 'weak' group was a measurement of the extent to which Muslims could be subjected to the exercise of disciplinary power and a marker of the extent to which Muslim needs could safely be discarded as 'marginal' or be deigned with further consideration. Ethnicity data monitoring thus becomes a means with which relative capacities of 'weakness' and 'power' are formalised through bureaucratic applications and bound into articulations of liberal whiteness.

In order to construct Muslim student identities in these terms, different ethnicised groups are represented as being bounded and distinct essential groupings but nevertheless only quasi-independent from each other. As a consequence, any significant change to the conditions in which power relations between 'white' society and any given 'minority' group are articulated will impact upon other 'minority' groups. Therefore, any notable formal empowerment or enfranchisement of Muslim students will necessarily involve the disempowerment and disenfranchisement of other minority groups, so delicate is the balance in regulation of power relations in which

different groups are maintained. The formal minority status of Muslim students thus becomes a mechanism through which the racialised infrastructure of the university is maintained and regulated.

Because it is this racialised infrastructure on which the opportunities, safety, and survival even of other assumed essential groups depend, formal models of multiculturalism require highly disciplined routine exercises of normalising power in order to maintain underlying patterns of racialisation. Just as Muslims are diagnosed as a 'minority', their needs are also marginalised and pathologised as being exceptional to the norm. As Jamil, a staff member in Finchton University, commented during interview[29]:

"When we talk about the needs of Muslim students are we talking about praying room? Or halal food? Or washing facilities only? I always feel irritated with this – I don't mean your things – but my general impression is that to present the Muslim students' needs from within that limited triangle err is not a ..is not helping in terms of the picture or the image of Muslim students too. You know – 'these fussy Muslim students who only need a corner and washing facilities because they mess around in the normal toilets [laughing] when they're washing so we better isolate them' so the university is most of the time happy to isolate them because they don't want to see somebody rolling his trousers up and making wudhu you know! [laughing] Mmmm So I think there are so many unexpressed aspects both in terms of the university administrations and the students there's an unwritten agreement maybe that Muslim students have to be somewhere outside the mainstream campus – 'okay let's provide them a special place to keep them quiet in one corner and do their weird things'..[laughs] mmm not that I agree with this but that's my impression!

The ascription of formal 'minority' status is therefore related to broader practices through which the campus is racialised through a range of activities such as racialised spatialisation through which Muslim students are often denied access to prayer rooms other than under the most unreasonable of conditions, allocated prayer rooms on the 'margins' of campus so as not to disrupt the racialised aesthetics of the campus, or even allocated prayer rooms in such undignified settings as janitors' cupboards. This respondent's references to "an unwritten agreement" demonstrate the self-subjection required of Muslim students within this arrangement, while his allusions to the fussiness or weirdness of Muslim students also demonstrate the extent to which formal ascription of 'minority' status is implicated in the inscription of racialised notions of 'majority', 'mainstream', 'normality', and 'consensus' in a university context.

In this light, it is worth turning to an interview with Greenstone's Vice-Chancellor – a self-confessed liberal "with a small 'l' " – who suggested to me that Blacks should make a conscious effort to adopt "consensus" attitudes and values if they wish to succeed. Although Greenstone's Vice-Chancellor did make appropriate noises about equal opportunities work[30], it was also clear from the broader pattern of his responses that this was no champion of equal opportunities work[31]. Clearly, the broader Islamophobia of this racist institution found its parallels in the type of leadership the university was receiving, in which questions about essentialised notions of tradition, 'majority', and 'consensus' were the markers against which ethnicised intruders would be assessed and diagnosed. It is therefore worth noting that in one of Greenstone's halls of residence, the Warden only acceded to requests for *halal* food provision after a lengthy campaign led by Muslim residents on the grounds that 'British' Muslims were now requesting *halal* food. She based this decision on a bizarre rhetorical assessment of the extent to which international and home-based Muslim students should be expected to 'adapt' to what she termed "British" diet.

Clearly, notions of 'consensus' and 'majority' here were just another way of expressing whiteness as a collection of normalising practices to which members of ethnicised groups would be expected to adapt[32]. In other words, based on even the most superficial of definitions of institutionalised racism, it is possible to suggest that this was indeed a significant problem in Greenstone University, at least from the point of view of Muslims. As a consequence, it was not possible to separate out the university's less than forthcoming approach to Muslim students' prayer room requests from this racialised description of the attributes required of successful and 'normal' students. The difficulties of this approach were recognised in a report on equal opportunities in Swanton University (1999), in which it was noted that existing patterns of provision constructed norms of student behaviour – often configured around stereotypes of student life as revolving around alcohol – that frequently exclude Muslims as well as overseas and mature students. Again, in contrast to the racist overtones of Greenstone's approach to dealing with Muslim students was the argument of Finchton staff member Jamil that:

"At the end of the day it's a trading ground isn't it the university, in terms of the university administration....There has to be a recognition on the side of the establishment that it's also part of their identity building, and the question of how much they allow what they perceive as minority into being a part of this society, not only a question of assimilation but integrating them so it's both ways. So as you mention this debate around identity construction of European mind or Western person, in the context of this huge you know minorities, immigration, now Kosovans are coming. Yes it seems they are perceived as temporary but who knows? Maybe half of them will stay because they don't have anywhere else to go. Here again you've got blue eyes, white skinned Muslims, European Muslims, it's a totally new situation. You don't have to watch Kilroy to see you know that there is a serious err anti- other psychology in many parts of the British white community despite the proportions that you've just mentioned that there's a very high you know participation in higher

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education in the black community...so it's on the one hand the practicalities of the conflict dilemma, on the other hand it's not just about how these minority guys can be integrated or can be helped about their own conflicting confused hybrid identities, it's about the identity of the establishment too – what sort of future they are looking at. That's how where the multi-faith centres come in, I think. So within my own limited context that's how I see and to put it simply the Multi-Faith Centres can be a way of integrating both sides, bringing both sides together to face each other."

But while Jamil argued that university multi-faith activities "can be a way of integrating *both* sides" [my emphasis], he also noted that "I've perceived it as somebody somewhere pushed a button from somewhere in the country...all of a sudden there's a trend towards inter-faith activities building up to in my mind primarily encourage the further integration of student groups into the main culture". I pushed Jamil, asking whether he thought that a controlling impulse lay behind this development, and he replied "I *suspect*...I can't express it any stronger than that because of my own experience in inter-faith programmes...I believe that there's a genuine side to this...the only point I try to raise is not that for an establishment to try to draw student groups...towards mainstream integration is the wrong thing....but that, mmm, while they do this they should take into account the needs of those groups genuinely. I'm not sure about whether there's a balance in this...there's a genuine, almost sincere, side and on the other hand I suspect that it's a way of dealing with others, yeah you know in a post-colonial discourse, the 'other' and bring it to the 'British' context".

Significantly, the issues raised by Jamil were also reflected in the responses of Peter, a Finchton University middle manager[33]. It appeared that the university had learned some painful lessons about Islamophobia following a period of Islamist activity during the 1997-1998 session. During interview Peter not only agreed that it was important for universities to reconfigure their notions of 'majority', 'mainstream' and 'consensus'

identities in order to avoid excluding members of groups diagnosed as 'minority', but also offered a well-meaning but largely rhetorical critique of 'inter-faith' and 'multi-faith' activities in an attempt to demonstrate the dangers of the former (which he argued implies a convergence of all faiths as though to involve assimilation) and the benefits of the latter (which he claimed implies a 'true' diversity of faiths, free from exercise of normalising power). Rebecca, a staff member from Swanton University also agreed that her work with Muslims involved interrogating and challenges notions of 'majority' and 'consensus' university identities although, possibly because Swanton didn't have the same problem of rampant Islamophobia as Greenstone and the same previous history of Islamophobia as Finchton, she added the qualification that she would only do this when relevant to do so. In Finchton University, where Equal Opportunities development had always taken into account the need to offer significant protection and provisions for Muslim students, a number of staff members including the Vice-Chancellor and three middle managers stated during interview that it was important to abandon belief in a static notion of 'mainstream' university identity, and instead to articulate institutional identity in ways inclusive of diversity, transforming the university rather than subjecting Muslims to exercise of normalising power[34].

It is certainly to be welcomed that staff in these three universities recognised and challenged normalising practices of whiteness. However, our responses to these approaches should be tempered by an important contextual note. Central to Fowlerstone's patterns of provision for Muslims and equalities development was the work of Latif, a minority ethnic middle manager. In Swanton University, Rebecca played an important role in mediating relations between Muslim students and the university administration for a significant length of time, receiving great praise from Muslim students and in many ways clearing the way for subsequent formal incorporation of issues affecting Muslims into equalities development. During interview Rebecca also revealed herself to be a member of a minority, noting that as a Jewish woman she understood the vulnerability of Muslim students. In

Fowlerstone University equal opportunities development had historically been greatly influenced by interventions of a number of Black and minority ethnic staff members. In the more recent past, however, a pall of Islamophobia had descended on campus and, as I shall explore in the next chapter, had resulted in Muslim student resistance involving an *al Muhajiroun* takeover of the Islamic Society. It is extremely significant, then, that more reflexive practices of whiteness emerged in these three universities either from the resistance of minority staff members willing to go well beyond the call of duty in order to challenge institutionalised racism and Islamophobia, or from a 'crisis' played out very publicly against a backdrop of entrenched Islamophobia.

2.4 Words without things and white governmentality

What emerged most forcefully from my fieldwork was a sense that routine university procedures were not neutral administrative functions, but rather that they were inescapably bound up in the construction of student identities and racialised norms of ideal student/staff types. For example, in the terrifyingly Islamophobic environment of Greenstone University, interpretation of institutional statute to foreclose Muslim prayer room requests was a powerful a tool in constructing Muslim students as being inherently transgressive, as were other routine professional interventions such as hall of residence Wardens advocating surveillance of Muslims, and one staff member's heavy-handed interventions when Muslim students were found to have uttered the unutterable words "Palestine" and "human rights". These routine administrative actions were no less effective in constructing Muslim students as transgressive than the campaigning of Zionists, the circulation of a racist memo advocating Apartheid in university accommodation, the appearance of Islamophobic graffiti on campus, or the vigilantism of Islamophobic assaults around the students union building. Clearly, all were united by a shared concern: defending 'mainstream' university spaces and practices from Muslim encroachment alternatively marked as 'fundamentalist' activity.

One of the reasons underlying the similarity between administrative procedures in Greenstone and broader racist activities within the context of broader exercises of governmentality is the usefulness of terms such as 'fundamentalism' and 'extremism'. I argued earlier that 'fundamentalism' is an essentially contested concept that cannot form the basis of coherent readings of political activities by Muslims. In fact, its contested nature holds the key to its usefulness as a disciplinary technique. 'Fundamentalism' is a 'word without a thing'; a resource that is presented as a 'fact' – "Muslim fundamentalists are threatening campus harmony" – but which is usually deployed rhetorically so as to neutralise demands for further qualification or explanation. Thus, without need for further discussion, "we" know exactly what is meant when Muslim students are accused of 'fundamentalism', even though what "we" know may well be wide of the mark, as I have already shown. Moreover, "we" also know exactly how to respond in this type of situation. "Our" knowledge of this is drawn from hegemonic notions of whiteness and related racialised readings of which categories of subjects are most/least fit to have access to the means of exercising governance. Ergo, Jamil's "unwritten rule" that Muslims can only demand certain levels of encroachment onto 'white' spaces – or risk being shunned as 'fundamentalists' is related to Greenstone's mode of organising public space according to racialised logics. In turn, these are also linked to broader exercises of white governmentality involving strategies of racist violence.

For this reason, Greenstone University's litany of Islamophobic hate crimes attract little attention because the exercise of power that produces them is merely an alternative node through which white governmentality is also exercised in the university, involving almost identical claims concerning the ways in which the institution should be (racially) organised. As a result of this, anti-Muslim vigilante narratives of the type I discussed earlier are bound up in specific racist attacks against Muslims in Greenstone, while racist union staff could beat up Amin and avoid justice on the grounds that their actions were a justifiable response to the 'fundamentalist' threat posed by Amin's enfranchisement. White racism is not only

something practised by the racists who spit at and verbally abuse Greenstone's Muslim students as they campaign against the exsanguination of Iraq outside the union building, or who assault *hijab* wearing Muslim women such as Aisha. White racism is not merely white racism, but a broader act of governmentality. Indeed, in one act of Islamophobic hate experienced by Aisha in a Greenstone hall of residence – having "Fucking Muslim!" yelled at her[35] – there are distinct parallels with the ways in which broader university practices construct visible articulations of Muslim identities as 'fundamentalism'. In a university in which, as I have already noted, 'fundamentalism' is nothing more than a deferred recognition of the presence of Muslims in public spaces, in its everyday usage in Greenstone University, 'fundamentalism' is nothing more than a politically acceptable means of saying "fucking Muslims".

3 Conclusion

I have already noted the extensive problem of Islamophobic graffiti in Greenstone University. One of the milder examples of this was the rhetorical question "Why are all Muslims paranoid?"[36] Whether or not there is any empirically demonstrable 'truth' underlying perceptions of surveillance expressed by Muslim respondents such as Arif and Junaid is utterly irrelevant. For the logics of governmentality require agents to be aware of their own surveillance and to participate in their self-subjection to surveillance. Clearly, those Muslim students who express perceptions of being scrutinised and surveilled are not displaying symptoms of paranoia, but are rather demonstrating their awareness of the intensive scrutiny to which Muslim students have been subjected first in the wake of racialised NUS-led witch-hunts and more recently in the wake of the attacks against the Pentagon and World Trade Centre.

This surveillance is articulated more through routine administrative procedures than through state security agencies, and it quickly became clear during fieldwork that

management calls for surveillance of Fowlerstone's Muslim students in the wake of the attacks against symbols of US military and economic might on 11th September 2001 were by no means an isolated occurrence. In Greenstone University it was clear that activities of a political nature likely to involve Muslim students were subjected to extensive scrutiny either in order to silence political expressions by Muslims[37] or to seriously reduce the effectiveness of the events they participated in[38], even though the scrutiny they were subjected to was usually highly selective and involved intensive surveillance of Muslim politicisation without extending any contextualised reading of the activities themselves. In Finchton University, former Islamic Society President Mohammed reported to me the extent to which racist union officers scrutinised every Islamic Society activity in order to root out radical Islamists who simply weren't present at the time[39]. Middle manager Peter also recounted to me how, when Muslim students resisted this institutionalised racism by turning to *al Muhajiroun*, an important disciplinary technique employed to combat the group's activities on campus lay in rigorous enforcement of routine administrative procedures – such as checking and double checking that invited speakers had provided their full names and that the most absurd of bureaucratic requirements been met – and it is also significant that Finchton's Equal Opportunities Committee responded by calling for a review of the university's appropriate speech guidelines in order to provide further strategies for challenging *al Muhajiroun* activity. Equally significant was that staff in all four case study universities agreed during interview that the ability to engage Muslim students in ostensibly supportive dialogue with institutional administration was an important strategy through which tabs could be kept on Islamic Society activities and institutional authority exerted.

For as long as we are asked to conceive of power in the context of Muslim students solely in terms of crude readings of 'authoritarianism', we will never be able to grasp the extent to which Muslim students are subjected to disciplinary power through the workings of dominant models of liberal multiculturalism. It is not merely through oversight or carelessness that Muslim students are frequently denied rights already

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accorded to members of other groups.   Neither is it simply an unfortunate coincidence that racialised witch-hunts against Muslim students in the higher education sector have generally been configured around appeals to principles of formal equality and multicultural rights.   For, in the final analysis, it is clear that dominant models of liberal multiculturalism represent by far the most effective means with which Muslim students can be subjected to the normalising exercise of white power.   The thinly veiled Islamophobia of Greenstone University – which frequently exploded into acts of Islamophobic violence, harassment, and even death threats – did not succeed in foreclosing the mobilisation of large numbers of Muslims in extremely vocal campaigns in pursuit of a range of basic rights such as protection from Islamophobia, adequate prayer room provision, formal enfranchisement, union block voting, and assessment exemptions for 'Eid.   In contrast, Swanton and Finchton universities – with their more subtle and infinitely more sophisticated methods of discipline and surveillance – political activities involving Muslim students were far less vociferous and far more infrequent.   In order to explore this it is now necessary to turn to a consideration of the ways in which Muslim students resist the exercise of disciplinary power.

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[1] For example, respondents in one university with a significantly above-average representation of Black and ethnic minority students – as much as 60% by 2002 – informed me during 1998 that the university's prayer room provisioning was only about a decade old. In contrast to this, Muslim students – even in Swanton University during the 1970s – often raised funds to open their own prayer rooms in earlier times. Examinations and assessments exemptions for 'Eid, halal food provision, and so forth have often only become widely available during the 1990s, and it was only from the late 1990s onwards that university equal opportunities policies were developing towards specific recognition of Muslim student rights and needs.

[2] For example, the University of East London and Fowlerstone University.

[3] Arif elected to the Greenstone union executive for 1999-2000 session; Junaid left Swanton University in June 1999.

[4] For example, a member of Greenstone University's senior management (female, mid forties) was able to fairly precisely estimate the number of Muslim students, as was Latif (Fowlerstone University middle manager), Rebecca (senior staff member in Swanton University), and Bob (staff member in Fowlerstone University with management responsibilities.

[5] Susan, early 40s, employed at middle management level and interviewed during July 1999.

[6] Iannis, aged mid 50s, employed at middle management level both in academic delivery (as a course director and director of a research centre), and in the university services as a Warden of a Greenstone hall of residence. This conversation took place in Iannis' office during summer 1999.

[7] Rebecca, aged mid-30s, employed in Swanton University at lower-middle management level. Rebecca not only had a wonderful track record of sensitive delivery with Muslim students, but also knew enough about Islam to recognize that when a Saudi student complained about pop music being played in public spaces and requested not to sit next to women in lectures, his views were completely unrepresentative of Islamic Society views. She referred the student concerned to the Islamic Society, thus reducing his complaint to an internal debate between Muslims. Revealed during interview with Rebecca during June 1999.

[8] Peter, middle manager in Finchton University, aged late 30s/early 40s, revealed this during interview in August 1999.

[9] Jamil, mid 30s, during interview, June 1999.

[10] Latif, mid 40s, middle manager.

[11] Munira, Saudi female postgraduate student in 30s.

[12] These reports also included very occasional claims that Libya was also given to keeping an eye out for the political activities of its nationals studying in Britain, particularly during the late 1990s when Gaddafi's son was studying in London. One Egyptian respondent from Greenstone University (Ali, male, mid 20s) with a mischievous sense of humour frequently played to such rumours by pretending to be an agent. Jameela (mid 20s) reported (June 1999) that an Israeli student she knew was convinced that Ali was a Mossad agent and refused to have anything to do with him, while it was also rumoured by some that Ali had managed to convince some Arab international students that he was a member of the *mukhabarat* (Secret Police), although I was unable to find respondents who did believe that Ali was anything other than an extremely intelligent postgraduate student with a keen sense of humour.

[13] Email received from respondent 06/08/02 and refers to claims of "Zionists...taking control of our University campuses". It goes on: "We have heard that these activities are controlled by the Israeli Embassy. It seems they have people in place in all Universities who are active in suppressing any anti Israeli conversations. Packs of information are sent out to these, possibly IDF or ex IDF members on a regular basis. We all are aware that in the USA, with few exceptions, no one dare speak out for fear of losing their jobs".

[14] For example, Ali claimed to me (May 1999) that perceptions of intelligence services as 'spies' were misleading, since the bulk of intelligence gathering activities was centred around embassies and involved activities even as innocuous as reading and monitoring press reports. Ali and a number of other respondents also claimed to me that intelligence was often received either from state employees studying in particular universities, or from overseas nationals reporting on 'dissident' activities to embassy staff out of fear that they would be seen as being involved in such activities and therefore lose their funding for further study (or even face worse repercussions).

[15] Interview with Peter, August 1999. At this point I must note a possible breach of ethics on my part as a researcher. On realizing that he had said too much, Peter noted that this information was 'confidential'. I interpreted this in the same way as all the other material in the interview – which I treated as entirely confidential – but did not interpret it as meaning that the information was not to be used in my thesis.

[16] Interview with Rebecca, June 1999

[17] Iannis, white male lecturer in mid 50s who repeated his claims on a number of occasions including in the company of witnesses, for example at a dinner party passing around bullets he claimed to have been shot with by Israeli soldiers.

[18] Iannis' account of the death of Poulantzas was one of the more bizarre experiences of my PhD – which is saying something – and difficult to hear while managing to contain my laughter. According to Iannis, "we were sitting in his flat in Paris while he paced the room expounding his latest thesis to us. Suddenly he stopped by the balcony window and turned to look at us as though to say 'goodbye' comrades, and that was the last we saw of him alive. We prefer to think of it as suicide rather than an accident because it does not say much of the main theoretician of our movement that he was incapable of even standing by a balcony without falling out". Iannis told me in the company of one of his (extremely) junior colleagues and trusted confidantes (mockingly known by some in the university as 'son of Iannis') during May 2000. Iannis' colleague was almost dumbstruck, managing only to look up in awe at his mentor and gasp "but Iannis...you have done so much!"

[19] Claim of involvement in Athens Polytechnic 'uprising' made to me individually in 1998-1999 session; claim of smuggling money to Palestinian resistance groups made to me individually during March 1998 and then repeated to a number of us attending a dinner party hosted by Iannis in August 1999 when the story of being shot by Israeli soldiers was added and a "bullet" with which he claimed to have been shot was passed round for guests to examine; story of being tailed by British security services related to me individually during June 1999; stories of being present at the death of Nicos Poulantzas and being imprisoned in Chile and Greece related to myself and a colleague of Iannis during May 2000; story of being imprisoned in Cairo (and even writing a prison diary!) related to me individually during summer 1999 in Iannis' office during wider conversation about Islamism. Interestingly, during a visit to Jordan in April 2000, I met a Palestinian UN worker who had been taught by Iannis, and claimed that while coursemates had been regaled with tales of his activities during the first *intifada* and his other links with Palestinian activists and institutions, she had been spared such tales, assuming that the reason for this was her ability to recognize them as fantasy. Iannis has since earned a chair in another university. It must also be noted that, while I am extremely skeptical of these claims, I imply no malice on Iannis' part: socially, I found him an extremely likeable person, and these claims appeared to surface when he was under stress (e.g. feeling harassed and undermined at work) or feeling emotional (e.g. when students in whom he had invested a great deal of support were leaving). As one university staff member remarked to me "Oh, poor Iannis, I actually feel sorry for him. I've sat in his office in a meeting with him when he's there telling me

blatant lies. I thing he has problems and needs help. I think he's ill, there's no other way of expressing it. He's a bit emotional and rather unstable, and it's clear that he's mentally ill".

[20] No page number for the Russell reference is provided since the article was accessed electronically rather than in hard-copy.

[21] Antonio, white male staff member employed as a Project Officer in the university and working as Warden of a Greenstone hall of residence from August 2000 to January 2001, aged early 30s. Informal conversation during November 2000.

[22] Latif, during telephone call.

[23] Point made by Arif during interview in summer 1999 and in informal conversations on a number of occasions.

[24] This incident occurred during May 2000.

[25] Interview with Arif, summer 1999

[26] For example, during interview in June 1999, Greenstone's Vice-Chanchellor argued that if the university was to provide a prayer room for Muslim students, then every "fringe group" including the "disco society" would be in a position to claim similar 'privileges'.

[27] Zainab, who reported these incidents to me in 1993 and was, at the time, in her early 20s and undertaking a PhD while offering part-time lecturing on a number of modules.

[28] Email received from Shaida, MPhil student in Greenstone University, mid 20s, 1st March 1999

[29] Jamil, employed on what Peter described as a "significant honorarium" to work with Muslim students, during interview in June 1999.

[30] Not only did the Vice-Chancellor suggest to me that if there were any problems in the university he would want to know about them, but he also argued that the relatively high level of British South Asian student enrolments in Greenstone's medical school could not be championed unless one was first able to explain a parallel discrepancy in applications and explain why there was such a shortfall between applications and actual enrolments.

[31] For example, the Vice-Chancellor attempted to persuade me that 'Zero tolerance' campaigns to stop violence against women were misguided since men were statistically more likely to be victims of violence against women. It goes without saying that this argument completely missed the point about the different forms of violence to which men and women are likely to be subjected. Not only did he therefore pass remarks that I found to be racist, but he also expressed views that I found sexist.

[32] Views expressed during interview, December 1999 by Emily, warden of a Greenstone hall of residence. Munira, a Tutor within the hall (Saudi, mid 30s postgraduate student) also reported to me during the 1997-1998 session that ongoing requests for halal food provision had previously been rejected on grounds that were often entirely rhetorical – such as claims that vegetarians in the hall would be dismayed to find halal butchery being approved of by hall catering staff – or just plain spurious – such as claims that halal food was too expensive, when in fact the hall's catering staff reported to Munira that at times when the hall's

regular meat supplier failed to deliver, *halal* meat had been obtained from another local butcher as an emergency measure and fed to residents at no extra cost to the hall.

[33] Peter, during interview in August 1999.

[34] Middle managers – Andrea (late 30s), Latif, and Bob (mid 40s) in interviews during summer 1999; Vice-Chancellor during interview in June 1999.

[35] This did not occur in the original hall in which Aisha was assaulted, but during the 2001-2002 session while she was working in a pastoral care capacity in another hall. Responding to residents' noise complaints, Aisha asked a group of party goers to reduce their noise level and was greeted with jeers such as this. Reported to me during informal conversation, September 2002.

[36] I first noticed this piece of Islamophobic graffiti in a toilet cubicle on the first floor of Greenstone University Library at union election time during the 1999-2000 session; it still had not been removed a year later.

[37] The outrage surrounding leaflets denouncing the NUS as 'Islamophobic' in 1998-1999 and Islamic Society references to Palestinians' experiences of racism in 1999-2000 exemplify this.

[38] For example, during the 1998-1999 session two Litte England respondents – Graham, a white researcher in his mid thirties and Arabella, a white research assistant in her mid 20s – reported to me that a guest lecture on Palestine organized by the Friends of Palestine Society had been commuted into a truncated question-and-answer session when complaints about the event were received and the union insisting on rigorous application of administrative procedures surrounding the event to which a blind eye was normally turned in activities held by other groups.

[39] Mohammed, President of Finchton's Islamic Society 1992-1995, mid 20s at time of telephone interview (June 1999).

Part Four – Discipline and ... Resistance

Chapter 8 – Muslim students, political voices, and resistance

1 Introduction

Islamophobic discourse is inscribed on the text of the university through a range of strategies including – but not restricted to – Islamophobic hoaxing, Islamophobic violence, and the exercise of racialised governmentality through the currency of formal multiculturalism and Equal Opportunities. These discursive strategies are all means through which a stabilisation is effected following disruption to traditional, normative modes of representation manifested in the unapologetic expression of Muslim identities and the decentring of white western subjectivities. In this context, it makes sense to read the vigorous assertion of Muslim political identities in Finchton and Greenstone universities as acts of defiance or resistance against the normalising exercise of whitemale power. However, it is also clear that this is an aspect of my analysis of institutionalised Islamophobia in British universities that still awaits further exploration. It is therefore to questions around resistance and Muslim political voices that I turn in this chapter. Of particular concern to me is how we can best conceptualise the political claims of those who mobilise around Islam in our universities, given the shortcomings of dominant accounts of Islamism, Islamophobia, and Muslims. Parallel concerns that emerge from this relate to whether or not it is possible to discern any noteworthy differences in patterns of Muslim mobilisation in universities given the need to extend a de-essentialised analysis, and whether or not it is possible to recognise any progressive potentials in critiques of institutionalised Islamophobia offered by Muslim students.

2 Mimeticism and resistance

By conceptualising Islamophobic discourse as the symbolisation of Muslims as defective whitemales I have extended an argument that resonates somewhat with the work of Luce Irigaray, whose inspirational feminist contributions have often focused on concerns arising from dominant phallocentric conceptual vocabularies derived from the European enlightenment (1985a, for example). My work resonates with Irigaray's since there is an obvious parallel between my argument that Islamophobic discourses symbolise Muslims as defective whitemales and Irigaray's Lacanian analysis of the dominant phallocentric language symbolises women as incomplete or defective males. This is particularly interesting since Irigaray's attempts to conceptualise resistance to phallocentrism give way to an account of a mimetic politics of resistance against dominant phallocentric language use.

It is clear that most accounts of Muslims and political Islam tend to emphasise a politics of mimesis that is thought to dominate political activities by Muslims. For example, according to Chetan Bhatt (1998), Muslims articulate their protest through the western language of modernity itself. According to Bernard Lewis (1996: 57), early contacts between Orient and Occident left "educated Muslims, chagrined by the newfound potency of their European rivals, [asking]... What are they doing right and what are we doing wrong, or not doing at all?" Likewise, Pnina Werbner's reading of Muslim protest against George Bush sr's first Gulf War attempts to locate Muslim campaigning within a quite specifically Mancunian history of political protest and resistance (Werbner 1994). The sort of Islamophobic claims concerning the inauthenticity of Muslim identities of which we have already seen numerous examples nearly always accompanies such arguments. In a slightly different vein, others maintain that modes of political protest and mobilisation for rights are determined more by hegemonic formations than by the agency of Muslim campaigners.

In other words, what we are being asked to find convincing is the idea that Muslims are only able to mobilise politically by miming back their enunciations in a 'white' western mode. Thus it is frequently pointed out that when Muslim identities are articulated through political activities predicated around mimeticism, the end result is the destabilisation of identities constructed around an assumed Islam/'west' binarism. Thus, the Muslim identities that are articulated through this politics of mimeticism are at best contradictory and at worst incoherent, and western identities are threatened by this mimetic resurfacing of key moments from western pasts. Since Islamophobic discourse seeks to reaffirm the pathological nature of Muslims as defective or incompletely realised westerners, this emphasis on mimeticism valorises Islamophobia. In the light of other superficial parallels between my conceptualisation of Islamophobia and Irigaray's work on phallocentrism, it therefore remains to be seen whether or not there is any scope for identifying potentially radical and transformative Muslim politics of mimesis from my fieldwork findings, or whether or not all such acts of mimesis must necessarily be Islamophobic.

2.1 Mimeticism and resistance

When Irigaray speaks of mimesis it is as a means for women to reclaim a language of their own. Irigaray seeks (1985b) to differentiate her notion of a mimetic politics from Plato's phallocentric reference to mimesis. However, within the context of decentred western subjectivities, the notion that the praxis of this distinction remains useful for considerations of Muslim acts of political resistance remains problematic. For, in Platonic thought, *methexis* and *mimesis* can be roughly rendered as participation. It is the internalising dimensions of this notion that concern me he because, for all of her ground-breaking contributions both to Lacanian analysis and to feminist theory, Irigaray remains located within the western project that she so critically engages with. Irigaray's concern is one of transformation and reform that can be read within the broader context of western radicalism. To put it crudely,

Irigaray's project is one not incompatible with broader western notions of progress, reason, and modernity, since reformation of the ways in which women are symbolised can be invoked as yet another example of the west's ability to redefine and reinvent itself in the name of further progress. As Wills (2001: 99) notes, "Irigaray puts forward...'subversive mimesis' as the only possible means for women to speak *within* patriarchal ideology" (my emphasis).

Thus, the mimetic possibilities Irigaray seeks to extend are interesting because they seek to overturn traditional phallocentric modes of representing mimesis in women. For example, traditional western representations of female sexuality expressed in mimesis through the milieu of patriarchy tend to portray women either as capable of enjoying and manipulating for their own ends patriarchal subjection (e.g. the Wife of Bath), or as suffering (particularly in Victorian literature) from some mental infirmity (madness, hysteria...) as a consequence of the destabilisation of their subjectivities emerging from the mimesis. What Irigaray seeks to do is to overturn traditional phallocentric oppositions in order to provide women with a means of accounting for themselves without recourse to patriarchal subjection (which has traditionally denied women their subjectivity and agency). In an Irigarayan sense, mimeticism is thus subversive and performative.

In this there are distinct contrasts against Islamism. Islamism emerged following the emergence of new possibilities for what Sayyid (1997) calls a 'polycentric' world and that it has little to do with the ability to speak *within* the western ideological project to which writers such as Chetan Bhatt appear so firmly wedded. And, even though I draw a distinction between Islamist students and other observant Muslim university members who may or may not advocate a political order configured around Islamic metaphors, it is still clear that a distinction must be drawn between attempts to transform institutionalised symbolisation of Muslim students by critiquing them from outside hegemonic western logics and attempts to maintain them in various degrees of subalternity by insisting they only ever speak as incidental moments in a broader

story of white western universality. Is it therefore possible to identify a performative politics of Muslim student mimeticism?

Muslim students in Greenstone University were symbolised as defective whitemales; incomplete beings by dint of their appeals to Islam and minorities deserving of subjection to racialised acts of governmentality. Muslim political engagements in Greenstone University were routinely scrutinised and read through the logics of Europe's past, as pathological anti-Semites with Nazi leanings whose right to engage in the same range of political activities and identifications as other groups was routinely suppressed and politicised as an exemplar of all that is undesirable about these defective and threatening fanatics. We have already seen that dominant readings of political activity involving Greenstone's Muslim students – including, notably, their support for Palestinian rights campaigns – are unsustainable, since they generally involve branding as transgressive, terrorist-supporting, and radically Islamist even the most seemingly innocuous activities such as participation in formal student politics. How, then, did Greenstone University's Muslim students deploy a political vocabulary?

If Eurocentric scholarship is to be taken seriously, then it would make sense to suggest that Muslim students campaigning for improved symbolisation of a Muslim presence were mobilising around incoherent appeals to the language of western supremacism and universalism itself. In fact, it is wise not to be mislead by the extensive political activity of Greenstone's Islamic Society, for far from being located outside the logics of liberalism – for example, as Islamist – the Islamic Society's political strategy was predicated around performative techniques of mimeticism that at times almost verged on the carnivalesque (in a Bakhtinian sense).

Following its 1994 expulsion from a prayer room at the centre of campus to an almost derelict store-room tucked away at the fringes of the university, the Islamic Society made a rather intriguing political manoeuvre that could not be adequately symbolised

within the university's discursive logics: they threatened court action. For a body largely pathologised as being rather subversive and criminalised this recourse to court action shook the institution to its very foundations. However the society's next move was ultimately to display less political vision than the threat of court action had done. The university responded to the threat by suggesting that a committee be formed to discuss issues relating to Muslim prayer room needs. After some discussion, the Prayer Room Trust Committee was born, a body chaired by the university with representatives from the Islamic Society, students union, local Muslim community and university administration to attend its meetings. The Islamic Society agreed to the suggestion, and in doing so was outmanoeuvred in a way that foreclosed any possibility of engaging in radical critique of the university's modes of symbolising Muslim students and any possibility of resolving the prayer room dispute once and for all. By agreeing to attend the committee, the Islamic Society also agreed to the principles of engagement that the university saw as being central to the committee's functioning, and more importantly to the principles of engagement that reflected the university's preferred method of symbolising its Muslim presence as largely 'fringe', defective, minority, and rather troublesome.

Crucially, the raison d'etre of the committee so far as the university was concerned was to provide support and facilitation for the Islamic Society to raise its own funds to build a prayer room. The Islamic Society's acceptance of this crucial principle was intimated by committee minutes reporting the hopes of a Muslim student who felt he would be able to raise £200,000 from a visit by overseas Muslim "dignitaries", which also revealed the relative weakness of Muslims on the committee[1]. The Islamic Society was unable to raise the necessary money and the Islamic Society was left with its sole means of engaging with the university as one in which the Islamic Society, having agreed to terms of engagement through the committee that were based on a complete acceptance of the institution's final vocabulary. As a result, the university's emphasis on viewing Muslims not only as a minority but as a largely 'fringe' group among minorities on which official modes of symbolising a Muslim

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presence were based could not be effectively critiqued or challenged by the Islamic Society which had effectively bought unreservedly into the terms of engagement dictated by the university. These terms were decidedly one-sided. The Vice-Chancellor's explanation of the situation to me during interview centred on suggesting that if Muslims were to be given a prayer room, then every other fringe group, including the "disco society" would also need to be offered a similar provision[2]. It followed, therefore, that the Islamic Society was unable to effect any noticeable transformation in institutional patterns of symbolisation and that as a result the society was also generally unable to resolve a whole range of problems arising from prayer room provision and faced an uphill battle persuading the university to even fund maintenance of the existing facility. The Islamic Society had found itself locked into a mimetic engagement that foreclosed the possibility of significant positional manoeuvres until such a time as the university administration would change the terms of engagement.

Greenstone's Islamic Society responded to its increasing marginalisation – and to its disenfranchisement from union politics in the 1996-1997 session following allegations of 'fundamentalism' – by attempting to increase its influence through extensive participation in formal student politics. When it was finally re-admitted into formal student politics, the Islamic Society actively campaigned to ensure that Muslim candidates were elected to various positions on the Council and Union Executive. During interviews and discussions with key Islamic Society figures it was clear that the carnivalesque atmosphere surrounding Islamic Society campaigning at election times was not merely a play of vanities, but that significant hopes of major political gains were invested in these elections. *Halal* food provision was one cause of the Islamic Society, even though it was clear that the society would have stood a greater chance of gaining such provisions across the university by lobbying university authorities rather than lobbying the union. Similarly, the society distributed leaflets at union election times warning that a failure to elect pro-Muslim candidates would also lead to the demolition of the prayer room and a rising tide of Islamophobia across the

campus. That the Islamic Society mobilised on these issues at election time year after year is testimony to its monumental lack of success. Far from achieving any significant gains or radically critiquing modes of institutional symbolisation of a Muslim presence through its mimetic strategies, the Islamic Society only succeeded in consolidating the liberal logics of exclusion that had been so dominant.

2.2 Irony and resistance

The lack of success experienced by Greenstone University's Islamic Society with all of its mimeticism contrasted starkly with gains made in the institution and elsewhere by employing an alternative approach. For example, Greenstone's Islamic Society had agreed to the institution's request of over £200,000 in order to provide a prayer room and, as a consequence, was unable to make any headway at all in gaining a prayer room at the university's expence. This contrasted with an incident in another (far more impecuniary) university, where £500,000 was requested in order to provide the society with a prayer room. As a former Islamic Society President from this university – let's call it Longstone University – recalled:

"...from the very start the Chaplaincy did not have or include or include an Islamic society. Maybe it was because Muslims did not want to be part of the Chaplaincy centre. It was named as Chaplaincy centre...and there are three you know arrow type of things sticking out of the top of the building and err one mm two of them are crosses and one was just a stick you know with the wings taken off which they say symbolises secular religions...I believe because of the way the building was structured maybe Muslim students did not want to be a part of the building, and they were given a separate room. it was not large enough and then I set up a committee and at the time – 1994 I think or 5... I told them to change the whole approach...its neither Islamically necessary nor feasible... There's no way they could get the money. I mean £500,000 – not even the Saudi king would give that

money so who's gonna run this...there's gonna be a conflict between the students and the local community..., blahblah, but we turned the whole thing and I then pulled it off and said they only want a larger room where they can socialise and pray. They couldn't resist that – though it took some time – so they gave us a larger room, a converted bar I think. A bar converted, that's right. Yeah, ironic, you see extremist Muslims they can manage to convert a bar [laughing].....that's the only thing they can do maybe...err although now its still not enough but its not at the centre of the campus, its out there on the other end of the campus, its very difficult to find it but they the university took the responsibility of arranging the washing facilities...they err took into account how those washing facilities should be.....somebody sat with us we drew plans together of the inside of the *masjid*, so err...the ...I generally found that Longstone University administration has a positive approach...mmm primarily because the majority of Muslim students are international students and mostly international students pay as twice the national students...."[3]

The Islamic Society President in Longstone was able to engage in a far more effective and ultimately successful positional engagement by refusing to get drawn into a mimetic struggle. Instead, he extended a more radical critique that enabled the society to transform Islamophobic modes of symbolising the presence of Muslims. This respondent succeeded in both winning over Muslim students to a more pragmatic approach likely to appeal to the university while simultaneously making it clear to the university that the society's Islamic final vocabulary had a bottom line that could not be sacrificed. This technique can best be understood as a politics of ironism.

According to Rorty (1989) an ironist is one who recognises the contingency of language and of final vocabularies. Although an ironist is one who possesses continued doubts over the truth claims of her/his own final vocabulary, this is not the same thing as suggesting that they do not have access to a coherent final

vocabulary, but rather that they are aware that its claims are no more final than those of any other final vocabulary. As a consequence of this, a Muslim student politics of ironism – if, indeed, it is possible to identify such articulations of Muslim political identities – could most productively be seen as one in which Muslim political agents privately configure their claims around appeals to Islamic metaphors while publicly appealing to liberalism (for example), recognising the contingency of both. In other words, a politics of ironism would differ notably from a politics of mimeticism since, rather than abandoning the possibility of appealing to Islamic metaphors, it would involve more complex positional plays switching between differing final vocabularies while maintaining something of a strong private emphasis on the preferred final vocabulary.

To illustrate this it is worth turning to Iran's President Khatami, a figure often invested with a peculiar status in the west as a totemic figure in the ideological struggle to westernise 'the fundamentalist' state of Iran. For it is clear that Khatami's discourse is not articulated internally to the western ideological project. To illustrate this point it is worth turning to Pease's (1999) discussion of a CNN interview in which President Khatami invoked Tocqueville to critique US democracy. In the interview, Khatami drew parallels between European persecution of the Puritans to the US establishment's attitude towards Islam, and attacked the US' dual containment policy. Pease (1999) notes that Khatami's deployment of Tocqueville precipitated a crisis in the CNN editors' symbolic order that led to a response predicated around failing to "engage in political commentary about its [Khatami's interview] content. In place of the expression of agreement or disagreement with the particulars of Khatami's discussion, they attempted its retroactive cancellation...the editors annulled Khatami's rights as an interlocutor within the precincts of international civil society. The purpose of the column entailed the reimposition of a series of terms—*ayatollah*, *mullah, jihad*—whose journalistic meanings Khatami had refused and whose system of connotative references cohered around the signifier of Islam's unchanging synonymy with international terrorism"[4].

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Khatami's critique was so effective in disrupting the symbolic order of the CNN editors not because it was an act of mimesis that positioned him within a eurocentric final vocabulary but rather because it was entirely dependent upon articulating a Muslim identity through reference to a final vocabulary configured around Islam as a master signifier. Khatami's deployment of Tocqueville may have shared a certain playfulness with Irigaray's notion of mimesis, but it was a far less ambiguous. Khatami was not attempting to improve the symbolisation of Muslims or Islamism within the eurocentric final vocabulary he challenged, but rather to show the contingency of that final vocabulary. If Irigaray's mimesis is largely concerned with women challenging and overturning the norms to which they are subjected from *within*, then Khatami's radical critique was concerned with overturning them from without. In a Rortyan sense, ironism involves recognition not only of the contingency of one's own final vocabulary but also of the possibility that it can easily be replaced with another. I prefer to see a political ironist as one who does not necessarily entertain continued self doubts over the claims of her/his own final vocabulary, but rather as one who is equally able to avoid being prone to such doubts while still being able to strategically occupy spaces of undecidability within another's final vocabulary.

One of the consequences of Greenstone Islamic Society's mimeticism was that it ultimately became entangled in two sets of running conflicts with no signs of prevailing in either struggle. First, by uncritically accepting the logics of formal student politics, the Islamic Society found itself buying into the racialised logics dominating formal student political engagements. As a consequence, it found itself participating in rather than subverting racialised encounters. Second, by accounting for itself through these logics, the society became embroiled in ongoing disputes with a range of observant Muslim students who rejected any notion of reifying the hegemonic final vocabulary through political techniques of mimeticism.

Swanton's Islamic Society experienced far more success that Greenstone as a consequence of its ironist engagements. The Islamic Society in Greenstone effectively placed all its eggs in one basket by articulating its identity through the currency of liberal milieu, and by doing so submitted itself to participation in ongoing racialised political engagements that ultimately brought negligable success over a number of years. In contrast to this, Swanton's Islamic Society maintained a cautious distance from direct participation in union elections while actively seeking to further causes of concern to Muslim students through positional engagements and manoeuvres. As a consequence, Swanton's Islamic Society was able to avoid principled opposition from Muslim students unhappy with uncritical acceptance of dominant logics. At the same time, it was able to avoid getting locked into political engagements predicated around racialised logics. Swanton's Islamic Society participated in positional engagements which centred on questions of political principle rather than racialised status and it was able to achieve considerable success.

By far the most successful Islamic Society was at Swanton University, where Muslims had faced the same type of difficulties as their peers across the country during the early days of the society. The society itself is now over three decades old, and managed to gain its first prayer room at the end of the 1970s when a number of international Muslim students raised sufficient funds to purchase a house for use as a student *masjid*. By the time of writing the Islamic Society has managed to transform itself into, in the words of a former President, "a force to be reckoned with", regarded by the students union as an important stakeholder in an alcohol free coffee bar, having received multiple prayer room provisions across campus and been granted a significant university donation in order to extend the original student *masjid* to better cater for the needs of Muslim women, having been featured in a highly complementary article in the university's staff newsletter, and having managed to successfully engage in a range of political campaigns to improve institutional symbolisation of a Muslim presence in a number of ways.

Swanton Islamic Society's engagements with the university were sufficiently successful for its President to receive a slightly apologetic letter in April 1999 from a member of senior management following a slight misunderstanding over room booking procedures[5]. A further reflection of the success of the Islamic Society's strategy emerged in the form of a letter to the Islamic Society President sent by another member of senior management in February 1999, which noted "I have been asked by the Vice Chancellor to reply to your letter of 4 January 1999 on the matter of dedicated Prayer Rooms within the Engineering Faculty area. I am pleased to inform you that having received a copy of your letter in early January I have taken steps to provide dedicated temporary accommodation in the...area. Estates Department and the Faculty will jointly fund the accommodation and it is hoped that it will be in place by the end of February 1999. As you may be aware, there are a number of new projects involving major capital build proposed for the area and, subject to being successful in our bid process, a permanent facility would form part of the new build"[6]. Following delays in providing the prayer room, the Islamic Society organised a petition which resulted in letters of support from from two Professors in the Engineering Faculty[7]. The Islamic Society's ironist approach involved politely communicating non-negotiable requirements for Muslims to key members of staff[8] and the success of this approach ultimately led to the provision of a prayer room.

The key to this strategy lay in the political ironism adopted by the Islamic Society leadership which recognised that well organised political adversaries within the students union and NUS would make any gains made through the students union hard fought and possibly, with the annual turnover of officers, short-lived. Instead the Islamic Society turned to the university's central administration, convinced that it was only through positional engagements that they would be able to make any headway. The key to these positional engagements lay in flexibility: whereas Greenstone's Islamic Society was run through unwieldy committees influenced by former students[9] and engaged with the university through an equally unwieldy committee, Swanton's

Islamic Society sought to identify key political figures within the institution and forge links between them and a designated single individual. This enabled a range of significant relationships to be formed, culminating in a range of quite unprecedented inputs into institutional symbolisation: not only was the Islamic Society formally represented in consultations over institutional equal opportunities but its good relations with a range of staff members even at senior levels. Central to these engagements was the Islamic Society's conviction in the necessity of maintaining their 'bottom line' and refusing to surrender their final vocabulary in their positional engagements. In order to ensure that they were able to help determine the ground rules for any engagements, the Islamic Society also ensured that they maintained a critical awareness of the university's final vocabulary. Through this approach Islamic Society members were able to effectively launch a series of radical critiques that succeeded in highlighting the contingency of existing institutional provisions. If Muslims were symbolised as a 'minority' this would not be contested in simple numerical terms as in Greenstone University (therefore valorising institutional processes for symbolising minority/majority) but rather by radically critiquing the ways in which Muslims' objective disciplinary capacities as minorities could be diagnosed. As a result of such strategies, Muslims were not seen as being minorities but rather as being significant members able to contribute to the daily life of the university in significant ways. Moreover, they were symbolised not as a simple 'fringe' group or minority, but rather as a group of strength, enriching university life and bringing substantial numbers of fee-paying overseas students with them. These radical critiques also ensured that the Islamic Society became valued as a means of helping to meet the needs of Muslim students within the institution, a status that could only be achieved as a result of the institution's implicit recognition that its own final vocabulary was incapable of symbolising a Muslim presence as adequately as the Islamic Society's final vocabulary was.

The Islamic Society at Swanton University effectively forced the university to symbolise it as a partner of the university rather than as a troublesome enemy.

Muslims were not even viewed as a minority, but rather as an important student constituency. The success of these strategies in transforming institutional symbolisation was reflected in the positional engagements of the Islamic Society with one particular member of staff. Institutional strategy at Greenstone had involved attempting to exercise normalising power over the use of Muslim vocabularies by boxing the Islamic Society into a mimetic engagement. Finchton's post-uprising strategy had involved engaging with Muslim students on ironist terms in order to help normalise Muslims to the need to engage on mimeticist terms for their part. But Swanton University engaged with Muslim students on ironist terms. The member of staff with the greatest level of contact with Muslim students demonstrated during interview that she had a strong knowledge about Islam and Muslims. It soon became clear through interviews with her and key Islamic Society figures that her engagements with the Islamic Society were characterised by a mutual sense of respect that did not extend to open friendship; both sides held their reservations. The terms of engagement between the staff member and the Islamic Society were based on a mutual recognition of each other's final vocabulary and on what the bottom line for each was. As a result of this the Islamic Society were able to configure the language of their positional engagements around Islamic metaphors and the institution accepted this. The Islamic Society was therefore able to avoid getting tied down by rules of engagement determined by the institution, but was able to launch radical critiques of the way in which those rules were constructed and thus demonstrate the contingency of the university's preferred means of symbolising a Muslim presence and the equal validity of deploying an Islamic final vocabulary[10].

A recognition of the success of the Islamic Society's strategy is illustrated rather paradoxically by the case of a Saudi student who complained to the university about having to sit next to women in lectures and listen to loud pop music in public spaces. The student was immediately directed to the Islamic Society, who foreclosed his complaints. On one level this was an obvious example of the deployment of disciplinary technologies of the self. But it also paradoxically marked an institutional

acceptance of the importance of recognising the validity of a final vocabulary configured around Islamic metaphors. Within the terms of the university's final vocabulary the student would have found himself pathologised as defective, making complaints that were unsustainable within the terms of its symbolisation of 'normalcy'. The Islamic Society could, however, deal with the matter by engaging in measured debate on Islamic grounds, ensuring that the student was not pathologised. Another illustrative example reported both by a staff member and a member of the Islamic Society occurred when word reached the institution that *Hizb ut-Tahrir* was planning to target the university's students, having already been active in the city. The institution could easily have read the issue within the terms of its own final vocabulary, and in doing so symbolised the presence of Muslims as inherently pathological and only ever one step away from 'fundamentalist' or 'Nazi' deviance as defective westerners. But rather than take such a step, a meeting was called at which members of a number of student societies would gather for a cup of tea with a staff member before being given a guided tour of the student *masjid*, with the Islamic Society's President able to clarify in his own terms the position of the society vis-à-vis *Hizb ut-Tahrir* and Islamic positions on anti-Semitism and so forth, thus demythologising dominant constructions of 'fundamentalism'. The result of this meeting was, of course, that conflict between Muslims and members of other student groups was not institutionalised and that, in fact, non-Muslims found an opportunity to confront Muslims with their fears while Muslims were able to respond in their own terms without being subjected to dominant modes of subalternisation[11].

By ensuring that they engaged with the institution on grounds of political ironism rather than getting drawn into the type of mimeticist encounter that Greenstone's Islamic Society had fallen for, Muslims of Swanton University also found added benefits in terms of their successful engagement in students union politics. The Islamic Society in Greenstone University was forced to invest a huge significance in students union politics as a result of the failure of its mimeticist mode of engagement with the university. This meant huge annual mobilisations of Muslims in order to

secure the election to key students union positions of Muslim candidates or those identified as supportive of Muslims. Year on year, Greenstone's Islamic Society engaged in this strategy, issuing printed notices to the effect that it was only through positive election results that the society would be able to secure the prayer room's future and defeat the Islamophobes. In fact, such a strategy would never secure the prayer room's future given that the Islamic Society had already completely accepted the parameters of engagement dictated by the university – which was, after all, the ultimate deciding authority on any spatial provision. Greenstone's Muslims were, however, extremely successful in forcing a number of debates on important issues, and in the wake of the WTC attack managed to successfully table two motions dealing with Islamophobia and other forms of discrimination and the sanctions against Iraq. They also managed to force a much publicised debate on whether or not it is anti-Semitic to criticise Zionism.

Swanton's Islamic Society was equally able to force important debates on a range of issues, although these debates were rarely publicised to the same extent as Greenstone's. In fact, it became clear during discussions with Muslim students at Swanton University that the Islamic Society recognised that the great age of huge student political campaigning was past. As a result, the society's emphasis on centring itself as a force to be reckoned with in the institution more broadly ensured that the society entered students union debates from a position of strength that was recognised by members of other student societies. Swanton's Islamic Society knew that it had political adversaries within the students union who had previously formed strategic alliances with each other and who had a greater access to strong national campaigning networks than the Islamic Society had, as well as significant allies among university staff. But their refusal to get dragged into a mimetic engagement with the university administration as Greenstone's Muslims had ensured that other student groups were already familiar with political claims based on an Islamic final vocabulary finding their symbolisation across the institution. This left the society in a position of strength; whereas shows of great numerical strength in students union

elections were the main prong of Greenstone's Islamic Society strategy for political engagements following the failure of its mimeticist strategy for positional engagements with the university administration, Swanton University's Islamic Society was able to deploy this as merely one strategy that could be selectively deployed among many other strategies within a broader ironist positional engagement. The strengthened position of Swanton's Islamic Society was reflected by the different ways in which a Muslim presence was symbolised. Minutes of Swanton University's students union meetings are extremely revealing: whereas Greenstone's Islamic Society was unable to sufficiently transform institutional symbolisation to a degree that showed the contingency of dominant Islamophobic pathologies, Swanton's Islamic Society had transformed institutional symbolisation to such an extent that only seven days after the WTC attack the students union issued a press release condemning the NUS:

"The Union has no evidence to support the statement from Brooks Duke of the National Union of Students that fundamentalist Islamic religious groups are targeting Swanton students. The Union regrets that NUS did not ask Swanton Union if their statement was accurate....The Students' Union will not tolerate any scape-goating of Muslim students in this period of tension. Following the tragic events in America last week there has been a huge rise in the number of attacks on Muslim and black people across the UK. This is a time for us all to be supporting Muslim communities in Britain and we strongly disagree with the singling out of particular Muslim groups which are completely unrepresentative of our Islamic members or the Islamic faith. We call on all responsible people to take into account the unrepresentative nature of this group and not allow inflammatory language to endanger our Muslim members"

A further statement was agreed which sought to "remind commentators that speculation and accusations as to the likely perpetrators of this crime against humanity are heightening tension and encouraging talk of retaliation and revenge.

This is both counterproductive and dangerous. We urge restraint, a rational and non-military response and time for reflection...US foreign policy has not promoted democracy and freedom in the Middle East and regional instability is spreading, not contained....We are also extremely concerned at a marked escalation of hostility and attacks on Muslim and Black people in Britain and the United States. We regret the role of the media in whipping up Islamaphobia at this time of great tension. The Students Union calls on all concerned organisations and individuals to urge our Government to show restraint and to actively dissuade the United States from military retaliation. It wishes to show support and solidarity with its Muslim and Black members at this time of increased danger and the British Muslim community."

In addition to committing the union to take part in peace demonstrations, the meeting resolved that the union would "publicly show support for Muslim and Black students at [Swanton University] and Muslims and Black people across Britain and the United States". What makes the outcomes of this meeting all the more remarkable is that not a single Muslim name appears on the minuted list of attendees, something that would be unthinkable in Greenstone University where Muslim students have to fight for all gains made within the students union. Indeed, the students union discussed a range of other issues directly affecting Muslims over the remainder of the term: bar music being too audible in the union's alcohol free coffee bar, whether or not Muslim students could have their own automatic representative on the university council, the progress of a letter of complaint to the NUS over its Islamophobic scaremongering about 'fundamentalists', and condemnation of Bush's war against Afghanistan (referring explicitly to *Islamic Relief's* concerns about the bombing). What was remarkable was that in order for such issues to be raised, the Islamic Society need not need recourse to massive mobilisations of Muslim students. So successfully had the Islamic Society managed to establish the validity of its final vocabulary within the institution over the decades since its foundation in the early 1970s by engaging in ironist political manoeuvres that it was now a force to be reckoned with; a power broker that different student factions would approach for support in elections and who

no other student society could ignore. The society did not need to raise concerns in a mimeticist manner at all; it could safely be left to non-Muslim students to re-symbolise a Muslim presence in their own terms in order to raise issues affecting Muslims at students union level. The Islamic Society was able to express through recourse to its own final vocabulary what its concerns were and leave others with the headache of re-symbolising them in their final vocabularies without resorting to dominant pathologies. The Islamic Society thus found itself able to engage in political debates on a range of issues – by organising debates and talks on the Palestine/Israel conflict, for example – without being pathologised as defective westerners pandering to Nazi sentiments, while its principled political adversaries were fully aware that, irrespective of their own power and access to local and national campaigning networks, any attempt to silence the Islamic Society would ultimately fail because the Islamic Society had so successfully managed to introduce its vocabulary to the institution and dictate the terms on which a Muslim presence should be symbolised as equals.

2.3 Islamist critique as resistance

The third and final technique for Muslim student political mobilisation uncovered during my fieldwork related to the explicit use of Islamic metaphors in such a manner that no spaces were left for ambiguities or apologia. In short, this strategy took the form of open support for Islamism.

Although the common misconception is that Islamist activities in universities centre on Antisemitism and other hate crimes, nothing could have been further from the truth. For example, one of the most effective provision requests made by a Muslim student during my fieldwork occurred in the 1998-1999 session when an Islamist student in Greenstone University took it upon himself to ensure that an examination he was due to sit did not interfere with his needs as a Muslim. Even though the Islamic Society was the self-styled protector and advocate of Muslims, the student

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concerned realised that its mimetic approach would be ill-suited to winning a fierce, focused engagement with comparatively radical aims in a short period of time. As a consequence he took on his lecturers himself and won. Central to the student's complaint was that to sit a particular examination would interfere with his religious observance since it would involve him missing both his *zohr* and *asr* prayers. The student therefore requested that appropriate alternative arrangements be made. After some to-ing and fro-ing staff finally acceded to his demands and organised a separate examination for the student, ensuring that he would be able to twice break his examination in order to perform his prayers in the examination room. This incident most clearly illustrates the advantages of extending an Islamist rather than a mimetic critique of institutional modes of symbolising a Muslim presence. After all, the Islamic Society with all of its mimeticism had taken a number of years to even win the concession that examinations falling on *'Eid* could be re-arranged. This single Islamist student, with his radical rejection of institutional logics, shook the system to such an extent that he won a far more radical provision in less than two weeks.

Other forms of Islamist mobilisation were both less and more successful in a number of ways. Very often they failed to generate any real gains for Muslim students in terms of provisions. Indeed, Muslim students from across the sector were often extremely vocal in opposing Islamists on the grounds that their activities would be used to justify more fierce Islamophobic backlashes against all Muslim students. Such perceptions are worthy of further thought, for it is clear that the Islamophobia that frequently resulted from such incidents generally owed far more to the power of the critique being extended by the Islamists than to anything particularly unacceptable about the behaviour they had displayed. Aside from the very occasional (and usually extremely isolated) Islamist expressing views that I found to be completely unacceptable for various obvious reasons, by far the majority of Islamists I encountered were engaged in generally harmless activities. Indeed, not once did I encounter any hate literature distributed by Islamists, despite the endless claims of widespread hate crimes. One typical example, which occurred in

Greenstone University during 1998-1999, involved the circulation of stickers in Greenstone Union which branded the NUS as Islamophobic and alleged that it was partisan to Zionism. These stickers were politicised as an example of Antisemitism although their target was not Jewish students but NUS partisanship and Islamophobia. The ferocity of the ensuing response was testimony to the disruptive potentials of this critique of dominant modes of symbolising a Muslim presence. This action could not easily be adequately symbolised within the hegemonic symbolic order (based around appeals to liberalism and full formal equality). As a consequence, the response it met with attempted to render invisible once again the contingencies of the practices through which Islamophobia was being.

The violence of the response to overt appeals to Islamic metaphors does, however, illustrate the success of Islamist critiques. For it is clear that responses predicated on revalidating the practices through which Muslims were originally symbolised as deviant, defective, and threatening merely testify to the strength of the Islamist critique and valorise the suggestion by Islamists that liberal institutions are Islamophobic. In this light it is extremely significant to note that throughout my fieldwork, I was struck by the ways in which Islamists attempt to convey their message to others and recruit support. Islamists do not recruit by promising death to members of other groups. Islamists recruit by highlighting the Islamophobia to which Muslims are subjected. And Islamists experience some success in some universities not only because their discourse is attractive to some Muslims but also because their references to Islamophobia appear both relevant and convincing.

This was perhaps most clearly demonstrated in Finchton University, where as we have seen, al Muhajiroun only emerged as a force to be reckoned with in the university during the 1997-1998 academic session after a period of sustained Islamophobia in the university left Muslim students with nothing to lose by turning to more radical political alternatives than they had hitherto employed. After all, even when there had been no al Muhajiroun presence among the Muslim students, they

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were still being punished and scrutinised for crimes that they had not committed. It should therefore come as no surprise that al Muhajiroun's appeals to Islamophobia appeared sufficiently convincing to Muslim students that the group was able to gain control of the Islamic Society. It is, however, extremely telling that the university chose to deal with the matter by being extremely tough on al Muhajiroun activists while making supportive overtures to other Muslim students[12], which were eventually to include significant improvements in provision, direct links with members of senior management, and the paid employment of an 'Imaam'. Intriguingly, the 'Imaam' noted to me during interview that, far from being 'extremist', the fundamental problem he had encountered with Finchton University's Tableegh-i-jamaat dominated Islamic Society was that its members were actually too apathetic.

3 Hearing Muslims

From broader difficulties of convincingly accounting for a Muslim presence in British universities emerges a parallel difficulty in hearing and adequately comprehending the enunciations of Muslim political actors. It would clearly be Islamophobic to assume that political activities involving Muslim students are predicated around 'extremism' or hatred for members of other groups. Among Britain's Muslim students are a tiny minority of activists with views that can easily be characterised as radical or extreme. However, there is no reliable empirical evidence to suggest that 'extremism' is any more prevalent among Muslims than among Socialists, those on the political right, Jews, Hindus, or any other student group.

There do remain significant difficulties. For example, as recently as the 2002-2003 session, I observed in a refectory of a London-based university a sign advertising the halal dish of the day as roast chicken with bacon. The head of the institution's Equality and Diversity Unit did not show any real interest in the problems that this reflected so it fell to a junior staff member to raise the issue with refectory staff. The incident was passed off as a simple oversight since, it was claimed, the chicken was

halal and was available separately from the bacon dish. The same excuse could not, however, be used the following day, when the *halal* dish of the day was advertised as pork in a white wine sauce[13]. This is not a university with no experience of dealing with Muslim staff and students. It is an institution with 60% Black and ethnicised minority students (a significant number of whom are Muslim) and almost 30% Black and ethnicised minority staff (some of whom are, again, Muslim). This is a university with extensive experience of 'dealing with' Muslim staff and students and a sizeable unit dedicated to working on equality and diversity-related issues. That it was still incapable of adequately symbolising a Muslim presence is a testimony not to the provocative or inciteful presence of 'fundamentalists' but rather to an institutionalised disregard for the legitimacy of Muslim voices. This episode cannot be written off through its characterisation as misguided well-meaningness. After all, the tokenism of such an exercise is sufficient grounds on which to discern the workings of Islamophobia.

It is not only in institutions such as this that Islamophobia can surface. Fowlerstone University was the first in the country to formally articulate protection for Muslim students through its Policy on Religious and Cultural Diversity. Muslim students in Fowlerstone University have enjoyed formal protection against Islamophobia for some time, in addition to guarantees of prayer room provision on request, *halal* food provision, and a number of other rights. Provision in Fowlerstone University was so good that the Islamic Society rarely had to politicise, although it should be noted that a Muslim senior staff member has been the driving force behind its equal opportunities development and implementation. However, during the 2001-2002 session there was some indication that the rights and provisions enjoyed by Fowlerstone's Muslim students and staff were under threat from a resurgent Islamophobia. Anonymous staff respondents indicated to me that discussions were being held at management level based on the premise that it was important to subject Muslim students to surveillance in order to ensure that no WTC-like atrocities were being planned in the university's prayer rooms. From such discussions

emerged attempts to divine a means of diluting provision for Muslims in the university. Following this, in April 2002 a *jummah* prayer was interrupted to warn Muslims that a newly passed students union resolution meant that any criticism of Israel or Zionism would lead to the banning of the society on the grounds of anti-Semitism. Muslim worshippers were outraged that their right to engage in free speech had been removed and that they were being silenced. Such a resolution would never have been passed in Greenstone University without an almighty struggle and would probably never have been passed at all in Swanton University. It had slipped through at Fowlerstone because the Muslims had effectively become normalised to the idea that they could enjoy a good level of symbolisation within the institution without being pathologised: *halal* food would be provided on request, there were multiple prayer rooms and an institutional commitment on paper to provide more when demand justified such a move, formal protection against various forms of Islamophobia, and Muslims had been offered a whole range of other rights without having to fight for them. Muslims were able to engage with the institution on ironist grounds without having to fight for the right to do so. However, Fowlerstone's Muslims began to discover the difficult way during the 2001-2002 session that it is not wise to take for granted even the most basic of provisions and rights.

3 Last words...

According to Olivier Roy (1994: 11), "Muslim responses to the "Orientalist" discourse are often stereotypical and can be sorted into three categories: (1) the nostalgia argument ("it was Islam that brought civilization to the West"); (2) rejection of the hypothesis ("in what way are Western values superior?"), combined with a denunciation of Western doubletalk, which applies its strict requirements only to others; (3) the apologia for Islam ("everything is in the Quran and the Sunnah, and Islam is the best religion"). The first two are defensive: they evade the question while accepting as fact that there is a modernity that produces its own values".

Roy's argument is wide of the mark. For, among those who explicitly identify themselves as Muslims, it is clear that there are those whose mimesis leads them to reaffirm the supremacy and universalism of hegemonic western discourse, those whose irony permits them to engage in complex positional manoeuvres recognising the contingency of Islamic and 'western' final vocabularies, and those whose adherence to a final vocabulary composed of Islamic metaphors is so firm that the west need not be acknowledged at all. Each of these techniques for critique can be defensive, although this need not necessarily be the case. However, none evade questions relating to Orientalism, Eurocentrism, or Islamophobia. Even Islamists, who may well decline to acknowledge the west, cannot be accused of evading such questions. Orientalism, Eurocentrism, and Islamophobia are western discourses that work to construct not only the west but also the 'non-west'. Islamists who politicise without recourse to the conceptual milieu of western supremacism are in fact constructing their own histories and knowledges and positing these as independent of discourses of western modernity and universalism.

Those who assert that Islamists articulate themselves through a western final vocabulary are guilty of a violence that has far reaching consequences. The logic that Islamists articulate their projects through explicitly western vocabularies is the flip-side of the epistemic violence through which they are othered. For the Eurocentric logics that invoke what Pease describes as "the fantasy of the East-West divide" "were anchored in a relationship between the U.S. national identity and its Oriental Other that promoted the belief that the U.S. political culture possessed the symbolic goods—rationality, civil society, modernity—that Islam not only lacked but actively negated". Within these logics, Islam is represented as assuming the status of inferior or defective westerners: Islam, for example, is represented as being associable with the west's own past. This logocentric[14] violence involves attempting to force a violent closure on the 'western' inside by rendering Muslims as the 'outside'. But through the logics of this violence, Muslims are represented as being inextricably bound up in the same chain of signification as the inside, readable only

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through Eurocentric logics. One effect of this violent exercise of logocentric will involves the strategic othering of Muslims, the other effect involves reading all political articulations by Muslims as being internal to the chains of signification of the inside. This logic helps reinforce the idea that Muslims are defective westerners; that whitemale subjectivities are universal and that beneath us all lies a whitemale western supremacist. However, this level of violence also demonstrates that the Islamists do, indeed, have a valid point to make concerning Islamophobia.

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[1] Minutes to Prayer Room Trust Committee meetings on Monday 15th April 1996 at 4PM. The weakness of the Islamic Society in the Committee is revealed by the presence of only two Muslims in the meeting, while six non-Muslim members of the University and Students' Union attended. Moreover, it is clear from the minutes that the direction of discussions was being shaped largely by the university rather than by the Islamic Society. For example, the minutes note timescales and strategies established by the university, with the only Islamic Society requests being that "for fund raising he [the society representative] would require...the length of any lease..., a structural survey/condition of the building, area available, rent required, architect's drawings, independent valuation, legal agreement, whether building is listed or not".

[2] During interview, June 1999.

[3] Jamil, mid 30s, during interview, June 1999, at the time of interview a staff member in Finchton University.

[4] No page numbers provided for the quote from Pease since the article was accessed electronically rather than in hard-copy.

[5] The letter, dated 20th April 1999, stated "Further to our meeting, I acknowledge your explanation of events and accept that there has been some misunderstanding between us. In the light of your assurances concerning the management and conduct of future activities organized by [the Islamic Society], I confirm that we will accept room booking requests...subject to our standard conditions..."

[6] Letter dated 3rd February 1999.

[7] One letter, dated 25th May 1999 noted "I prefer not to sign the form provided, but to set out my views on this subject. I am supportive of the principle that Muslim students should be provided with facilities that allow them a Prayer Room with adequate facilities to meet their requirements. In effect this means two rooms, one for males and one for females. I agree...that the number of Muslim students in the Faculty warrant a facility in the ...area". A second letter from another Professor, dated 20th May 1999, noted "I regret that, as a standing rule, I never sign petitions or circular letters on the grounds that they cannot adequately convey my views on any matter. I have, therefore, not signed the one you so kindly provided. I am highly supportive of the issues that you raise. It seems to me that the Engineering Faculty in general and my Department in particular has a sufficiently strong Muslim community that basic provisions for

religious observance should be provided as a matter of some priority. I have discussed this at the Engineering Policy Board where I know that the same view was taken by the other Heads of the Engineering Departments. I am copying this letter to the Dean, and to the Director of Estates, so they too may be sure of my views."

[8] For example, in a letter dated 28th June 1999, the President of the Islamic Society outlined prayer room requirements for the faculty, noting that each room [one each for men and women] would require "a new sink, whereby feet can be washed...(with hot and cold water supply), a new carpet, and perhaps some form of vinyl covering around the sink area, for any spillages of water, pegs, whereby to hang coats, ...access to some sort of ventilation i.e. windows that can be opened, as the Union rooms can get rather humid, as they are internal rooms, signing on the door: "Muslim Prayer Room (Men)", "Muslim Prayer Room (Women)", but also when entering the main building (directions stating "Muslim Prayer Rooms")..., finally a large noticeboard in each room". The letter further requested that Cleaning Services be made aware of the need to regularly clean and mop the vinyl part of the floor and provide paper towels, while suggesting that Muslim students take care of vacuum cleaning the carpets provided access to appropriate equipment be granted by the university. The letter further noted that "in the past, cleaners and workment in the Union Prayer Room have been respectful and understanding of ...[the requirement to remove shoes when entering the prayer room]".

[9] For example, during the 1999-2000 academic session an attempt was made to sack the Islamic Society President allegedly at the behest of the owner of a local Islamic book shop who had some influence over the society's direction. I was also aware that former students were involved in the behind-the-scenes running and direction of the society, although to be fair these were recent graduates who may well have found it difficult to immediately dissociate themselves from a society they had spent a large amount of their spare time working for in the very recent past.

[10] Throughout the pre-fieldwork pilot stage of my research, I received responses from Muslims in a number of universities who reported that by launching radical ironist critiques of institutional modes of symbolising Muslims was a successful strategy. By far the most common engagements involved launching critiques of the ways in which universities diagnosed Muslim students' objective capacities for discipline as minorities. Respondents in a number of universities reported the rejection of basic provision requests on the grounds that Muslims were, as a minority group, in a position of weakness and undeserving of the requested provisions. Engagement strategies reported as successful involved maintaining the original grounds of the request (that the provisions were an Islamic necessity and Muslims were unwilling to accept the institution's mode of symbolising them) while effectively critiquing the processes through which the institution symbolised Muslims as an undeserving minority, and highlighting the contradictions between institutional equal opportunities policies, the substantial income provided by overseas and postgraduate Muslim students, and the designation of them as an undeserving minority. As a result, in a number of institutions, Muslims were able to demonstrate the contingency of institutional symbolisation of Muslims.

[11] It is worth noting a similar occurrence at Fowlerstone University when, in the wake of the WTC attack a member of management approached a staff member involved in Equal Opportunities delivery who was known to be a Muslim in order to request that he kept an eye out for increased tensions between Muslims and other students. It is worth noting that this request was not configured around an NUS-style hunt for members of *Hizb ut-Tahrir*. The university knew that the staff member would be able to deal with any tensions in a way that would ensure Muslim students were not pathologised in any ensuing incidents. On another occasion some years earlier, the Vice-Chancellor received an anonymous threat purporting to come from a member of the Nation of Islam. Without further ado, and without politicising the threat as an example of the transgressive nature of Muslim students, the letter was immediately passed to a Muslim staff member involved in Equal Opportunities delivery. The staff member was able to convincingly account for the letter without referring to dominant modes of symbolising Muslims as defective westerners: not only was the threat completely untypical of Muslim views and not configured around an Islamic final vocabulary, but it was also completely untypical of the views held by Fowlerstone's Muslim students. Combined with the spelling errors on the address and in the text of the letter, the staff member was therefore able to reassure the institution that this was a hoax letter sent from outside. The reasons for that hoax remain unknown: was it sent by somebody with a grudge against the university? Or was it sent by somebody who wanted to make it appear as though Muslims were targeting the university and threatening its white spaces? Or was it just sent by somebody who was delusional. We may never know. What is for sure, however, is that a major series of NUS-style histrionics was averted by simply referring the threat to a Muslim who would be able to best symbolise it from within a Muslim final vocabulary.

[12] Learned from interview with Peter. The university's strategy for being tough on *al Muhajiroun* members included rigorously scrutinizing all activities involving them, and tacitly supporting Special Branch activities on campus during the period of the group's activity. Incidentally, rumours abounded that the student responsible for the *al Muhajiroun* takeover of the Islamic Society had been banned from using the university's computing facilities for distributing hate literature, and then expelled from the university, although no staff members confirmed this.

[13] Respondent, Muslim woman staff member, early 20s.

[14] When I refer to logocentrism I mean, drawing from Derrida (1976), the notion that the word retains full consciousness of itself, corresponding directly to some underlying, stable truth.

Chapter 9 – Conclusions...

1 Pulp friction

Discussions of Islam and Muslim students are frequently bound to fail as a consequence of their weddedness to conventions that dictate the essential types presented to us and the ways in which we should conceive of them. All too often they present us with a series of binary opposites – 'fundamentalists'/'modernisers'; Islam/the West; Muslims/Jews... – none of which correlate to underlying truths. These are disciplinary categories that underpin the normative ideological project of 'the West' in these postcolonial times. The tales we are told through this approach are riven with inaccuracies and causal assumptions which, far from enhancing our ability to convincingly read the articulation of Muslim identities, underpin notions of the eternal, essential supremacy of the white 'West' and the need for further westernisation.

Such tales do not just find their narration in the pages of orientalist and eurocentric writers such as Bernard Lewis, but are also retold through the text of the contemporary university. The practices, policies, protocols, and routine daily encounters and activities of the university constitute the medium through which these tales unfold. As such they also form the main ideological currency through which the university accounts for itself through complex processes of inclusion, exclusion, and othering.

2 Disrupting the essential

The Rushdie affair and the racialised campaigns against Islamist activities on campus thus become increasingly significant. These are not the points at which Muslims in Britain began abandoning prior underlying secular essential ethnic determinants, but rather the points at which Muslims in Britain began increasingly

taking part in organisations political mobilisation to contest the racist exercises of white governmentality that were serving to stabilise representations of white western nationhood, progress, and supremacism that had been disrupted through decolonisation and the provincialisation of the west. Muslims who had been denied access to public spaces in which they could make even the most basic identifications as Muslims stepped forward and asserted with pride that they were Muslims and, as Muslims, required rights. The Rushdie affair shattered the logocentric assumptions on which liberal discourse of state provision had been unable to symbolise Muslims other than by retreating into pathologies. The Rushdie affair was a political contest over the multicultural. It was the shattering of the older colonial tropes that had so influenced dominant symbolisations of a Muslim presence that led to attempts to restabilise the protests by reading them through a new set of eurocentric logics. And, as the 1990s would wear on, the (predominantly) young, educated elites among Britain's Muslim communities would increasingly undertake their own acts of political protest in universities across the country.

3 'Fundamentalism' and governmentality

When we hear of the problem of Islamic 'fundamentalism' in universities, we are being told of the expression of identities that cannot be convincingly recognised or accounted for within the eurocentric logics of the university. This resurfacing of Muslim identities is, as we have seen, a powerful testimony to the failure of dominant attempts to repress or deny the polyvalency of Muslim identities. And the depiction of Muslim identities as 'extremisms' or 'fundamentalisms' is the last line of defence available to the eurocentric text; a powerful justification for further acts of exclusion against Muslims and evidence of the capacity of the university to engage in acts of white governmentality. But 'fundamentalism' as an essentially contested concept will always reveal to us far more about the preoccupations, fears, and inadequacies of those deploying the term than about the Muslim students to whom it is applied.

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When we hear of the Rushdie affair or of struggles against Islamic 'fundamentalist' insurgencies in the university, it is clear that we are being presented with a range of strategies for maintaining Muslims in radical alterity: the story of the savage, essentially non-western other emerging from his – and, of course, the 'fundamentalists' are always apparently men – jungle-like urban ghetto and who is in need of the civilising and rationalising influences of the 'modern' essential 'west'. We also see the emergence of alternative modes of representing Muslims, in which we are not so much 'savages' maintained in radical alterity and holding back the inexorable tide of progress, but are simply defective westerners, best understood by rehearsing again key moments from western pasts. In these tales, it is not necessarily 'modernity' which we oppose but, more likely, 'progress'. Older orientalist oppositions – the opposition between reason and sensation became that between liberalism and 'fundamentalism', for example – were redeployed to cement the west as the universal template for progress and recentre the west.

It is easy to recognise the exercise of racialised governmentality through the designation of Finchton University's Muslims as 'fundamentalist' simply for having had the audacity to request *halal* food provision. But it is not only in the blunt racism of the struggle against 'fundamentalism' that the university's disciplinary functions are played out. How the university responds to prayer room or *halal* food requests, whether student social activities are geared primarily towards meeting the needs of those who drink alcohol, whether religious festivals such as *'Eid* are accorded the same weight as Christmas and Easter, and even how the university feels about the propensity of Muslims to enjoy *harmonious* relations with members of other groups; all tell us something of the notions of ideal studenthood institutionalised through everyday university practices and formalised and codified through its policies, charters, statutes, and practices. Muslim students have often found themselves on the receiving end of the exercise of racialised governmentality for a number of reasons. First, they are likely to come from Black and Minority Ethnic communities in Britain or from lands overseas formerly – currently, in many cases – subjected to

discourses of colonialism or imperialism. Second, many of them are likely to be expressing perceived 'alien' religious identities in universities that are largely either secular or traditionally Christian in nature.

Third, it is also the case that the range of needs expressed by observant Muslims frequently falls well outside standard, commonsense definitions of 'normal' student identities. Representations of the student ideal are far more likely to invoke motifs of the alcohol-drinking, hooded-sweatshirt wearing white male (or female) rolling up late to lectures and living in squalid accommodation than they are to invoke images of a *hijab* wearing Muslim woman praying five times a day and rolling up at regular intervals to the university's prayer room. This question is not merely of peripheral interest, since it is through the everyday practices and provisions of the university that such norms are upheld as the ideal benchmark against which Muslim students must always be judged as somehow deficient, incomplete, or abnormal.

4 Racialised conflicts

When it comes to the range of political causes espoused by Muslim students, it is also clear that there is bound to be tension, particularly when it comes to the question of Palestinian rights. This is not because there is some inherent disposition towards conflict with each other that marks Muslims and Jews as two particular and quite distinct groups. Rather, it is because, as we have already seen, Zionism and Islamism are articulated against completely different fields of intelligibility. The former emerged at the peak of modernism's influence and the impossibility of anything other that the western ideological project as the *de facto* limit of political opportunities and a template against which those subjected to colonialism should be measured. The latter emerged in the wake of the decentring of the west and the disruption of hegemonic teleological notions of history and progress as being essentially western.

Islamophobia emerged as the flagship of attempts to recentre the west for two main reasons. Firstly, prior orientalist discourse had invested great significance in the ways in which Muslims could be constructed. Secondly, in the postcolonial world, it was Islamists who most radically critiqued the terms on which the western ideological project had reached its racialised definitions of modernity. Even at the height of the cold war, Marxism and communism were final vocabularies that were well known to the west, born in the west, and which were being symbolised in different ways by political activists and politicians in the west, as well as finding their cultural expression in the west. Likewise, Zionist discourse is known and understood within the terms of the western ideological project, notwithstanding the attempts of its orthodox malcontents. But Islamic final vocabularies could not be adequately symbolised within the logics of the ideological project of the west. Thus there are always likely to be racialised discrepancies between the ways in which liberal institutions read and accommodate discourses of Zionism and Islamism. And, as we saw in chapter five, when this occurs racialised conflict between Muslims and Jews will be institutionalised.

Racialised conflicts involving Muslim students also emerge in other, more subtle ways. In these days of multiculturalism, identity politics, and 'new' racism, traditional phenotypal markers of racialised difference have been displaced by radically relativistic markers of cultural difference. The repackaging of whiteness around alternative markers of difference – such as, for example, economic status – does not foreclose appeals to whiteness by select members of other minority ethnic groups or their strategic enwhitening within contemporary representations of whiteness, and their counterpointing against Muslims, whose supposed relative defectiveness incompleteness (in terms of socio-economic status, rationality, tolerance...) leaves them facing a disparate bunch of opponents unified around a politics of Islamophobia.

There is an urgent need for more research on the experiences of Muslim students in British universities. In Chapter One I noted some of the limits of this analysis, and opined that there is an urgent need for a gendered reading of Islamophobia in the academy, studies on university provision including teaching and learning, work on Islamophobia in staffing, and further work on the political activities of Muslim students.

5 Final words

Challenging Islamophobia, then, involves recognising the death of the west as an ideological project articulating western subjectivities as universal and modernity as inherently western. And this project is more than simply tagging remedial addenda onto the end of a liberal critique; rather it involves a whole series of fundamental conceptual shifts. Once we accept that the conceptual vocabularies of liberalism are inextricably bound up in broader projects of Eurocentrism, then it naturally follows that any drastic overhaul of these vocabularies – or even their rejection – would have profound effects for the way in which western subjectivities are constructed. The assumption that current liberal institutional configurations are the only means of 'managing' diversity require us to accept the idea that western rational traditions somehow reflect some essential natural order of things. But once we accept that no such natural order exists, and once we acknowledge that western academia (indeed, the 'west' itself) are not reflections of some immutable, essential identity, but rather that such notions are only arrived at through the same regiments of practice and symbolisation underpinned by logocentrism through which Islamophobia occurs.

Once we accept that no such natural order exists then it is possible to begin the process of conceiving of a Muslim presence in the west without retreating into the endless cycles of subalternising, pathological readings of Muslims as defective westerners. Moreover it will be possible to begin transforming methods of symbolising Muslims that recognise the authority of a final vocabulary configured

around Islamic metaphors as staff in Swanton University have been rather uniquely able to do. And finally it will be possible to account for Muslim political voices without retreating into the logics that somehow the identity of the western ideological project is threatened by traces of voices from its own past. For, in the final analysis, the heirs to western excesses are more likely to bear names such as Donald, George, and Ariel, than they are to be called Ahmed, Daoud, or Imran.

Throughout this thesis I have argued that explicitly Muslim identities emerge to critique, demystify and (in the form of Islamism) reject modes of constructing knowledges on Muslims that, despite their appeals to tolerance and formal equality, are as bound up in a valiant rearguard against the dissolution of western supremacism and the extension of racialised, 'westernised' definitions of modernity as they are with the diagnosis, surveillance, and discipline of Muslim bodies. If 'fundamentalism' is the signifier invoked when all other attempts to deny or define Muslim identities have failed, then it is also clear that Islamism represents the most effective means of negating, subverting, and rejecting the normative discourse of Islamophobia. In the final analysis, the final words must go to Bobby S Sayyid:

"No doubt the Islamist tide will ebb and flow over the coming years, no doubt Islamists will suffer disappointments, and will advance and retreat. But as long as there are Muslims the promise and fear of Islamism will remain, for in the end, for us Muslims, Islam is another name for the hope of something better..."
(Sayyid 1997: 160)

Appendices

Appendix one - The four case study universities – a summary

University	Summary[1]	Muslim Community	Muslim Students[2]	Provisions for Muslims	'Fundamentalist' activities	Islamophobic incidents
Finchton University	Campus-based 'new' University	8.2% of Finchton residents Muslim (2001 census). Mainly Gujarati Indian and Pakistani heritages.	250 - 500 (dominated by local students)	Examinations/assessment exemptions on 'Eid; one prayer room; voluntary faith advisor for Islam (paid advisor during 1998-1999 academic session)	Activity by *al Muhajiroun* and *Hizb ut-Tahrir* in mid-late 1990s; allegations of activities by these groups predating any credible evidence of their presence	Assaults against Muslims (one male, one female) in Students' Union and prayer facility predating the fieldwork in Students'; reports of Students Union Islamophobia
Fowlerstone University	Non campus-based 'new' university	1% of Fowlerstone residents Muslim (2001 census). Mainly Arab or North African heritages; some various South	250 - 500 (mixture of local, national, and international students)	Examinations/assessment exemptions on 'Eid; multiple prayer rooms; *halal* food; policy protecting Muslim students against Islamophobia and enshrining certain rights (right to wear *hijab*, receive *halal* food on	No activity by any known Islamist groups; allegations of potential for radical Islamist terrorist plotting made by staff members during 2001-2002 academic session.	No sign of assaults against Muslims; no sign of Students' Union Islamophobia; some signs of institutional

[1] Distinction between 'red-brick' and 'new' universities based on whether or not institutions were universities prior to 1992 (when both Finchton and Fowlerstone were still Polytechnics) and the overall repute of the institutions (Greenstone and Swanton are both well established universities with excellent reputations). Distinction between campus- and non-campus based universities was harder to draw, not least because none of the four universities were based in geographically distinct, bounded campuses, but were all located along public thoroughfares. However, I employ the category of campus-based university to signal – like Finchton and Greenstone Universities – institutions in which 95% of core activities took place within a radius of 500-1000 metres, and in which students generally referred to their respective universities as 'campus-based'. I describe Fowlerstone University as non campus-based on the grounds that the university is spread over a number of facilities covering a radius of several kilometres, and none of my respondents were in any doubt about the lack of a sense of recognisable 'campus' in the university. The various buildings that comprise Swanton University are located in close proximity. However, student respondents described the university to me as non-campus based. Moreover, the different parts of the university were separated by private concerns and premises to a greater extent than Greenstone University.

[2] Since no accurate figures are available for the number of Muslim students, these figures are estimations that generally fall mid-way between estimates of Muslim student numbers made by staff members and senior members of the respective Islamic Societies. Also factored into these estimates are a number of other factors including numbers of students regularly using praying facilities, numbers of students attending *jummah* prayers in university facilities, general visibility of Muslim presence in each university, capacity of Islamic Society to influence student politics.

University	Summary	Muslim Community	Muslim Students	Provisions for Muslims (demand, receive prayer rooms on demand, celebrate religious festivals, receive protection against discrimination)	'Fundamentalist' activities	Islamophobic incidents (Islamophobia following 11th September 2001)
Greenstone University	Campus-based pre-1992 'red-brick' university	9% of Greenstone Muslim (2001 census). Mainly of Pakistani heritage; also Arab and North African presence and some other South Asian groups.	750 – 1000 (mixture of local, national, and international with high number of local students)	Examinations/assessment exemptions on 'Eid; prayer room.	Tiny *al Muhajiroun*, *Hizb ut-Tahrir*, and *Salafi* Islamist group presence; no credible evidence of Islamic Society infiltration by Islamist groups; annual allegations of widespread organised radical Islamist activities and infiltration.	2 assaults against Muslim women, 1 death threat against Muslim male prior to research. During research incidents included assaults against male & female students, incidents of spitting, verbal abuse, and harassment; bomb threat against Islamic Society; circulation of memo advocating racial segregation of university accommodation to 'protect' non-Muslims
Swanton University	Non campus-based pre-1992 'red-brick' university	4.6% of Swanton Muslim (2001 census). Mixture of South Asian (mainly Pakistani), Arab, and North Asian.	500 - 750 (mixture of local, national, and international)	Examinations/assessment exemptions on 'Eid; multiple prayer rooms; *halal* food; voluntary faith advisor for Islam; alcohol free social space in Students' Union; recognition of	No credible evidence of Islamist groups active on campus; false NUS allegations of radical Islamist recruitment criticised by Students'	No racist attacks or significant levels of overt racism or Islamophobia.

African heritages.	Muslim students' needs in report on Equal Opportunities in Swanton (1999); Muslim students regularly consulted by Students' Union and University.	Union 2001-2002 session

Appendix two – provisions in the case study universities

1 Finchton University

1.1 Context

Finchton University is a campus-based 'new' university with a significant number of Muslim students. Finchton University's Islamic Society is not particularly active and successive Islamic Society Executive Committees have often been dominated by *Tablighi*-oriented students more concerned with establishing regular prayer than with political engagements. In the town of Finchton, 10,678 people identified themselves as Muslim in the 2001 census. This constitutes 8.2% of the town's declared population of 129,633. The total population of the County in which Finchton is situated is 1,134,974, of whom 38,967 (3.4%) are Muslim. The majority of Finchton's Muslims are of Gujarati Indian heritage followed by a significant number of Muslims of Pakistani heritage. Finchton has numerous mosques ranging from a converted two-up, two-down terraced house to large purpose-built facilities capable of accommodating well over one thousand worshippers. Finchton is also home to the country's first purpose-built mosque to possess a minar.

1.2 Provisions for Muslim students in Finchton University

Muslim students in Finchton University were fortunate to have benefited greatly from the establishment of a Racial Equality Unit in the university in 1987. The unit's staffing complement included lecturers and an administrative assistant who also offered culturally sensitive counselling. Former students noted to me during different stages of the research that they had benefited greatly from the services offered by the Racial Equality Unit, which was not only a site from which struggles against racism were fought but which was also a gathering point for students dropping by to

use the unit's considerable resource collection or simply to have a chat and a cup of coffee with staff.

1.2.1 Praying facilities in Finchton University

Another way in which Muslim students benefited was through the involvement of one unit staff member in debates surrounding the establishment of a multi-faith facility. Until the foundation of the centre, Muslim students were forced to pray in the back of empty lecture rooms. The initial impetus for the formation of the centre came during the late 1980s following the tragic death of a local Muslim student, which led to a larger than usual gathering of Muslim students in prayer. A staff member from the unit who attended the prayers proceeded to raise with the Vice-Chancellor the idea of providing a multi-faith facility in which students could pray in peace. The Vice-Chancellor indicated his support for the idea, which was subsequently supported by the university Chaplain and Head of Student Services, both of whom subsequently gained the credit for the genesis of the multi-faith facility.

Within the facility Muslim students were provided with a prayer room divided into two with a curtain, permitting women to pay in the front and men at the rear. Two small ablution facilities were also provided – one each for men and women students. A resource of books on Islam donated by students was kept in the prayer room, while further material was available in the multi-faith resource in the adjacent coffee lounge. With the downsizing of the Racial Equality Unit during successive restructurings, the prayer room became the main focal point for many observant Muslims in the university. Anecdotal data gathered during my fieldwork suggested that the prayer room's importance to Muslims was reinforced by the level of Islamophobia experienced by Muslim students in the adjacent coffee lounge, which effectively left the Muslim-only space of the prayer room as the primary space within which their needs could be met and their identities and needs freely articulated.

The Muslim prayer room is extremely small in size and it is not uncommon for *jummuah* worshippers to pray on the pavement outside. A number of requests have been made for a larger prayer room, although it was not until the 1998-1999 session that the university administration appeared to be taking these seriously. When the university did listen more intently to these requests it was in the wake of *al Muhajiroun* activity on campus during the 1997-1998 academic session. Two members of management then attended the prayer room during a *jummuah* prayer to assess the overcrowding problem firsthand. Following this, direct negotiations over improved prayer room provision were opened with the Islamic Society, which now found itself in a sufficiently strong position to reject the subsequent offer of improved prayer room provision on the grounds that it was not close enough to the heart of the campus.

1.2.2 Other provisions for Muslims in Finchton University

No *halal* food is provided in any part of Finchton University, and observant Muslim students are forced to rely on local *halal* fast-food outlets or on vegetarian dishes available on campus. Some years ago an attempt to obtain *halal* food provision was made led by staff members. One of the staff involved recalled that the request was rejected by the Head of Catering Services on the grounds that she was against "the bastardisation of our food". A complaint was lodged with the Vice-Chancellor, who responded that he was "sick and tired of being told what to do by a bunch of fundamentalists". Since then, no noteworthy campaigns to obtain *halal* food provision have taken place in Finchton University.

Muslim staff and students have enjoyed for some time the right to absence (including at times of examination and assessment) on dates of religious festivals such as *'Eid*,

and former staff and students noted to me that this right was widely respected for a considerable length of time before it was formalised.

1.2.3 Muslim students and Equal Opportunities in Finchton University

Former students and staff of Finchton University recalled that Muslim students had benefited greatly from the university's Racial Equality Unit between 1987 and 1991. The unit included a number of lecturing staff and an administrative assistant offering culturally sensitive counselling. It also housed a well developed collection of resources. The unit became a focal point for a number of Muslim students and it was significant that staff involved in the unit worked hard to develop provisions for Muslim students alongside their other developmental work on race equality and equal opportunities. Former staff and students noted that, following restructuring, Muslim students were left with no 'mainstream' institutional spaces within which their articulations of Muslim identities could be coherently read by the institution and interpolated into useful patterns of institutional provision. Former staff and students noted that, after this point, two foci for Muslim student activities became increasingly significant. First, they noted that the dilution of unit in terms of staffing and remit was followed by an increasing tendency of Muslim students to focus their social activities around the university refectory, often in distinctly racialised (Muslim-only) groups and often occupied particular spots in the refectory and marking them through their very presence as 'mainstream' spaces in which Muslims could gather and articulate their identities. Second, they noted the increasing importance of the prayer room, particularly when Islamophobia in the Students' Union and multi-faith lounge became more noticeable. During the 1997-1998 academic session, *al Muhajiroun* supporters became active on campus, significantly focusing their activities on Muslim 'canteen culture' (attempting to exhort Muslim students from the refectory and into more vocal political activities) and around control of the prayer room.

It is significant to note that, following the first restructuring and weakening of the Racial Equality Unit, Muslims were largely excluded from the subsequent development of Equal Opportunities work in the university. One by one a number of new initiatives sprang up, including a university Harassment Officer and a Women's Unit. The Racial Equality Unit haemorrhaged its staff and found its remit focused solely on widening access work rather than developmental duties. Indeed, of a number of minutes to the university's Equal Opportunities Committee that I was passed during my fieldwork, the only open references to Muslims I was able to find related to the need to review and strengthen language use policies in order to combat Islamic 'fundamentalism'.

Following the restructuring of the Racial Equality Unit, Muslim students lost any noteworthy contact with key staff in development positions. From 1991 onwards their needs were channelled to the university administration only indirectly through a Multi-Faith Committee comprising members of university staff and multi-faith workers including Chaplains and voluntary Faith Advisors. Equal Opportunities work continued to develop but with Muslim students largely excluded from these processes and treated solely as an easily secularisable faith group. This changed following the Islamic Society's brief flirtation with al Muhajiroun during the 1997-1998 session. During the following year the university responded by breaking with protocol to appoint a new Faith Advisor for Islam on what one member of the senior management team described as "a substantial honorarium". Management also initiated direct contact with Muslim students in order to work together to identify and meet the needs of Muslim students and incorporate them into wider agendas for institutional change.

1.3 Dealing with Islamic 'fundamentalism'

Attempts to engage with Islamic 'fundamentalism' in Finchton University significantly predated the emergence of any noteworthy Islamist presence on campus, and

focused on the efforts of Students' Union staff in marginalising and silencing the Islamic Society and denying it unfettered access to the same range of rights and support as other student societies. When *al Muhajiroun* did find this Islamophobic environment a fruitful recruiting ground, the university administration stepped in to resolve the issue. One member of the Islamic Society is reputed to have been suspended from the university. The main thrust of the university's efforts involved rigorously implementing basic administrative procedures in order to keep track of and pre-empt Islamist use of university facilities. Side by side with this were increasing attempts to

1.4 Short history

1987-1988:   Racial Equality Unit formed. One member of lecturing staff in the
                Unit collaborates with University Chaplain and Vice-Chancellor to
                drive forward prayer room provision in the university.

1989-1990:   Multi-faith facility opened. Contains prayer room for Muslim students
                with ablution facility.

1991-1992:   Restructuring of Racial Equality Unit.

1992-1993:   Further restructuring and renaming of Racial Equality Unit.

1996-1997:   Restructuring sees dissolution of former Racial Equality Unit.

1997-1998:   *al Muhajiroun* gain control of Islamic Society.

                Rival Islamic Society formed. 'Moderates' with institutional backing
                win support of majority Muslim students and period of *al Muhajiroun*
                activity ceases.

1998-1999:   Muslim students engaged in consultation with university

administration over question of how best to provide adequate sized

prayer facility.

In wake of previous year's *al Muhajiroun* activity, university decides

to break with protocol to pay what one middle manager describes as

"a substantial honorarium" to its Muslim faith advisor, and promptly

replaces its current Muslim faith advisor with a PhD qualified Muslim

based on recommendations from another university.

2 Fowlerstone University

2.1 Context

Fowlerstone University is a non-campus based former Polytechnic with a

comparatively small and largely inactive Islamic Society. In the 2001 census 5,945

people in the city of Fowlerstone identified themselves as Muslim out of a total

declared population of 439,473. Thus, a little over 1% of the city's declared

population identified themselves as Muslim. For the whole of the surrounding

conurbation the figures are 8,344 Muslims out of a total population of 1,352,026, or

0.6%. The city's main mosque is frequented by Muslims from a range of

backgrounds. In contrast to Greenstone, where Pakistanis constitute the majority of

the Muslim community, most Muslims in Fowlerstone are of Arab or North African

heritage.

2.2 Provisions for Muslim students in Finchton University

Muslim students in Fowlerstone University were fortunate to have been members of the first university in the country to formally acknowledge the need to challenge Islamophobia and other forms of religious discrimination. The Head of the university's Equal Opportunities Unit produced the first Policy on Religious and Cultural Diversity in the Higher Education sector, a document that has since been extensively 'borrowed' from (usually without acknowledgements) by a number of other institutions. The policy commits the university to providing multi-faith prayer rooms on request, *halal* (and other culturally or religiously appropriate) foods across the institution, and offers protection against a number of common manifestations of Islamophobia. Even the right of Muslim women to wear *hijab* without being subjected to unnecessary abuse or interrogation was protected. The policy also formalised and ring-fenced a number of other rights that had previously been granted to Muslim students, such as exemptions from examinations and assessments on *'Eid*. Fowlerstone's policy on Religious and Cultural Diversity was drafted during the 1999-2000 academic session.

2.2.1 Praying facilities in Fowlerstone University

Even though Fowlerstone University does not have a particularly large number of Muslim students it offers multiple prayer rooms, guaranteeing their provision on request through the university's policy on Religious and Cultural Diversity. Staff find a number of creative ways of overcoming budgetary and other logistical difficulties in catering for the needs of Muslim students. Prayer rooms are provided on the basis of audit of room usage, with rooms in little demand set aside as multi-faith prayer facilities. Maintenance of prayer rooms is provided for under Health and Safety budgets and coordinated through Access Committee.

2.2.2 Other provisions for Muslims in Fowlerstone University

Staff find a number of creative ways of overcoming budgetary and other logistical difficulties in catering for the needs of Muslim students. Prayer rooms are provided on the basis of audit of room usage, with rooms in little demand set aside as multi-faith prayer facilities. Maintenance of prayer rooms is provided for under Health and Safety budgets and coordinated through Access Committee. *Halal* food production problems overcome by buying in from external supplier. Demand problems associated with relatively low Muslim community size overcome through system requiring Muslim students to place an order for their *halal* meals either twenty minutes in advance or at the start of the day. Muslim students are guaranteed protection against discrimination under the terms of the university's policy on Religious and Cultural Diversity. The policy also guarantees staff the right to receive discretionary paid leave on religious festivals and allows students to make alternative arrangements for examinations and assessments clashing with major religious festivals.

Muslim students also enjoyed a strong relationship with the students' union. During the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 sessions, the Union's Equal Opportunities Sabbatical Officer forged particularly strong links with the Islamic Society. These links were reaffirmed by a subsequent officer serving during the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 sessions. The Union had also previously had as its President a Muslim woman. During union activities there was no sense at all on campus of a racialised face off between Muslim and non-Muslim students as there was in Greenstone University.

2.2.3 Muslim students and Equal Opportunities in Fowlerstone University

The development of provisions for Muslim students (and members of other faith groups) has been central to the development of Fowlerstone University's Equal Opportunities agendas. There was also significant evidence that staff in a range of

positions were far more willing to incorporate consideration of Muslims' needs into their work as a matter of course than were their peers in the other case study universities, as was illustrated by the creative ways in which staff were able to deal with prayer room provision and maintenance and *halal* food provision. The university administration engaged Muslim students in consultation in a very proactive manner, largely through the efforts of the university's Head of Equal Opportunities. The university's Policy on Religious and Cultural Diversity was widely consulted across the university prior to adoption. During these consultations, Muslim students were involved. Muslim students were also encouraged to attend a range of other events across the university, and staff members (most notably the Head of the Equal Opps Unit) often attended events organised by Muslim students. The university's policy on Religious and Cultural Diversity was also based on a prior acceptance of the importance of consultation, with responsibilities carefully delineated (e.g. who students should notify of their needs and how staff should respond).

2.3 Dealing with Islamic 'fundamentalism'

During the fieldwork only two alleged cases of 'fundamentalism' or even relatively mild Muslim politicisation were presented. The first centred on an incident some years prior to the fieldwork in which Muslims had expressed anger at posters advertising a Bhangra 'Asian love' night. Distributed across campus, these posters included Islamic text written in Arabic and caused offence. The Head of the university's Equal Opportunities Unit was consulted for advice and the matter was swiftly resolved. The second such incident occurred during the 1998-1999 session when a threatening letter claiming to be from local Nation of Islam activists was received by the Vice-Chancellor. The incident was responded to with the utmost discretion in order to avoid whipping up Islamophobic hysteria on campus. The Head of the Equal Opportunities Unit was again consulted and was able to advise the Vice-Chancellor that the letter was extremely unlikely to be genuine given both its use of language and the lack of Nation of Islam supporters or activists in the area. He was

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also able to reassure the Vice-Chancellor that the letter was unlikely to have originated among students given its significant spelling mistakes and the fact that it had been wrongly addressed. Consequently, it appeared to have been a racial hoax intended to increase racial tension in the university.

In the wake of September 11th 2001 it also emerged that certain university staff expressed fears about the prospect of terrorist plotting by Muslim students in prayer rooms. As a consequence, attempts were made to terminate prayer room provision. However, even these attempts were made in consultation with Muslim students and they thus failed. The Head of Equal Opportunities further responded to these moves by attempting to convene a working group to deal with cases of hate crimes. The move was calculated to appeal to those who experiencing racist fears of Muslim plotting although it was conversely designed to protect members of groups most vulnerable to hate crimes – Muslims, for example.

2.4 Short history

1993-1994:   University's Equal Opportunities Unit is formed.

1996-1997:   *Muslim woman student elected as Union President.*

1998-1999:   Vice-Chancellor receives threatening letter ostensibly sent by a member of the Nation of Islam but more than likely a racist hoax. No widespread moral panic following letter, which is dealt with by passing it on to the Head of the Equal Opportunities Unit for advice and appropriate action.

1999-2000:   Policy on Religious and Cultural Diversity is drafted, consulted to all students and staff, and finalised.

Policy guarantees multi-faith prayer rooms on demand, religious and culturally appropriate food, exam/assessment exemptions on religious festivals, and protects the rights of university members to practice their faith without facing discrimination.

2001-2002:   Reports of management expressing racist fears about Muslim students plotting atrocities in the prayer room emerge in the wake of the attacks of September 11th 2001. One staff member begins attempting to reduce prayer room provisioning but even then does so in consultation with Muslim students and is ultimately unsuccessful.

3 Greenstone University

3.1 Context

Greenstone University is a campus-based 'red-brick' university with a significant number of Muslim students and an extremely active Islamic Society. In the 2001 census 35,806 residents in the city of Greenstone identified themselves as Muslim, making it a major centre of Muslim population in Britain. This constitutes roughly 9% of the city's declared population of 392,819. It is also worth noting that, within a ten mile radius of the conurbation within which Greenstone is situated can be found a number of other local authority areas with sizeable Muslim communities. Thus, the immediate local catchment area surrounding Greenstone University contains approximately 125,000 Muslims according to figures from the 2001 national census, or around 5% of the total declared population of the conurbation. Greenstone's Muslim community is dominated by those of Pakistani heritage.

3.2 Provisions for Muslim students in Finchton University

3.2.1 Praying facilities in Greenstone University

Greenstone University also failed to offer adequate consideration to Muslim students' praying needs. During the 1994-1995 session, Muslim students were evicted from their prayer room in the Union's main building. They were also disenfranchised on the grounds that it was unconstitutional for the Islamic Society to table motions before the Union requesting such things as resolution of the prayer room dispute. In consultation with the Union, the University offered a temporary alternative prayer room in a disused store room. The poor state of the building was reflected in reports of mice infestations at various times, while it was also claimed that the building was in dire need of re-roofing. The responsibility for upkeep of the room generally fell to Muslim students, who raised funds through a charitable trust they had founded to raise funds for a permanent prayer facility. During fieldwork Muslim students repeatedly informed me that the temporary prayer room had in fact been condemned by the university and was designated for demolition, a charge that the university's head of estates categorically denied to me. However, during the 2002-2003 session, the university finally declared that the prayer facility would be demolished and began attempting to find alternative accommodation for a new temporary praying facility.

3.2.2 Other provisions for Muslims in Greenstone University

Although Greenstone University had the largest Muslim community of the four case study universities, it offered them by far the worst provisions. No *halal* food was available on campus, and Muslim students reported having been forced to campaign long and hard to win the right to examinations and assessments exemptions on *'Eid*, even though Jewish students had been in receipt of this provision for some time. What provisions there were for Muslim students students and staff had fairly typically been won following hard-fought campaigns. Off campus, two of Greenstone's

catered halls of residence offered *halal* food to residents. One of these halls began offering this provision during the period of my fieldwork, after a long drawn-out campaign by Muslim residents that had lasted for around eighteen months.

3.2.3 Muslim students and Equal Opportunities in Greenstone University

Greenstone University only possessed one rather restrictive structure for engaging in consultation with Muslim students, through joint meetings with the Islamic Society's charitable trust. Anecdotally, staff and students across the university were extremely critical of the university's Equal Opportunities work. These fears were also manifested in other ways; prior to my fieldwork the university had already received negative publicity nationally through something of a scandal concerning racist marking on one of the university's flagship courses and through a successful tribunal case taken by a lecturer on the grounds of racial discrimination. At the time of the fieldwork, Equal Opportunities work in the university was focused through Personnel Services. Whereas the other case study universities had, at various times and in various ways, managed to incorporate student concerns in their Equal Opportunities work, in Greenstone University all indications suggested that Equal Opportunities in Greenstone University was simply a staffing matter. As a consequence, the prospects for incorporating any significant consideration of Muslim students' needs into Equal Opportunities development were extremely remote.

3.3 Dealing with Islamic 'fundamentalism'

One of the biggest problems presented during fieldwork in Greenstone University was the extent to which racialised campaigns against Islamic 'fundamentalism' occurred. Although all the indications from the outside were that this was a university with a significant number of active Islamist 'extremists', during my research I found no evidence to support such an assumption. This racialised witch-hunt did not merely appear attractive to Students' Union staff, but was also on occasion taken up

with some enthusiasm by university staff. As a consequence, Greenstone University was the most racialised of the four case study institutions, and Muslim students were subjected to far greater levels of everyday Islamophobia than in institutions such as Swanton or Fowlerstone. As a result of this, the Islamic Society focused most of its efforts in improving conditions for Muslim students on union activity.

3.4 Short history

1994-1995: Muslim students evicted from prayer room and re-housed in temporary, derelict, prayer facility.

Islamic Society disenfranchised for tabling Union motions which called for permanent prayer room provision and the establishment of a Bosnian student scholarship paralleling the university's South African student scholarship

Islamic Society seeks legal advice and begins action against the Union and university.

1996-1997: Islamic Society faces further sanctions after a Muslim student proposes a motion equating Zionism with racism and the Islamic Society is accused of Antisemitism. Muslim woman assaulted during discussions surrounding the motion and Muslim male received death threats from militant Zionists.

1997-1998: Islamic Society wins its long battle to win a block vote in Union elections and is effectively re-enfranchised. Immediately supports campaigns by Muslim students to win election to Council and Union Executive.

Official notices informing Jewish students of procedure for gaining examination and assessment exemptions on religious festivals displayed prominently across campus. Islamic Society campaign to win similar provision for Muslim students continues.

1998-1999:   Allegations of Islamic 'extremism' among Muslim students circulate and are fuelled by article in union newspaper following distribution of stickers accusing NUS of Islamophobia and bias towards Zionism by an individual who was not a member of the university.

1999-2000:   Islamic Society accused of circulating hate literature and condoning terrorism when it participates in the Union's annual Antiracism Week event and displays a leaflet criticising the treatment of Palestinians.

2001-2002:   Islamic Society accused of 'extremism' and Antisemitism following the tabling of a motion seeking to differentiate between criticisms of Zionism or Israel and Antisemitism. The motion is actually the work of a Socialist student and a Muslim woman member of the university's Friends of Palestine Society.

2002-2003:   University announces that the prayer facility is to be demolished.

4 Swanton University

4.1 Context

Swanton University is a non-campus based 'red-brick' university with a moderate number of Muslim students – probably around one thousand at best estimate. There

are a number of mosques in Swanton. In the 2001 national census, 23,819 residents of Swanton described themselves as Muslims, or 4.6% of the city's total declared population of 513,234 – described themselves as Muslim. Swanton is situated in a large Metropolitan County with a population of 1,266,388, of whom 31,851 (2.5%) are Muslim. Swanton's Muslim community is very diverse, comprising Muslims of various Arab, North African, and South Asian heritages.

4.2 Provisions for Muslim students in Swanton University

Muslim students in Swanton University benefited from an extremely supportive university administration and a Students' Union that was also willing to challenge Islamophobia and support Muslims. Muslim students were treated as important stakeholders, and benefited from alcohol-free spaces in the union building as well as from respectful relations with a range of university staff. One function of this was the willingness of university staff to sign petitions in support of additional Muslim prayer facilities. Another was the university's willingness to feature the Islamic Society in its staff magazine, highlighting the proactive work of Muslim students in supporting the core work of university support staff. When Muslim students experienced problems it was possible for them (or Islamic Society Executive Committee members) to directly approach key members of staff across the institution and receive a fair hearing and impartial interventions that challenged Islamophobia and demonstrated the university's commitment to valuing members of its Muslim community.

4.2.1 Praying facilities in Swanton University

Muslim students in Swanton University were in the unusual position of both running a mosque and being in receipt of extensive prayer room provisions. The mosque was a large, converted detached house purchased by overseas (mainly Egyptian) students during the late 1970s. During the 1997-1998 academic session the university's senior management team agreed to make a significant donation of

around twenty thousand pounds to part fund an extension to the mosque increasing space for female worshippers. In addition to this, the university and students' union also cooperated to provide multiple prayer rooms (male and female) with ablution facilities in order that Muslim students in each building would have unfettered access to places of worship. Swanton University was by far the most advanced of the case study institutions in meeting the basic praying needs of Muslims.

4.2.2 Other provisions for Muslims in Swanton University

Muslim students find no difficulties in obtaining *halal* food on campus, which is available both from union outlets and in a university refectory. During my fieldwork visits to Swanton University it was also clear that the *halal* food available in the university was often of exceptionally good quality, even when in the form of plastic-wrapped food sold in union shops. Muslims also benefited from an alcohol-free social space in the union building, and are viewed as important stakeholders in the union.

Muslim staff and students have enjoyed for some time the right to absence (including at times of examination and assessment) on dates of religious festivals such as *'Eid*, and former staff and students noted to me that this right was widely respected for a considerable length of time before it was formalised.

4.2.3 Muslim students and Equal Opportunities in Swanton University

Muslim students in Fowlerstone University benefited greatly from the commitment and work of the Head of the university's Equal Opportunities Unit. Likewise, their peers in Swanton University benefited significantly from the support of the university's International Students Support Officer. A further parallel emerged through the domination of Swanton Union over a number of years by staff and elected officers committed to challenging all forms of racism. As a consequence,

Muslim students in Swanton University were able to develop forthright and open relationships with both the university administration and the Students' Union. This resulted in a number of marked gains for Muslim students. By the 1998-1999 academic session, Swanton University had reached the point of reviewing its Equal Opportunities delivery, and embarked on a major consultation process which saw payments made to students for participating in focus groups. The views of Muslim students were proactively solicited during the review, and the final report on Equal Opportunities in the university communicated a number of key concerns expressed by Muslim students. These included in particular complaints about the configuration of notions of 'normal' student behaviour around assumptions of alcohol consumption.

4.3 Dealing with Islamic 'fundamentalism'

As with Finchton University, staff and students in Swanton University concurred that Islamic 'fundamentalism' did not pose a threat to the campus. However, as with Fowlerstone University, Swanton University's response to national and local scaremongering about Islamic 'fundamentalism' was extremely nuanced and sensitive to the need to avoid racialising relations on campus and exacerbating Islamophobia. For example, when the university did receive warnings of potential *Hizb ut-Tahrir* activity in the area, the university's International Students Support Officer promptly responded by convening a meeting between Muslim, Jewish, and Hindu student leaders in the university, which was to include a guided tour of the student mosque and an opportunity for Muslims to reassure their non-Muslim peers of their harmless intentions. The university's next engagement with debates on 'fundamentalism' occurred only days after the attacks of 11th September 2001, when the NUS alleged 'fundamentalist' recruitment in Swanton University. Swanton Union was moved to issue a public statement refuting these allegations which, it was feared, would lead to increased Islamophobia, and criticising the NUS for not having bothered to check the accuracy of its claims by contacting Swanton Union.

4.4 A short history:

1969-1970:   University Islamic Society founded.

1978-1979:   International students (including substantial Egyptian contingent) raise sufficient funds to purchase a large house and convert it into a student mosque.

1997-1998:   University administration receives warning that *Hizb ut-Tahrir* activists are planning to target students in the local area. University's International Officer responds to these warnings by convening a meeting between Muslim, Jewish, and Hindu students to provide reassurance that the Islamic Society is not an extremist organisation. No reported incidents of Islamic 'extremism' occur.

University donates twenty thousand pounds to the Islamic Society to fund an extension to the student mosque in order to better cater for the needs. This supplements the university's provision (in collaboration with the Union) of multiple prayer rooms for Muslim students.

1998-1999:   University features an article on the Islamic Society in its staff newsletter, and emphasises the positive role played by the society in the lives of students.

1999-2000:   Muslim students orchestrate a terribly well-mannered campaign for an additional prayer room, which wins the support of a number of staff members.

University publishes results of an audit of its Equal Opportunities work that was produced in consultation with staff and students. In a number of places the report explicitly highlights the needs of Muslim students.

2001-2002:   Union is forced to issue public statement condemning the NUS for issuing false allegations of 'extremist' activities by radical Islamists on campus.

5 Good Practices in Religious and Cultural Diversity

5.1 Protection against Islamophobia

Fowlerstone University possesses what was the first policy on Religious and Cultural Diversity in the British Higher Education sector. Since then a number of other universities have adopted policies with similar concerns.

To this difficulty we must add the further difficulties of attempting to implement one institution's carefully arrived-at policy in an entirely different organisational context. While Fowlerstone's policy went through extensive consultation across the university in order to fine-tune it to meet the university's particular needs, it appears that copycat variants of the policy in other universities have not been linked to any but the most nominal of consultation exercises. This raises particular problems, because the Fowlerstone policy was specifically drafted in a way that permitted direct engagement with a number of very specific institutional concerns and priorities relating to the presence of diverse religions in a secular university with traditionally low numbers of Muslim students situated in an area with significant numbers of observant Christians. That the Fowlerstone policy has been transplanted into a number of other universities with only the most superficial of amendments is a testimony to its strength. However,

it is extremely dangerous to assume that a policy carefully drafted to solve Fowlerstone's particular problems can safely be applied to other institutions.

Best practice in protecting against Islamophobia therefore involves not borrowing from Fowlerstone's work but rather by following its example and producing a policy targeting protection from discrimination against members of diverse faith groups. As in Fowlerstone University, such policies should respond to particular institutional needs by emerging from a needs analysis for Religious and Cultural Diversity work in particular universities. Such policies should be fine-tuned through comprehensive consultation with university members and community groups. These policies should delineate individual responsibilities relating to the receipt and provision of rights to members of diverse faith groups. The introduction of such policies should be accompanied by comprehensive training availability. Finally, as is the intention of Fowlerstone's Head of Equal Opportunities, all such policies should be evaluated for their effectiveness in eradicated discrimination against members of diverse faith groups.

5.2 Religious festivals

Best practice in the higher education sector involves formal codification of the right to celebrate religious festivals. In Fowlerstone University this right is formalised through its policy on Religious and Cultural Diversity, although in other institutions it is guaranteed through more generic Equal Opportunities policies. Best practice is again found in Fowlerstone University, where members of diverse faiths are free to take time off to celebrate important religious festivals without eating into their annual leave allowances.

This right is also widely available to students across the sector, who are widely permitted to approved absences – even on dates of formal assessments and examinations – should they notify university authorities of their specific intentions to

celebrate major religious festivals in good time. However, the implementation of such arrangements varies greatly from institution to institution. Best practice is exemplified by Fowlerstone University, where rights and responsibilities are clearly defined in its policy on Religious and Cultural Diversity. Worst practice was exemplified in Greenstone University, where such provisions were subjected to racialised operationalisation and extended to Jewish students while being apparently denied to Muslims. The lack of clear guidance on observation of religious festivals in Greenstone University also gave rise to a situation in which more complex issues – such as whether or not Muslim students should be allowed praying breaks during examinations – could only be decided based on the discretion of individual staff members.

5.3 Prayer rooms

Best practice in prayer room provision was exemplified in both Fowlerstone and Swanton universities, where multiple prayer rooms were provided for Muslim students on request. What made these provision all the more impressive was that the geographically dispersed nature of both institutions meant that it was not satisfactory for either institution to provide single, centralised prayer rooms without excluding significant numbers of Muslim students from access to such facilities. Therefore, both universities found themselves providing numerous prayer rooms. Of the two institutions, Fowlerstone University again exemplified best practice by formalising the provision of multi-faith prayer rooms based on student requests. Staff in Fowlerstone University also possessed extremely clever strategies for prayer room maintenance, as we have already seen. Worst practice was found in a Scottish university where it was discovered that Muslim students were being expected to pray in a cleaners' cupboard. Little better was the situation in Greenstone University, where the university refused to commit itself to providing a permanent praying facility and expected Muslim students to both pay for upkeep of a derelict temporary prayer room and raise money to pay for a permanent prayer room. Indeed, the Vice-Chancellor of Greenstone University dismissed Muslim prayer room demands to me in an extremely pejorative manner, suggesting that if Muslims were to be provided with prayer rooms, the university's Disco Society could also expect to be provided with its own disco facility.

Prayer rooms are one of the most basic provision needs of Muslim students. Muslims are expected to pray five times a day, and it is clearly exclusionary to expect that Muslims wishing to practice their religion be expected to travel off campus to mosques. Universities and students' unions already provide relatively large amounts of space for a range of activities including sport and alcohol consumption. Practising Muslims are often excluded from some of these spaces for a range of reasons.

Thus, it is entirely reasonable to expect that universities also allocate resources in ways that meet the needs of Muslim students.

5.4 *Halal* food

Best practice in providing *halal* food was unsurprisingly found in Fowlerstone and Swanton universities. *Halal* food was easily available in Swanton University, both from the main refectory and Students' Union outlets, and was of a higher standard than that available in Fowlerstone University. However, staff in Fowlerstone University deserve commendation for the extremely thoughtful way in which they set about meeting *halal* food requirements in an institution with a small Muslim population. The right to receive *halal* food provision on request is enshrined in Fowlerstone's policy on Religious and Cultural Diversity. The Head of Catering Services noted during interview that difficulties in ensuring that food really was *halal* and really was of an acceptable standard had been solved by training staff on *halal* food issues and by buying in pre-prepared *halal* meals from an external supplier. The small size of Fowlerstone's Muslim community also meant that a novel approach to preventing food wastage was required. *Halal* food requirements were thus gauged on a day-to-day basis, with refectory users required to notify staff of any *halal* food requirements at least twenty minutes prior to purchase, and preferably first thing in the morning prior to lunch-time rush. By employing this system, it was possible to avoid either shortfall in supply or overproduction and wastage.

Halal food availability in Finchton and Greenstone universities was noticeably worse. Students requiring such provision in both universities were either left eating vegetarian meals or obtaining *halal* food from local takeaways. Indeed, it is worth noting that numerous *halal* food outlets have sprung up in the immediate vicinity of both universities, catering for unfulfilled student and staff needs and appearing popular with students during daytime hours. Both Finchton and Greenstone universities have large Muslim populations and it would be misleading to suppose

that neither institution has ever received requests for *halal* food provision. Indeed, during fieldwork it emerged that when staff led such requests in Finchton University during the early 1990s, the Head of Catering Services responded with a memo railing against "the bastardisation of our food". A subsequent complaint was dismissed by the Vice-Chancellor of the time, who claimed to be "sick and tired of being told what to do by a bunch of fundamentalists". At the time of my fieldwork, no *halal* food provision was made anywhere in Finchton University. The situation was marginally better in Greenstone University, where two halls of residence had acceded to *halal* food requests. However, at the time of my fieldwork, no *halal* food was available in Greenstone's refectory or the Students' Union.

5.5 Cost implications

Perceptions that resource implications obstruct the provision of *halal* food in universities do not stand up under scrutiny. The Head of Catering Services in Fowlerstone University reported that there was very little cost difference involved in preparing and providing non-*halal* meals and buying in pre-prepared *halal* meals. An interesting parallel to this emerged during fieldwork in Greenstone University, when students in a women-only hall of residence launched a successful campaign to win *halal* food provision. Reports from the hall suggested that opposition was largely polemical and failed to stand up under closer scrutiny. For example, opposition to *halal* food on grounds of animal cruelty was neutralised by pointing out that non-*halal* food is also butchered; itself an act of cruelty. Claims of prohibitive cost in *halal* food provision turned out not to have been based on any cost analysis at all, and campaigners in the hall reported being told by hall catering staff that *halal* food had already been fed to residents on a number of occasions when the kitchen had been failed by usual suppliers. The upshot was that nobody had even been aware that they were eating *halal* food, and there had been no difference in cost to the hall.

The provision of prayer facilities for Muslim students carries with it far greater resource implications than does meeting dietary requirements. As a consequence, it was unsurprising to find Greenstone University being in the position of requiring Muslim students to pay for their own prayer room. However, on closer consideration, it appears that resource constraints form no more convincing an explanation for failing to provide prayer rooms than for refusing *halal* food. Staff in Fowlerstone University were aware that they faced the same resource constraints as their colleagues across the sector, particularly in relation to the designation of "prime land" for "non-core" activities such as praying. However, Fowlerstone staff overcame these difficulties by identifying low-demand spaces (such as basement rooms) and redesignating them as prayer facilities. Staff in Swanton University were also able to overcome financial constraints in providing multiple prayer facilities, by engaging in partnership approaches to the issue. Thus, while the Islamic Society had raised funds by itself for the student mosque, the university was willing to contribute around twenty thousand pounds to help ensure it met the needs of Muslim women. In another partnership approach, when problems were experienced in obtaining a prayer facility in the Faculty of Engineering, the faculty worked with the Faculty of Management and Estates and Services in order to share the cost burden and workload, while the Islamic Society stepped in to reduce the upkeep costs by promising to share cleaning responsibilities. An even more imaginative approach towards partnership was reflected in the funding of one prayer room by the Malaysian government.

5.6 Dealing with Islamist activity

Best practice for dealing with Islamist activity was, unsurprisingly, found in Swanton and Fowlerstone universities, for reasons relating both to Students' Union and university treatment of Muslims. Union staff in both universities were able to recognise the right of Muslim students to engage in political activity in support of causes important to them as Muslims. At the same time, they applied strictures

relating to hate speech equally to members of all groups on campus. With 'extremism' not treated as something innate to Muslims and with the rights of Muslim students to politicise however they felt fit (within bounds applied to all groups), levels of Muslim student participation in 'mainstream' union activities were high. By the time my fieldwork began, Fowlerstone Union had already seen a Muslim woman President and elected officers – in particular, the Equal Opportunities Officer – were engaging in a partnership approach with Muslim students by actively involving the Islamic Society in their work and campaigns. In Swanton University, Muslim students were a force to be reckoned with in student politics, with rival political groups eager to forge alliances with the Islamic Society. Staff and elected officers in Swanton Union also proactively engaged with Muslim students, treating them as important stakeholders (for example, in the development and management of alcohol-free spaces in the union). During the 2001-2002 academic session, Swanton Union also spoke out against the racist scapegoating of Swanton's Muslim students by the National Union of Students.

University staff in Swanton University were extremely supportive of the Islamic Society, which enjoyed direct access to senior management. In many ways the university treated the Islamic Society as a partner, and there was particularly close cooperation between the International Office and the Islamic Society in supporting Muslim overseas students. During the 1998-1999 session, the Islamic Society was also featured in an article in the main staff magazine. When warnings of possible *Hizb ut-Tahrir* activities in the city were received, a senior member of the International Office intervened to foreclose possible conflict and build trust by arranging a four-way meeting involving the university and Hindu, Jewish, and Muslim students. The meeting began with a general conversation over a cup of coffee in the university and ended with a guided tour of the student mosque and the opportunity for Muslim students to reassure their peers that hate crimes would not be tolerated by the society. As a consequence, conflict was pre-empted and harmony restored to campus.

Staff in Fowlerstone University were also generally supportive of Muslim students, and there was evidence of sensitive handling of potential conflict on the part of Fowlerstone's former Vice-Chancellor and the Head of the Equal Opportunities Unit. This was most clearly demonstrated during the 1998-1999 session when a threatening letter purporting to come from the Nation of Islam was sent to the Vice-Chancellor. Rather than launching a campus-wide campaign against 'fundamentalists' the Vice-Chancellor sought advice from the Head of the Equal Opportunities Unit, who was able to offer reassurances that the letter was unlikely to be genuine. As a consequence, broader racialised conflicts on campus were prevented. In the wake of the attacks of 11th September 2001, there was some evidence of a distinct change in attitudes towards Muslim students. Staff respondents informed me during informal conversations that moves were afoot to reduce levels of prayer room provision and that the main justification being used was that there was a need to keep an eye on the activities of Muslim students and ensure that no heinous crimes were plotted from the privacy of the prayer rooms. Nothing eventually came of these moves, thanks to organised opposition from the Islamic Society and the willingness of the university to listen to Muslim students.

By contrast, it was clear that worst practice was uncovered in both Greenstone and Finchton universities. In both unions the line adopted resonated strongly with that of the National Union of Students, and racialised campaigns against Islamic 'fundamentalism' were a notable feature of campus life for Muslim students. A similar line was adopted by university staff in both institutions, as we have already seen. It was therefore unsurprising that activists from *Hizb ut-Tahrir* and *al Muhajiroun* felt able to convincingly appeal to students by carrying out recruitment in Finchton University and in the vicinity of Greenstone University (on stands situated on main roads) on the basis of politicising against Islamophobia. It is significant that the only verifiable incident of *al Muhajiroun* activity *within* Greenstone University during my fieldwork involved the circulation of stickers alleging NUS partisanship and

Islamophobia. It is equally significant that, having experienced an *al Muhajiroun* takeover of the Islamic Society, staff in Finchton University responded by dramatically improving the rights and provisions offered to Muslim students, granting direct access to key members of the university's senior management, employing an 'Imaam' on a paid basis, encouraging Muslim students to participate in Finchton Union through the intervention of the university's 'Imaam', and finally moving to resolve the prayer room overcrowding problem. Equally significant is that, with Muslim students being treated with respect by the university, *al Muhajiroun* were unable to make any further inroads into Finchton's Muslim student communities. Clearly, on the evidence of my fieldwork in the four case study universities, there is more likely to be an *al Muhajiroun* or *Hizb ut-Tahrir* presence in universities that do not adequately meet the needs of Muslim students and in which there are significant levels of Islamophobia.

5.7 *al Muhajiroun* and *Hizb ut-Tahrir*

It is also important to note that the influence of groups such as *al Muhajiroun* and *Hizb ut-Tahrir* has often been grossly overstated. There was irrefutable evidence that *al Muhajiroun* had enjoyed a significant presence in Finchton University during the 1997-1998 academic session, although all the evidence suggests that both prior to and following the incident, the group's presence and influence was at best completely minimal. There was no evidence of any activities by either of these groups in Fowlerstone University, although in Swanton University there were indications that a handful of students supported one or other of the two groups. In Greenstone University there was an *al Muhajiroun* presence, although it was extremely small, and the group's activities were generally led either by non-members of the university or undertaken on public roads in the vicinity of the university – which, by dint of its situation in an area of high Muslim population, cannot necessarily be an indicator of any targeting of the university *per se*. I never encountered any forms of hate literature distributed by Muslims in any of the case study universities. The only

time I witnessed *al Muhajiroun* or *Hizb ut-Tahrir* distributing leaflets on campus was in Greenstone University, when worshippers leaving after *jummuah* prayers would occasionally be presented with leaflets by members of the groups. However, the leaflets I saw took three different forms: those calling for establishment of *Khalifah*, those publicising lectures and debates about the establishment of *Khalifah*, and those publicising the support for *Khalifah* of activists under arrest in Muslim countries. Indeed, it is also worth noting that the two groups were spoken of in extremely pejorative terms by a significant number of Muslims I encountered during my research, who criticised their knowledge of and adherence to Islam.

A far more notable presence was that of *Salafi* students. Among these were numerous sub-groups often engaged in disagreements with each other. Among more vigorous adherents of *Salafi* interpretations of Islam were a number of students who would pejoratively term as *Ikhwani* those who engaged in mimetic politics by, for example, pursuing their aims through 'mainstream' participation in channels such as the Students' Union. The priority of *Salafi* students I encountered during my fieldwork was to return to a 'pure' form of Islam, and their activities therefore focused on organising and attending study circles through which their knowledge could be increased. On occasion, *Salafi* students would engage in political activities, although these usually focused on the perceived corruption of Saudi Arabia. However, not all *Salafi* students supported such actions, and some were extremely loyal to Saudi Arabia.

6 Conclusion

The importance of combating Islamophobia cannot be underestimated. Muslim students are less likely to be happy in a university – and therefore more likely to politically mobilise – in universities in which they are being subjected to Islamophobia. By the same token, all the instances of Muslim student political mobilisation encountered during my fieldwork either involved Muslims claiming basic rights – such as the right to support political causes important to them – or Muslims campaigning against institutionalised Islamophobia in their host institutions. As a consequence, there was absolutely nothing for any of the case study universities to fear in the examples of Muslim politicisation that I witnessed.

The most basic of provision needs for Muslim students include *halal* food availability, approved exemptions and absences on *'Eid*, the flexibility to ensure that Muslim students do not have to miss *jummuah* prayers to attend lectures, provision of prayer rooms, and protection against Islamophobia. None of these provisions are particularly difficult for universities to provide, and none require the commitment of unreasonable amounts of resources. As staff in Swanton and Fowlerstone universities have demonstrated, it is possible for universities to meet the needs of Muslim students and challenge Islamophboia.

Appendix 3 – Respondents and fieldwork

All names and institutions listed are fictitious in order to protect the anonymity of respondents.

The respondents listed below have had a material impact on the contents of this thesis – either by being quoted directly or through having provided information that has allowed me to extend narrative and analysis of events. However, a large number of respondents are absent from this list, and also from the analysis, since they either expressed reservations about being quoted or informing research, made it clear that they were speaking to me strictly 'off record', feared (in some cases) being made vulnerable by speaking about particular events and experiences, or because they were simply too 'recognisable' and there was a danger that somebody, somewhere, would recognise them from the information that they had provided. Interestingly, this applied to staff as well as to students.

I have also omitted a number of incidents which were sufficiently widely publicised for particular universities and figures to be identified, instead leaving in my thesis only those incidents which were not sufficiently unique or widely publicised to breach the anonymity I promised all respondents.

Finchton University

Abid - student

Jamil – staff

John – staff

Latif – former staff member

Mazar – former student

Mohammed - former student

Peter - staff

Rahila former student and staff member

Shabana – former staff member

Tahmur - student

Focus group interview with five members of Islamic Society Executive Committee, June 1999

Additional activities during fieldwork included participant observation at *jummuah* prayers over a three month period and other events organised by the Islamic Society or attended by significant numbers of Muslim students, conducting general fact-finding and opinion-finding conversations and short interviews with a number of Muslim students. Requests to attend Islamic Society Committee meetings were refused, although it does appear that these were not regular.

Fowlerstone

Ahmed - student

Alison – staff member

Bob – staff member

Edward – staff member

Gemma – Students' Union sabbatical

Jennifer – Students' Union sabbatical

Jim – Staff member

John – staff member

Khalida – student

Latif – staff member

Latifa – student

Yasmin - student

Zubaida – Student

In addition to interviews, fact-finding conversations with Muslim and non-Muslim staff and students, I also attended two Islamic Society Committee meetings, was interviewed by a student for an article in *Islam de France*, was invited to address students at an Islamic Society guest lecture in which I spoke about my research and participated in a question-and-answer session, and attended numerous *Jummuah* prayers and other Islamic Society organised events over a three month period.

Greenstone University

Afsana - student

Aisha - student

Amin - student

Amrit – staff member

Antonio – staff member

Arabella – staff member

Arif - student

Athena – student

Bilal – former student

Costas – student and part-time staff member

Deborah – student and part-time staff member

Francesco - student

Iannis – staff member

Iqbal – former student

Jerome – union sabbatical

Laila – staff member

Mary – staff member

Shaida - student

Sanjay - student

Shaista - student

Suleiman – former student

Talhat - student

James – staff member

Additional fieldwork included regular attendance of *Jummuah* prayers and Islamic Society organised events over the length of the research (other than when attending *Jummuah* in the other case study universities, general fact-finding, participant observation across campus, and conversations.

Swanton

Aijaz - student

Andy – union officer

Gina – union staff member

John - staff

Junaid - student

Mustasam - student

Sarah - student

Steve – staff member

Tabassam - student

Rebecca – staff member

Islamic Society Executive Committee (mixed by gender, age, ethnic & cultural heritage, adherence to Islamic groups and schools of thought), focus group interview June 1999.

Other fieldwork included attending one Islamic Society Executive Committee meeting, attending *jumuah* regularly over a three month period, general participant and non-participant observation, and general fact-finding and conversations with students and staff over a three month period.

Other respondents

Other respondents included:

Nina, research student

Shehla, staff member in another university

Fareeda, staff member in another university

Male drug worker, early forties, white British non-Muslim, North West based

Male drug worker, early thirties, white British non-Muslim, Greenstone-based

Female drug worker, mid fifties, Greenstone-based, white British non-Muslim

Female drug worker, mid thirties, East Midlands based, British South Asian convert Muslim

Prior to the fieldwork, pilot research was undertaken by contacting Islamic Societies across the country in order to form a basic assessment of the sorts of problems affecting Muslim students and the levels of provision available to them (overleaf). Response rates to this questionnaire were low. I therefore found a more fruitful line of enquiry to involve asking Muslim students I encountered for contacts among observant Muslims they knew in other universities. These contacts would be followed up by telephone or, failing that, by email, to generate a broad sense of the range of issues important to Muslim students. It was from this pilot research that Finchton, Fowlerstone, Greenstone, and Swanton universities were selected as potential case studies.

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