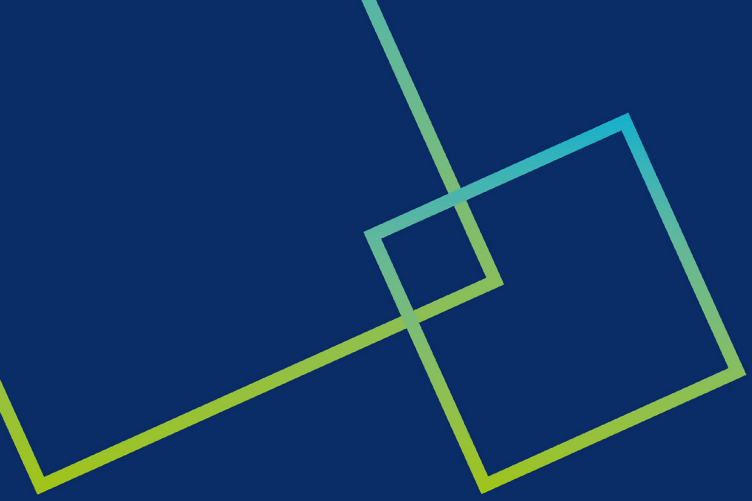

Jessica Fischer

AGENCY

The Entrepreneurial Self in Narratives of Transformation: Debuting in the Literary Field at the Dawn of the Twenty-First Century

Königshausen & Neumann

Jessica Fischer

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Agency

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"Prior to being a generous life-style in the service of others, altruism is indeed the foundational principle of a self that knows itself to be constituted by another: the necessary other."

Cavarero, Adriana. *Relating Narratives. Storytelling and Selfhood*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. (*Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti*, 1997, trans. Paul A. Kottmann.). 84.

'Necessary others' for this story were Gesa Stedman and Elahe Haschemi Yekani, my teachers, tutees and students from all over the world, the members of the AK Cultural Studies, of the Berlin Graduate School for British Studies and of the interdisciplinary Berlin-Britain Research Network, my colleagues at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, the numerous guest lecturers, visiting researchers as well as the student assistants at the Centre for British Studies, the team of *Hard Times Magazine* and of Tino Sehgal, Ingrid Meyer-Legrand and Jeong Kwan, Ben, Ela, Patricia or everyone else who makes me breathe and dance, Andrea, Anna, Assiyeah, Clemens, Emil, Ilaria, Jacob, Jimmy, Jon, Lena, Leonie, Lucilla, Nadja, Reena, Sabina, Sara, Sophie, Stefan, Steffi, Svea and many more who nourish me with their colours, songs, tales, meals and smiles, the community in Weisestraße and of the Alte Sennerei, in particular Azra, Daniel, Janina, Johanna, Kilian, Matteo, Peter, Renate, Sajda, Sanela, Valentina, for being a home.

Thank you

Berlin, 21 December 2018

PER R. & P.

tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti

[L]e savoir n'est pas fait pour comprendre, il est fait pour trancher.

Michel Foucault (1971)

Contents

1 Introduction

This study analyses narratives at the beginning of the twenty-first century. I consider the narrative as "one of the most potent of all ideological forms"[1] and the first decade of this century a key phase for an analysis of narratives. The events of 11 September 2001 and the financial crisis of 2007-8 affected lives globally. Great Britain, the regional focus of this study, is one of the countries that still struggles with the consequences. Scholars acknowledge these series of events as turning points in factual and fictional discourses, in world politics, daily practices, artistic works or cultural theory.[2] The changes in public discourses involved questions of citizenship or social (in)equalities. When 9/11 and 7/7 put Muslim populations under the spotlight, British Asians experienced a rise in discrimination as many of them are associated with Islam. Not 'race' but 'religion' became a major motif for xenophobic attacks on them.[3] The situation led to new forms of representing British-Asian citizens in politics and media. Moreover, the post-9/11 situation allowed or called for a *new* generation of authors who produced literary texts about British-Asian identities and their relationship to a fictional British society. These texts portrayed processes of subject formation which ran counter to racist discourses and deconstructed prejudices caused by Islamophobia.

For this study, I chose to concentrate on literary texts. Because literature *can* be "difficult, indirect, an allusive, because it mixes verisimilitude with imagination, the literal with the symbolic, it can express something of the complexity of 9/11."[4] Fictional narratives can have the potential to

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[1] Eagleton, Terry. "Ideology, Fiction, Narrative." *Social Text* 2 (1979): 62-80. Quotation 71.

[2] See, for example, Bentley, Nick, Nick Hubble and Leigh Wilson. "Introduction: Fiction of the 2000s: Political Contexts, Seeing the Contemporary, and the End(s) of Postmodernism." *The 2000s. A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction*. Ed. Nick Bentley, Nick Hubble and Leigh Wilson. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. 1-26. Or Schüller, Thorsten. "Kulturtheorien nach 9/11." *Repräsentationen des 11. September 2001 in kulturellen Diskursen, Literatur und visuellen Medien*. Ed. Sandra Poppe, Thorsten Schüller and Sascha Seiler. Bielefeld: transcript, 2009. 21-38. Schüller considers 9/11 an "epistemological caesura". Quotation 21. [Translation by J. F.]

[3] "[O]ver the last fifty years British discourse on racialised minorities has mutated from 'colour' in the 1950s and 1960s […] to 'race' in the 1960s-1980s […], 'ethnicity' in the 1990s […] and 'religion' in the present period […]. Within religion, Islam has had the highest profile." Peach, Ceri. "Britain's Muslim Population: an Overview." *Muslim Britain. Communities under Pressure*. Ed. Tahir Abbas. London and New York: Zed Books, 2005. 18-30. Quotation 18.

[4] Keniston, Ann and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn. "Representing 9/11: Literature and Resistance." *Literature after 9/11*. Ed. Ann Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn. London and New York: Routledge, 2008. 1-15. Quotation 14.

complicate normative discourses. The novel in particular addresses the relationship between individual and society. The novel addresses "the worlds in which we live, the symbolic forms by which we abide, the maturation of subjects, and the land and property on which they subsist."[5] Besides, the novel as a genre still features heavily in the range of narratives consumed on the contemporary media market.[6] Quite a few authors that the literary field promoted strongly after 9/11 are British Asian with parents who had migrated to Britain. Being born in Britain, this younger generation of authors have a "particular relationship to citizenship which marks them out as distinct"[7]. They had to "negotiate feelings of racial or religious rejection against their own inherent sense of British citizenship as a birthright."[8] This sounds attractive for a market that was ripe for a redefinition of 'Britishness' after 9/11 but still fed on ideas of the 'exotic other'[9]. The kind of postcolonial literature produced by these writers was assumed to give insight into British Asian communities and to "address the plight of the wretched of the earth".[10] I am interested in four of these 'new' novelists:

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[5] Johansen, Emily and Alissa G. Karl. "Introduction: Reading and Writing the Economic Present." *Textual Practice* 29.2 (2015): 201-214. Quotation 202.

[6] Nünning, Vera and Ansgar Nünning. "An Outline of the Objectives, Features and Challenges of the British Novel in the Twentieth Century." *The British Novel in the Twenty-First Century. Cultural Concerns – Literary Developments – Model Interpretations*. Ed. Vera Nünning and Ansgar Nünning. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2018. 3-20. Quotation 6.

[7] Upstone, Sara. *British Asian Fiction*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010. Quotation 4.

[8] Upstone. *British Asian Fiction*. Quotation 7. Sara Upstone also explains how birth became essential to citizenship legislation in Britain. "Both the 1914 and 1948 British Nationality Acts gave commonwealth citizens the right of British citizenship. […] The subsequent 1968 Act, however, made Britishness contingent on the birthplace or citizenship of one's parents or grandparents. This was further sedimented by both the 1971 and the 1981 Acts, the latter restricting right of settlement to those whose parents or grandparents were British citizens. As being born to a British citizen became what made one British, so the birthplace of a British citizen frequently became Britain itself, against an earlier generation of migrants whose British citizenship preceded entry into Britain, and was dependant not on ancestral connection, but on membership of the British Empire." Quotation 4.

[9] See Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. For more recent research on the commodification of otherness, see Saha, Anamik. *Race and the Cultural Industries*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017. For difficulties to publish unconventional 'British Asian' literary texts, see Bhanot, Kavita. "Introduction." *Too Asian, Not Asian Enough. An Anthology of New British Asian Fiction*. Ed. Kavita Bhanot. Birmingham: Tindal Street Press, 2011. vii-xi.

[10] Israel, Nico. "Tropicalizing London: British Fiction and the Discipline of Postcolonialism." *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction*. Ed. James F. English. Malden: Blackwell, 2006. 83-100. Quotation 96. These assumptions stem from some scholars of postcolonial studies, too. Elleke Boehmer, for instance, wrote in a rather generalising manner that postcolonial literature "offers ways of articulating [the] justice-

Monica Ali, Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal, Gautam Malkani, Sarfraz Manzoor. They all had worked in publishing or journalism before but their debut novels were only published after 9/11. In their debuts they all write about marginalised subjects from migrant communities in or around literary London. The titles of their publications already indicate imaginary spaces which refer to both London and to stories of migration. Sarfraz Manzoor's *Greetings from Bury Park. Race, Religion and Rock 'n' Roll* (2007)[11] refers to the outskirts, Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's *Tourism* (2006)[12] to a movement through various social groups in the city, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2002)[13] to a space with a long history of immigration to London, and Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* (2006)[14] to people from former colonies who have moved from the margins to the centre of the former empire. I deliberately chose to do a qualitative analysis of four primary sources in order to provide an in-depth comparison rather than a reductionist overview that might fit a literary theory but fails as literary analysis. Still, I claim, these four texts are representative for the products of the British publishing industry at the time: the dawn of the century showed an "extraordinary prominence of novels that were widely celebrated for their portrayals of the city's ethnic and cultural diversity."[15] All the four primary sources appeared between 11 September 2001 and the peak of the financial crisis in 2008, i. e. between the two main markers for first fundamental changes in public discourses of the twenty-first century. Each of the novels narrates a first- or second-generation immigrant's process of subjectification, the story of becoming a full member of a fictional contemporary British society. These processes are depicted in different ways with different protagonists. Nevertheless, the four protagonists all indicate symptoms of 'cruel optimism'. "A relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing,"[16] formulates scholar Lauren Berlant. She details that people in the United States and in Europe hold on to visions of a good life, which include "promises of upward mobility, job security, political and

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and-respect-driven struggle [against colonialism]. [It] both recalls the way in which cultures are syncretically interlinked, as they always have been, *and* provides a gateway to *feeling* otherness, experiencing how it might be to be *beside one's self*." Boehmer, Elleke. *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature. Migrant Metaphors*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Quotation 258. [Emphasis in the original].

[11] Manzoor, Sarfraz. *Greetings from Bury Park. Race, Religion and Rock 'n' Roll*. 2007. London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2008. Quoted as *Greetings from Bury Park* in the following chapters.

[12] Dhaliwal, Nirpal Singh. *Tourism*. London: Vintage, 2006.

[13] Ali, Monica. *Brick Lane*. 2002. London: Black Swan, 2004.

[14] Malkani, Gautam. *Londonstani*. 2006. London: Harper Perennial, 2007.

[15] Perfect, Michael. *Contemporary Fictions of Multiculturalism. Diversity and the Millennial London Novel*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 6.

[16] Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011. 1.

social equality, and lively, durable intimacy".[17] These people "hoard idealizing theories and tableaux about how they and the world 'add up to something'"[18] although the opportunities are not provided anymore in liberal-capitalist societies. The fictional narratives examined in this study contain various 'visions of a good life'. They offer models of subjectification in the UK that 'add up to something'. They do not address the overarching issue of neoliberalisation or political questions which go beyond identity politics. These fictional narratives stay cruelly optimistic.

Similar to critics of postcolonial studies, such as Melissa Kennedy[19] or Neil Lazarus[20], who call for painstaking analyses of discourses in the light of capitalism[21], neoimperialism and state politics, literary theorist Walter Benn Michaels stresses that today's most drastic inequalities are not created through discrimination but through exploitation: "[i]t is neoliberalism, not racism or sexism (or homophobia or ageism) that creates the inequalities that matter most."[22] Michaels does not deny the importance of political struggles against discrimination and for equal rights but he clearly prioritises the shared experience in neoliberal systems regardless of the infinite number of identity categories which are relevant for the individual. Political scientist Adolph Reed agrees with this stance. He elaborates: "[m]oreover, versions of racial and gender equality are now also incorporated into the

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[17] Ibid. 3.
[18] Ibid. 2.
[19] Kennedy, Melissa. "New Directions in Postcolonial Studies." *NUCB Journal of Language, Culture and Communication* 13.2 (2012): 3-12.
[20] Lazarus, Neil. "What Postcolonial Theory Doesn't Say."*Race & Class* 53.3 (2011): 3-27.
[21] Neoliberalism is often considered as a new form of capitalism. Gérard Duménil and Dominique Lévy mark neoliberalism as "a new phase in the evolution of capitalism". Duménil, Gérard and Dominique Lévy. *The Crisis of Neoliberalism*. Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2011. 5. I use this connection as a means to understand the entangled histories between past forms of British colonialism and neoimperialist projects of the 21st century.
[22] Michaels, Walter Benn. "Against Diversity." *New Left Review* 52 (2008): 33-36. Quotation 34. He continues: "[i]n fact, one of the great discoveries of neoliberalism is that [racism and sexism] are not very efficient sorting devices, economically speaking." This is not to diminish the necessity of discussions about 'intersectionality'. Theories of 'intersectionality' point out forms of multiple discrimination and oppression which originate from a combination of identity categories such as gender and ethnicity. See, for example, Winker, Gabriele and Nina Degele. *Intersektionalität. Zur Analyse sozialer Ungleichheiten*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2009. Christine Weinbach links identity categories to systems theories in order to be able to investigate social inequalities. Weinbach, Christine. ""Intersektionalität": Ein Paradigma zur Erfassung sozialer Ungleichheitsverhältnisse? Einige systemtheoretische Zweifel." *ÜberKreuzungen. Fremdheit, Ungleichheit, Differenz*. Ed. Cornelia Klinger and Gudrun-Axeli Knapp. Münster: Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2008. 171-193.

normative and programmatic structure of 'left' neoliberalism."[23] Hence, my study scrutinises the diversity celebrated in four British novels at the beginning of the twenty-first century in order to understand better the types of inequalities and forms of citizenship portrayed. Beyond the celebratory aspect, one can detect an unease and internal contradictions, not always stated overtly in the fictional texts, which point to the complex nature of fictional representations. For the investigation of neoliberalism, I draw mainly on Michel Foucault's lectures about "The Birth of Biopolitics"[24], on the work of David Harvey[25] and of Philip Mirowski[26]. Harvey defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade."[27] In Great Britain it was Margaret Thatcher in particular who pushed this "culture of entrepreneurialism"[28] and created conditions for later politicians that made it difficult for them to leave the route of neoliberalisation.[29] Harvey, like Foucault and Mirowski, sees neoliberalism not merely as an economic theory but as discourses that define human beings within the coordinates of entrepreneurial activities. Neoliberal principles thus shape practices of daily life[30]; neoliberal discourse reproduces by encouraging people to regulate themselves "according to the market principles of discipline, efficiency, and competitiveness"[31] and makes them "eminently governable"[32]. The primary sources for this study, i.e. the four novels all pick up the notion of the 'entrepreneur'. At the same time, the fictional texts all exchange aspects of the 'entrepreneur' as delineated by Foucault and Mirowski, for instance. By transforming these aspects, the novels expose possible variations. For the

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[23] Reed, Adolph Jr. "Marx, Race, and Neoliberalism." New Labor Forum 22.1 (2013): 49-57. Quotation 53.

[24] Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. Ed. Michel Senellart. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. (*Naissance de la Biopolitique: Cours au Collège de France, 1978-1979*, 2004, trans. Graham Burchell).

[25] Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

[26] Mirowski, Philip. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste. How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown*. London and New York: Verso, 2013. And Mirowski, Philip and Dieter Plehwe, eds. *The Road from Mont Pèlerin. The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009.

[27] Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 2.

[28] Ibid. 61.

[29] Ibid. 63.

[30] For the profound psychological impact this has on populations in the West, see James, Oliver. *The Selfish Capitalist*. London: Vermilion, 2008.

[31] Ong, Aihwa. 2006. *Neoliberalism as Exception*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. 4.

[32] Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 270.

linguist Marnie Holborow the entrepreneur is a kind of neoliberal *Leitmetapher* whose power lies in the "apparent non-ideological character and [its] matter-of-fact, common-sense status as mere pointe[r] to adaptation and advancement in market society."[33] I aimed at finding out how a *Leitmetapher* or strong metaphor like the 'entrepreneur' is embedded and developed in the four fictional texts. The metaphor of the 'entrepreneur' plays a key part in the way the novels feed into a hegemonic discourse and is one reason why I regard the novels as neoliberal narratives. Entrepreneurship discourse which was prevalent in the new economy of the 1990s did not fade with the financial crises at the beginning of the century and after 9/11.[34] Literary fictions perform an important role in this hegemonic discourse. The editors of the special issue of *Textual Practice: Neoliberalism and the Novel* warn: "The displacement of neoliberal rationalities by identity politics […] obscures the perpetuation of neoliberal consensus in its focus on hyper-individualised narratives of self-actualisation."[35] Literary fiction runs the risk of adding 'hyper-individualised narratives of self-actualisation' and it can gloss over more problematic issues of subject formation intrinsic to questions of governmentality.

In order to investigate the subject formation in the four literary texts, I bring them into dialogue with a model of 'the novel of transformation'. The model is informed by research about the *Bildungsroman* genre[36] with certain thematic and formal features which put subjectification centre stage. My main references are Marianne Hirsch's article about the novel of formation and Mark Stein's book on the novel of transformation.[37] For Stein the novel of transformation sketches the formation of a protagonist and, at the same time, the transformation of British society. It gives migrant

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[33] Holborow, Marnie. *Language and Neoliberalism*. Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2015. 71, 72.

[34] Bröckling, Ulrich. *The Entrepreneurial Self. Fabricating a New Type of Subject*. London: Sage, 2016. (*Das unternehmerische Selbst. Soziologie einer Subjektivierungsform*, 2013, trans. Steven Black). 36.

[35] Johansen, Emily and Alissa G. Karl. "Introduction." 208.

[36] Key to my project were conversations with Georgia Christinidis who works on a large-scale study about the *Bildungsroman* in relation to the neoliberal self. See Christinidis, Georgia. *Human Capital: Neoliberal Governmentality and the Contemporary British Bildungsroman*. (Forthcoming). While following her paradigm, my study investigates 'novels of transformation' in particular (see below) and the debates of postcolonial studies and identity politics they entail.

[37] Hirsch, Marianne. "The Novel of Formation as Genre: Between Great Expectations and Lost Illusions." Genre 12.3 (1979): 293-311. And Stein, Mark. *Black British Literature: Novels of Transformation*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004. 'Black British literature' includes British Asian literature in Stein's book. Today, 'black, Asian, and minority ethnic' (BAME) might be a fitting term in order to indicate this inclusiveness.

identities a voice. I claim, however, that this voice is not automatically a voice that matters. "Voice is one word for that capacity [of giving an account of oneself], but having a voice is never enough. I need to know that my voice matters; indeed, the offer of effective voice is crucial to the legitimacy of modern democracies […]."[38] To test whether the protagonists of my primary sources gain a voice that matters, I not only investigate their formation but also the agency they develop. In fact, the concept of 'agency' is the prominent tool in the discourse analyses of this study. As a characteristic of the entrepreneurial self, one of the most widely discussed subject positions in the context of neoliberalism, agency marks the ambiguity of processes of individualisation and offers an entry point into a dissection of ways to engage with governmentalities and technologies of the self. Generally, the concept of 'agency' connects to questions of "who is able to do what with whom in which way, which effect can be assigned to whom (the individual, the society, anonymous powers etc.) and what is in the power of the individual (factually or imagined)."[39] 'Agency' is one of the most important aspects in the formation of the self and shows most clearly at the difficult intersection between individual and social environment. 'Agency' can be understood as one of the "three practical challenges" in processes of formation, i.e. "(i) a successful diachronic navigation between constancy and change, (ii) the establishment of a synchronic connection between sameness and difference (between self and other), and (iii) the management of agency between the double-arrow of a person-to-world versus a world-to-person direction of fit."[40] In addition, the concept of 'agency' assists a discussion about ingredients of neoliberal discourses such as 'individual', 'choice', 'autonomy', or 'freedom'.[41] Thus it points out the contradictions and inconsistencies in current debates about what it means to be a subject in Western democracies.

The most pressing question of this research project is not just about the representations of British-Asian identities in post-9/11 novels but also, and more importantly: **which forms of agency do the fictional subject positions offer to the reader?** My hypothesis is that all the protagonists find a new position in their fictional British societies through a transformation of

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[38] Couldry, Nick. *Why Voice Matters. Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism*. London: Sage, 2010. 1.

[39] Bethmann, Stephanie, Cornelia Helfferich, Heiko Hoffmann and Debora Niermann, eds. *Agency. Die Analyse von Handlungsfähigkeit und Handlungsmacht in qualitativer Sozialforschung und Gesellschaftstheorie*. Weinheim und Basel: Beltz Juventa, 2012. Quote 10. [Translation by J. F.]

[40] Bamberg, Michael. "Who am I? Narration and its Contribution to Self and Identity." *Theory & Psychology* 21.1 (2011): 3-24. Quotation 3.

[41] Eagleton-Pierce, Matthew. *Neoliberalism. The Key Concepts*. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2016.

their identity. Despite their very different processes of formation, their agency is restricted to practices which conform to neoliberal structures. In a few cases the process of becoming a *homo economicus*, and more specifically, an entrepreneurial subject, might result in autonomy but never in a form of agency which could challenge neoliberal power hierarchies. The *Bildungsroman* models provided by Hirsch and Stein inform my research to a certain extent, specifically when it comes to the trans/formation of the main characters. In order to arrive at a more critical evaluation of the literary works, I employ a combined approach of postclassical narratology and critical discourse analysis with a focus on the function of the metaphor, though. This is a means to examine the subject positions each of the literary sources proposes, to find out how *Brick Lane*, *Tourism, Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park* constitute entrepreneurial selves discursively. On a broader scale, the analyses of the novels as discourses of subjectification and the question of agency are an analysis of power relations. They lead to an answer to why these fictional texts make us "believe that we are all more alike than we know"[42] – rather than *criticising* that we might be all more alike than we know, i.e. cruel optimists. In my reading of the novels, the 'entrepreneurial self' is not a model which I apply to them. It is a basis for comparing the various ways these literary texts narrate the self in the context of a neoliberal Britain.

The first part (chapters 2 and 3) of this study establishes the main pillars of the framework of my argument. I outline the situation in post-9/11 Britain and conceptualise neoliberalism as a hegemonic discourse with the enterprising self as its preferred subject. I define the novel of transformation and clarify the categories of analysis with a particular focus on 'agency'. The second part (chapters 4 to 7) examines the primary sources. These larger elements split into the following chapters: in chapter 2 "Post-9/11 Britain and Neoliberalism" I contextualise the primary sources. I sketch the post-9/11 atmosphere in Great Britain, which is defined by 'new' forms of discrimination. I trace broad dynamics concerning representations of migrants in British literatures since the post-war period and new directions in postcolonial studies. In this chapter I also introduce the frame for a critical discourse analysis of the novels. Here, I provide definitions of neoliberalism, a short overview of its main doctrines and a Foucauldian perspective on neoliberal discourses and practices. Thereafter I explore the subject positions these discourses offer, particularly the entrepreneurial self, from a cultural sociologist point of view. In chapter 3 "Novels of Transformation and Categories of Analysis" I first discuss literary fiction as a discourse of

[42] Tony Parson's review about *Greetings from Bury Park* on the publisher's website. http://www.bloomsbury.com/in/greetings-from-bury-park-9780747592945/ [17.12.2018].

subjectification. I gradually zoom in: starting with definitions which concern the discursive constitution of the subject, I then concentrate on fictional narratives, the neoliberal novel and how narrating the self is linked to narrating neoliberalism. This leads to a preliminary critique of Foucault's conceptualisation of neoliberalism. In the second part of the chapter I present models of novels of transformation. I look at selfhood as a construction of unity, continuity and coherent development, and at the performative function of novels of transformation. This is followed by a part about my methodological approach with a focus on metaphors and encapsulated imaginaries. In the final part of this chapter I explain in more detail the aspect of 'agency', the main criterion for the investigation of the protagonists in the primary sources. In this subchapter I introduce conceptualisations of 'agency' informed by sociology, psychology and philosophy. I relate these definitions to the chapters about neoliberalism and the entrepreneurial self. Thereby I come to a differentiated set of criteria that allow for a more nuanced critique of the novels of transformation *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park*. Because the narrative is important in my constructivist perspective on the neoliberal novels, I do not leave the discussion of 'agency' on the level of critical sociology and psychology but integrate the concept into narratological considerations of the discursive constitution of the subject. Discourses about the neoliberal self often offer monodimensional, teleological 'success stories' similar to many we find in traditional novels of formation. In contrast, I claim, a more complex discursive construction of the subject in general and of agency in particular could include the idea of 'relationality'. Philosopher Adriana Cavarero[43] offers such an intersubjective narrating of the self: dialogically, not monologically like many conventional constructions of the subject. This relationality is a requirement for agency, or rather, for a voice that matters. In chapter 4 I discuss Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*, in chapter 5 Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's *Tourism*, in chapter 6 Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani*, and in chapter 7 Sarfraz Manzoor's *Greetings from Bury Park*. Although, or rather because, these narrations differ greatly, I employ the same analytical categories for all in order to compare their protagonists' processes of subjectification. These categories are based on Hirsch and Stein's theories about the novel of trans/formation. They comprise the characterisation of the central figures and their direct social environment, their alienation and relations to the larger society, the generational and cultural conflict, the setting and spatial dynamics, and, of course, linguistic devices. To these categories I add one which sheds light on agency in relation to finding a

[43] Cavarero, Adriana. *Relating Narratives. Storytelling and Selfhood*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. (*Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti*, 1997, trans. Paul A. Kottmann).

voice. 'Agency' is the litmus test in my literary analyses: are these narratives about voices that matter?

2 Post-9/11 Britain and Neoliberalism

2.1 Representations of British Asians and the State of Postcolonial Studies after 9/11

Thing is, see, they is getting more sophisticated.
They don't say race, they say culture, religion.

Muslim character in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*

New Forms of Discrimination and the Question of Multiculturalism

In the aftermath of 9/11, British Muslims faced increasing discrimination.[44] Or rather, the discriminations of Muslim citizens became more visible in Britain after 9/11. Migrant communities with a high percentage of Muslim members and in particular British Asians were increasingly associated "with violence and anti-Western values"[45]. Tabloid media, for instance, fuelled a "growing public fear that [the threat of terrorism and immigration] are inextricably linked"[46]. Scholars observed a shift from discriminations along the lines of ethnicity or race to forms of discriminations along the lines of religion or culture.[47] A Trinidadian character in *Tourism* (2006) provokingly claims: "'[…] Muslims are good for black people. 9/11 was a break for niggers. White people are cutting us some slack, now we're not top of their shit-list. […] 'Niggers might rob you and rape your girlfriend, but they

[44] See, for example, Abbas, Tahir, ed. *Muslim Britain. Communities under Pressure*. London and New York: Zed Books, 2005. Berg, Sebastian. "Multiculturalism, British Muslims and War." *Rhetoric and Representation. The British at War*. Ed. Gabriele Linke and Holger Rossow. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2007. 203-216. Rehmann, Javaid. "Islam, 'War on Terror' and the Future of Muslim Minorities in the United Kingdom: Dilemmas of Multiculturalism in the Aftermath of the London Bombings." *Human Rights Quarterly* 29.4 (2007): 831-878.

[45] Triandafyllidou, Anna, Tariq Modood and Ricard Zapata-Barrero. "European Challenges to Multicultural Citizenship: Muslims, Secularism and beyond." *Multiculturalism, Muslims and Citizenship. A European Approach.* Ed. Tariq Modood, Anna Triandafyllidou and Ricard Zapata-Barrero. London: Routledge, 2006. 1-22. Quotation 1.

[46] Makarenko, Tamara. "Immigration and Asylum Issues." *Homeland Security in the UK: Future Preparedness for Terrorist Attack since 9/11*. Ed. Paul Wilkinson. London: Routledge, 2007. 248-255. Quotation 248. Regarding the rhetoric of fear in the aftermath of 9/11, see also Altheide, David L. *Terror Post 9/11 and the Media*. New York: Peter Lang, 2009. For changes in the legal system after 9/11 and 7/7, see, for example, Forster, Susanne. *Freiheitsbeschränkungen für mutmaßliche Terroristen. Eine Analyse der Terrorismusgesetzgebung des Vereinigten Königreichs*. Berlin: Duncker & Humlot, 2010.

[47] Poole, Elizabeth. "Change and Continuity in the Representation of British Muslims Before and After 9/11: The UK Context." *Global Media Journal* 4.2 (2011): 49-62. For long-term changes in representations of migrants in public discourses of the twentieth and beginning twenty-first century, see Julios, Christina. *Contemporary British Identity. English Language, Migrants and Public Discourse*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008.

won't land a fucking plane on you. Another stunt like that, and we'll be in the clear.'"[48] In his opinion, the threat 'black people' pose to the 'white people', i.e. individual robbery and rape in the above example, is relativised by the threat 'Muslims' are imagined to have become, i.e. terrorists who aim to kill as many 'white people' as possible. Ultimately, the problem stays the same[49]: Islamophobia "disguise[s] racism as the defence of Western secular values. That Asians belong to different religions or that Islam has various shades has no place in these constructions."[50] The London bombings of 7 July 2005 intensified this problem.[51] Media representations of British Muslims were "underpinned by a renewed accent on an imagined 'clash of cultures'"[52] which referred to Samuel P. Huntington's 'clash of civilizations'[53]. Slavoj Zižek diagnoses this kind of culturalisation of politics when discrepancies caused by political or economic inequality "are naturalised and neutralised into 'cultural differences'; that is into different 'ways of life', which are something given, something that cannot be overcome."[54] In many ways, 'culture' has thus become a defining element for a new racism in a 'post-racial'[55] era. This does not mean that 'culture' has gained a negative connotation per se.[56] Nonetheless, 'multiculturalism' as a political concept

[48] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 67, 68.

[49] See also Smith, Andrew. "Migrancy, Hybridity, and Postcolonial Literary Studies." *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Ed. Neil Lazarus. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 241-261. Quotation 250.

[50] Berg, Sebastian. "Multiculturalism and Racism in Blair's Britain." *Britain under Blair*. Ed. Merle Tönnies. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2003. 33-48. Quotation 37. For an overview of the entangled history of race and immigration in Britain since 1945, see Solomos, John. *Race and Racism in Britain*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2003.

[51] See, for instance, Rai, Milan. *7/7: The London Bombings, Islam and the Iraq War*. London: Pluto Press, 2006. 59.

[52] Macdonald, Mary. "Discourses of Separation: News and Documentary Representations of Muslims in Britain." *Postcolonial Media Culture in Britain*. Ed. Rosalind Brunt and Rinella Cere. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011. 127-141. Quotation 128.

[53] Huntington, Samuel. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. London: Touchstone, 1998.

[54] Zižek, Slavoj. *Violence*. London: Profile Books, 2008. 119. See also the concept of 'neo-racism' by Étienne Balibar in Balibar, Étienne and Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein. *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*. London: Verso, 1991. (*Race, nation, classe: les identités ambiguës*, 1988, trans. of Étienne Balibar by Chris Turner).

[55] Lenting, Alana. "Post-race, Post Politics: the Paradoxical Rise of Culture after Multiculturalism." *Multiculturalism, Social Cohesion and Immigration. Shifting Conceptions in the UK*. Ed. Martin Bulmer and John Solomos. London and New York: Routledge, 2015. 4-21.

[56] Rather, it depends on the way the term 'culture' is instrumentalised ideologically. Although he criticises the existing 'cultural racism', sociologist Tariq Modood, for instance, is a strong proponent of multiculturalism in post-7/7 Britain. See Modood, Tariq. *Multicultural Politics. Racism, Ethnicity and Muslims in Britain*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005. Author Hanif Kureishi is convinced that an 'effective multiculturalism' is not about lifestyle consumerism but a "robust and committed exchange of

became highly controversial[57]. Former prime minister David Cameron eventually attacked the idea of 'state multiculturalism'[58] after Blair's 'Cool Britannia' had implemented and exploited the narrative on a national level for years. This led writer Rajeev Balasubramanyam to argue that multiculturalism is "a huge and growing *industry*, generating wealth that, mostly, is returned to the upper castes, wealth garnered mostly from middle-class consumption."[59] The definitions of multiculturalism abound and the way it is used varies greatly. Therefore, reducing the concept of multiculturalism to the idea of an industry, which functions to oppress diversity, does not do justice to the complexity of the topic. However, that the brand 'multiculturalism' has been promoted in many cases to cash in on diversity can be observed in a number of sub-fields, e. g. the music industry and the literary field.[60]

Representations of Migrants in British Literatures

The literary field[61], too, commercialises otherness and markets the exotic[62]. This is not surprising if one reflects on the representations of migrants in

ideas – a conflict which is worth enduring, rather than a war." Kureishi, Hanif. *The Word and the Bomb*. London: faber and faber, 2005. 100.

[57] Berg, Sebastian. "Der kurze Frühling des britischen Multikulturalismus." *Repräsentationsformen des Anderen. Migranten in Westeuropa und den USA im 20. Jahrhundert*. Ed. Gabriele Metzler, Sebastian Klöß, Reet Tamme. Frankfurt: Campus, 2013. 35-54. Berg. "Multiculturalism, British Muslims and War." 203-216.

[58] Cameron, David. PM's speech at Munich Security Conference. *GOV.UK* 5 February 2011. https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference [14.11.2017].

[59] Balasubramanyam, Rajeev. "The Rhetoric of Multiculturalism." *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+. New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts*. Ed. Lars Eckstein, et al. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008. 33-42. Quotation 42. Related to what I wrote above about the shift from 'race' to 'culture' in new forms of discrimination and about the culturalisation of politics, Balasubramanyam further claims that 'multiculturalism' looks like the victory over racism when, quite ironically, it is used to limit cultural diversity. See ibid.

[60] See Huggan. *The Postcolonial* Exotic. And Saha. *Race and the Cultural Industries*.

[61] I use this term as coined by Pierre Bourdieu without going into a detailed critique of his concept. Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Rules of Art. Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996. (*Les Règles de l'art*, 1992, trans. Susan Emanuel).

[62] See, for instance, Huggan. *The Postcolonial Exotic*. Waugh, Patricia. "The Historical Context of Post-War British Literature." *The Post-War British Literature Handbook*. Ed. Katharine Cockin and Jago Morrison. London and New York: Continuum, 2010. 35-56. For a concise overview of the literary field in Great Britain including key historical developments, see Nünning, Vera. "Der zeitgenössische britische Roman: Ein Kartierungsversuch." *Der zeitgenössische englische Roman. Genres - Entwicklungen - Modellinterpretationen*. Ed. Vera Nünning and Caroline Lusin. Trier: WVT, 2007. 1-15. And Stedman, Gesa. "Das literarische Feld in Großbritannien." *Der zeitgenössische englische Roman.*

the history of British literatures. Considering the topic of the study, I outline here general developments in prose fiction written by authors with migrant biographies in the second half of the twentieth century. These authors could be termed forerunners in a very constructed and complex literary history. At the end of this literary history stand second-generation migrant authors such as Monica Ali, Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal, Gautam Malkani and Sarfraz Manzoor. At its beginning, Britain experienced drastic changes: in the second half of the twentieth century, the end of the Empire led to new flows of migration between, to and from parts of the world that had stood under colonial rule. This in turn influenced the makeup of Britain's society. Of course, "[p]rocesses of cultural transformation are […] not new phenomena in Britain, but they have been more marked since the 1940s."[63] From the 1950s until the 1980s, we see a slow increase in publications by authors with migrant biographies, often connected to postcolonial contexts. A general characteristic of many texts is a positive portrayal of migrant identities. As a response to racism, writers reversed existing categories of 'migrant' and 'British'. They enriched stories of migration to Britain by complicating dominant conceptions of the migrant subject position. Hanif Kureishi labels their writing "cheering fictions"[64]. Uplifting humour became their main literary device to point at the gloomy life immigrants faced. In the 1970s and early 1980s, another form of author emerges: the child of immigrants or the migrant author who came to the UK at a very young age. Many literary scholars consider the so-called second generation to be more outspoken. This parallels the political changes at the time, calls for protest and a crisis of clear-cut concepts of Britishness. Stuart Hall diagnosed a shift in the tendencies of representation in the 1980s.[65] Previous writers had challenged negative stereotypes with positive representations. Now authors do not simply flip categories anymore. In this 'second phase', representation is recognised as a formative force, not a mimetic one.[66] Authors, such as Hanif Kureishi, David Dabydeen or Salman Rushdie, foreground hybridity, metamorphosis and performative aspects in the

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Genres - Entwicklungen - Modellinterpretationen. Ed. Vera Nünning and Caroline Lusin. Trier: WVT, 2007. 17-32. For changing market conditions for South Asian and British Asian writers in the UK during the twentieth and early twenty-first century, see Ranasinha, Ruvani. *South Asian Writer in Twentieth-Century Britain: Culture in Translation*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007.

[63] Stein. *Black British Literature*. xiv.

[64] Kureishi, Hanif. "Dirty Washing." *Time Out* 14 (1985): 25-26. Quotation 26.

[65] Hall, Stuart. "New Ethnicities." 1988. *Black British Cultural Studies. A Reader*. Ed. Baker, Houston A., Manthia Diawara and Ruth H. Lindeborg. University of Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996. 163-1972.

[66] Procter, James. "New Ethnicities, the Novel, and the Burdens of Representation." *A Concise Companion to Contemporary British Fiction*. Ed. James F. English. Oxford: Blackwell, 2006. 101-120. Quotation 103.

representation of identity. They relativise definitions of the term 'migrant', for example in the screenplay *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985) and the novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) or in *The Satanic Verses* (1988).[67] In the 1990s, however, and related to Blair's political project, the meaning of diversity changed yet again. New Labour deliberately employed markers of difference in their idea of 'Cool Britannia'.[68] Literary scholar James Procter states: "As difference gets incorporated, reworked, and pieced out according to the logic of late global capitalism, it is worth asking whether (ethnic) difference is still capable of making a difference."[69] It was around that time when author David Dabydeen anticipated a growing assimilation by British Asians to discourses of neoliberalism. He encouraged migrant artists to stay awake: "It is not enough to criticize the Empire and British imperial legacies. We must criticize our own societies severely […]."[70] The new millennium intensified conflicting strategies in the way migrant writers related to dominant neoliberal discourses. Some of them 'marketed the exotic'[71]. Others, such as authors Bernardine Evaristo or Zadie Smith, in some ways try to oppose hegemonic ideas of difference.[72]

'Outsiders Within' after 9/11

According to literary scholar Mark Stein, novelists with a migrant biography are 'the outsiders within' who are able to contribute to anti-racism by voicing their identities.[73] This type of agency that Stein attributes to texts lies in the potential of literary fiction to portray new processes of subject formation on the one hand and to question the political changes in Britain on the other.[74] In the aftermath of 9/11, new 'outsiders within' appeared on the literary market as the events had "stimulated literary

[67] Kureishi, Hanif. *The Buddha of Suburbia*. 1990. London: Faber and Faber, 1999. ---. *My Beautiful Laundrette*. 1985. Rushdie, Salman. *The Satanic Verses*. 1988. London: Vintage, 2006.
[68] Hall, Stuart. The Multicultural Question. The Political Economy Research Centre Annual Lecture. 04.05.2000. http://red.pucp.edu.pe/wp-content/uploads/biblioteca/Stuart_Hall_The_multicultural_question.pdf [18.01.2018].
[69] Procter. "New Ethnicities." 113.
[70] Enkemann, Jürgen. "Interview with David Dabydeen." *Hard Times Magazine* 49 (1993): 4-11.
[71] Huggan. *The Postcolonial Exotic*.
[72] For example, Evaristo, Bernardine. *Blonde Roots*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2008. Smith, Zadie. *NW*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 2012.
[73] Stein. *Black British Literature*.
[74] See Gunning, Dave. *Race and Antiracism in Black British and British Asian Literature*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010. 9.

engagement with British Muslim identity"[75]. The events seemed to have created a surge of writers who could meet the thirst for insider information about the mysterious, exotic and dangerous 'Other' on the part of a white middle-class readership. This demand also allowed for opportunities: young authors, often second-generation British Asians, such as Monica Ali, Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal, Gautam Malkani and Sarfraz Manzoor, found publishers.[76] In their debut novels, they could renegotiate representations of British Asian identities and their relationship to a changing Britain in which specific forms of discrimination (e.g. Islamophobia) had increased. In contrast to these forms of discrimination which were based on old mechanisms of exclusion and Othering, their fictional texts offer alternatives to "the overall negativity" in the mass media which "resulted in the predominance of a 'cultural clash' framework"[77]. In addition, these writers as well as the characters in their novels represent a bridge between the colonial past of Great Britain and the postcolonial present: not only the authors are considered British Asian but also the protagonists, and the identities of a minority which has to face growing prejudices in British society after 9/11. So, one could certainly claim that these fictional constructions of British Asianness are counterdiscourses to a xenophobic mood rooted in past colonialism and neo-imperialism.

The primary material for my project, the selection of popular British-Asian debut novels published between 9/11 and 2008, tell "success stories" of first- or second-generation British-Asian migrants. These narrations confirm some of the established concepts of postcolonial studies. Excerpts of some of the reviews about the novels or blurbs on their covers already hint at the general tone set in the respective plots. Geraldine Bedell writes in *The Observer* about Monica Ali's novel, "*Brick Lane* has everything: richly complex characters, a gripping story and an exploration of a community that is so quintessentially British that it has given us our national dish, but of which most of us are entirely ignorant. Plus, it's a meditation on fate and free will."[78] The blurb by Vintage on Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's novel *Tourism*

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[75] Birkenstein, Jeff, Anna Froula and Karen Randell. "Introduction." *Reframing 9/11. Film, Popular Culture and the "War on Terror"*. Ed. Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula and Karen Randell. New York and London: Continuum, 2010. 1-8. Quotation 5.

[76] In many of these cases, e.g. with Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane*, publishers willingly or unwillingly entered the pitfalls of 'authenticity'. "'Authenticity' [however,] is the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism. It demands that sources, forms, style, language and symbol all derive from a supposedly homogeneous and unbroken tradition." Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands. Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta, 1991. 69.

[77] Poole. "Change and Continuity in the Representation of British Muslims." 49.

[78] Bedell, Geraldine. "Brick Lane." *The Observer*. 15.06.2003. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/jun/15/fiction.features1 [17.01.2018].

reads, "A refreshing, unflinching and politically incorrect take on modern Britain from an extraordinary Sikh writer." Natasha Fairweather reviews *Londonstani* in *The Telegraph* with the claim that "Malkani has some interesting observations about identity and the way in which the culturally oppressed can take strength from their exclusion."[79] With reference to a statement in *The Independent,* the publisher Bloomsbury praises Sarfraz Manzoor's *Greetings from Bury Park. Race, Religion and Rock 'n' Roll*: "[T]he book is about many things – the impact of multi-culturalism, a coming-of-age story and a Nick Hornby-style documentation of musical obsession […]."[80] 'Hybrid' subjects, to borrow Homi Bhabha's term, who renegotiate their marginalized position in British society through empowerment, who achieve liberation from dependence and gain autonomy as new subjects, seem to be – at least from a postcolonial studies' stance – laudable. The literary texts tick the list of key concepts associated with the canon of postcolonial critics such as Edward Said[81], Gayatri Spivak[82] and Homi Bhabha[83]. The novelists, for example, destabilise essentialisms and cultural stereotypes, complicate binarisms such as coloniser/colonised, black/white, British/Asian, they redefine spaces like home and exile, question eurocentrism, point at today's racisms, centre the subaltern, write back to the Empire, and affirm cultural diversity. They are – in Stein's sense – 'outsiders within', who contribute to anti-discrimination. Their fictional narratives *do* voice British Asian identities in an increasingly xenophobic climate after 9/11.

Neoliberal Narratives

A detailed analysis of the novels hints at a more complex picture: the successful narrations of postcolonial migrants are close to the heart of hegemonic discourses of neoliberalism. Their British subject is a neoliberal subject. Deconstructing the cultural-clash framework in their fictional narratives, on the one hand, Monica Ali, Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal, Gautam Malkani and Sarfraz Manzoor strengthen neoliberal discourses on the other hand.

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[79] Fairweather, Natasha. "A World of Cultural Confusion." *The Telegraph*. 30.04.2006. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3651967/A-world-of-cultural-confusion.html [17.01.2018].

[80] Bloomsbury Publishing. "*Greetings from Bury Park. Race. Religion. Rock 'n' Roll*." Bloomsbury Publishing. n. d. https://www.bloomsbury.com/in/greetings-from-bury-park-9780747592945/ [17.01.2018].

[81] For example, Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage, 1979. Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Chatto & Windhus, 1993.

[82] For example, Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. 66-111.

[83] For example, Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

They give a voice to British Asian identities; only, do these voices matter?[84] Sociologist Ulrich Bröckling would caution about the 'nomadic' or 'hybrid' subjects of their novels.

> The variously nomadic […] or hybrid subjects held up by post-structuralist theories like those of […] Homi Bhabha may provide a kind of shape shifting that evades the remnants of the pressure to conform in a post-disciplinary society, but nevertheless do not present opposition to the neo-liberal imperative to be flexible.[85]

As the next chapters show, the protagonists in *Brick Lane* (2002), *Tourism* (2006), *Londonstani* (2006) and *Greetings from Bury Park. Race, Religion and Rock 'n' Roll* (2007) might gain autonomy but not a type of agency which could challenge existing power hierarchies. They operate in an economic system but do not participate in political processes. The characters are not citizens of a state but consumers in a market. The fictional texts are part of what scholar Lena Karlsson identifies as "a larger neoliberal life-writing trend, offering readers ways of working on the self."[86] It is a trend that celebrates neoliberal practices as means for social mobility while overlooking prominent factors that lead to inequalities. In a way, all the analysed novels offer non-discriminatory models for British Asian identities but they do not offer alternative models to neoliberal narratives which have become pivotal for definitions of the 'British subject' in the beginning of the 21st century.

Clearly, neoliberal discourse became hegemonic long before the turn of the century. A wide range of scholarly research delineates the processes of neoliberalisation in Britain from Conservatism via Thatcherism and New Labour.[87] For most, the election victory of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Party over Labour in 1979 represents a fundamental shift with far-reaching consequences: "[It] altered the terms of public debate. […] Neoliberal 'economism' increasingly dominated the public domain, a discourse of markets and liberty whose lack of intellectual credibility was no obstacle to its propagation and execution."[88] Despite some discontinuities

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[84] I refer here to the concept of 'voice' as defined by Nick Couldry and as explained in the following chapters. Couldry. *Why Voice Matters*.
[85] Bröckling. *The Entrepreneurial Self.* 198.
[86] Karlsson, Lena. "'This is a Book about Choices': Gender, Genre and (Auto)Biographical Prison Narratives." *NORA—Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* 21.3 (2013): 187-200. Quotation 178.
[87] For instance, Couldry. *Why Voice Matters*. Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Tribe, Keith. "Liberalism and Neoliberalism in Britain, 1930-1980." *The Road from Mont Pèlerin. The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*. Ed. Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009. 68-97.
[88] Tribe. "Liberalism and Neoliberalism in Britain, 1930-1980." 90, 91.

in the political history since 1979, the election of the Thatcher government, sociologist Bob Jessop observes an ever-growing spread of neoliberal thought not only as a political programme but also, and maybe more importantly for my cases, as a normative way of life. Rather than as the end of eighteen years of neoliberal developments, Jessop sees the change to a Labour government under Blair in 1997 as the beginning of an intensification. What Blair announced to be a 'New Labour' government which offered a 'Third Way' turned out to be "a radical and modernizing reform of the British state apparatus and its economic and social policies [which] also actively promot[ed] its version of neo-liberalism in Europe and the wider world."[89] By this time, the 'culture of entrepreneurialism' which was heavily promoted during the Thatcher years had become normalised.[90] Unsurprisingly, Blair's successor Gordon Brown could win the election in 2007 with a vision of Britain which guaranteed fairness to those "who earn it"[91], i.e. entrepreneurial individuals who "play by the rules"[92]. The novels create 'new' British Asian identities and simultaneously feed into 'established' discourses of the neoliberal subject. The novels offer very different forms of the entrepreneurial self – the ice skater, the flâneur, the reformed rudeboy and the Bruce Springsteen fan. Still, all these fictional subject formations suggest a form of 'suffering agency'[93], which leads to my two-fold critique: one of neoliberalism and one of a literary study predominantly interested in representations of identity[94] rather than in constructions of subject positions.

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[89] Jessop, Bob. "From Thatcherism to New Labour: Neo-Liberalism, Workfarism, and Labour Market Regulation." Department of Sociology, Lancaster University. http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/sociology/soc131rj.pdf [06.11.2015].

[90] See Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 61-63. Bröckling. *The Entrepreneurial Self*. 25.

[91] Brown, Gordon. Speech Announcing Candidacy for Labour Party Leadership in May 2007. Gordon Brown speech in full 11 May 2007. *BBC*. 11 May 2007. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/6646349.stm [14.11.2017]. John Clarke observes in this speech an important fusion between the social and the economic through the metaphors of the entrepreneur and the hard-working families, images which imply that only those deserve citizenship "who make the most of themselves" to use Brown's words. Clarke, John. "Imagined, Real and Moral Economies." *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research* 6 (2014): 95-112. Quotation 103.

[92] Brown. Speech. *BBC*. 11 May 2007.

[93] See next chapters. For a concise overview of some of the contemporary debates in postcolonial studies, see, for instance, Wilson, Janet, Cristina Sandru and Sarah Lawson Welsh, eds. *Rerouting the Postcolonial. New Directions for the New Millenium*. Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2010.

[94] This is not to say that a debate about questions of identity is unnecessary. Quite the contrary – see Hall, Stuart. "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay. London: Sage, 1996. 1-17. Michaels. "Against

Changes in Postcolonial Studies

These results of my analyses coincide with current demands in postcolonial studies[95] to link literary analyses more strongly to social, political and economic sciences again. For instance, Neil Lazarus, in his article "What Postcolonial Theory Doesn't Say", criticises postcolonial research for having detached colonialism and imperialism from capitalism[96]:

> Even on the best postcolonialist accounts, imperialism is typically situated in civilisational terms and refers to 'the West' rather than to capitalism. The social and temporal power identified through this means is a euphemism. The idea of 'the West', as it is deployed in postcolonial studies, inevitably issues in a dematerialised – and, for that matter, unhistorical – understanding of the forces powering the world system over the course of the past 500 years.[97]

Postcolonial studies seem to have throttled the political motor that once drove anti-colonial struggle by framing imperialism as a cultural agenda only, delinking it from specific, historical situations and their material circumstances. In the year 2000 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri went as far as saying that "postcolonialist theory is entirely insufficient for theorizing contemporary global power" as it needs to recognise "the novelty of the structures and logics of power that order the contemporary world. Empire

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Diversity." 34. Weedon, Chris. *Identity and Culture. Narratives of Difference and Belonging*. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2008.

[95] These demands partially follow the perceived questioning of postcolonial studies in the light of 9/11. For the connection between changing discourses after 9/11 and newer debates in postcolonial studies, see Poppe, Sandra. "Einleitung." *9/11 als kulturelle Zäsur. Repräsentationen des 11. September 2001 in kulturellen Diskursen, Literatur und visuellen Medien*. Ed. Poppe, Sandra, Thorsten Schüller and Sascha Seiler. Bielefeld: transcript, 2009. 9-17. Obviously, established scholars and their theories had been questioned before. See, for example, Childs, Peter, Weber Jean Jacques and Williams Patrick. *Post-Colonial Theory and Literatures. African, Caribbean and South Asian*. Ed. Ansgar Nünning. Trier: WVT, 2006. Lazarus, Neil, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Postcolonial Literary Studies*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2004. Arif Dirlik claimed that some of the concepts of postcolonial theory actually played into the hands of global capitalism. See Dirlik, Arif. *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1998. 176. And Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak warned, "in a certain way, we [postcolonial academics] are becoming complicitous in the perpetration of a 'new orientalism'." Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Outside in the Teaching Machine*. New York: Routledge, 1993. 56. For a more differentiated critique, e.g. of the concept of 'hybridity', see Kalra, Virinder S., Raminder Kaur and John Hutnyk. *Diaspora & Hybridity*. London: Sage, 2005.

[96] Neoliberalism can be understood as a late form of capitalism.

[97] Lazarus. "What Postcolonial Theory Doesn't Say." 3. For an in-depth assessment of postcolonial studies, see his publication Lazarus, Neil. *The Postcolonial Unconscious*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011.

is not a weak echo of modern imperialisms but a fundamentally new form of rule."[98] I do not entirely agree with Hardt and Negri regarding the disconnection of current forms of imperialism from past forms.[99] Nevertheless, the events of 9/11 and the following debates in postcolonial studies led to a recognition of new power constellations and to new ways of investigating them, a process in which *Empire* was certainly thought provoking.[100] I argue, postcolonial studies were and are important for the analysis of power dynamics that go beyond the nation state.[101] What needs to be revised, as in any other field of research, are the approaches of postcolonial studies. In her article on "New Directions in Postcolonial Studies", Melissa Kennedy observes a shift in literary constructions of (national) identity which postcolonial studies might not be able to tackle appropriately with their conventional set of concepts and methods. She identifies discourses of "globalisation" in contemporary postcolonial literatures. For discourses of globalisation, an interdisciplinary approach is necessary in order to understand the complex interconnections between economic, political, social aspects and the novels' identifications with subject positions. She calls for an update of postcolonial studies in order to keep track of the multiple changes in the arts and the media. Terrorism, financial crises, or developments in the EU, for instance, contribute to a continuous re-definition of identity. Moreover, they force us to question "the role and power of the state in and against neoliberal economics; national policies towards migrants and refugees; multiculturalism versus citizenship models of national belonging; the place of, and attitudes to Islam in Europe […]."[102] Reading the novels not only through the lens of canonical postcolonial studies' concepts but also against neoliberal discourses can, therefore, highlight the inherent entanglement of colonial and neo-imperial enterprises, refresh the theories and methods of established academic fields, and bring into dialogue current politics and literary visions of a society.

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[98] Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2000. 146.

[99] See also Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. 1998. London and New York: Routledge, 2005. 216.

[100] For current, politically invested criticism of postcolonial studies, see also Bernard, Anna, Ziad Elmarsafy and Stuart Murray, eds. *What Postcolonial Theory Doesn't Say*. New York and London: Routledge, 2016. Reuter, Julia and Paula-Irene Villa, eds. *Postkoloniale Soziologie. Empirische Befunde, Theoretische Anschlüsse, Politische Interventionen*. Bielefeld: transcript. 2010. Sethi, Rumina. *The Politics of Postcolonialism: Empire, Nation and Resistance*. London: Pluto, 2011.

[101] See also Gikandi, Simon. "Globalization and the Claims of Postcoloniality." *Postcolonialisms. An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism*. Ed. Gaurav Desai and Supriya Nair. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005. 608-634. Quotation 608.

[102] Kennedy. "New Directions in Postcolonial Studies." 4.

2.2 Neoliberalism as a Hegemonic Discourse

Broken Britain and the Individual's Responsibility for Inequality

In his seminal research project *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2013), the French economist Thomas Piketty and his colleagues analysed the wealth and income data of 27 industrialised nations (World Top Incomes Database) collected over a time span of about 200 years and came to the conclusion that capitalism creates inequality.[103] In Western Europe, a new form of capitalism, i.e. neoliberalism, has been "deepening inequalities of income, health and life chances within and between countries, on a scale not seen since before the second world war"[104], and particularly in the past three decades. And after the financial crisis in 2008, Great Britain was diagnosed by the then leader of the Conservative Party David Cameron to be "broken"[105]. He shifted the responsibility to the individual citizen instead of naming the structural conditions which led to the crash. This kind of subtle but deliberate unlinking is not new to political discourses in the UK.[106] What is striking, though, is that an obvious failure of the economic system, which led to disastrous effects worldwide, could be folded elegantly into each individual's own business. It does not always go without

[103] Piketty, Thomas. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014. (*Le capital au XXI siècle*, 2013, trans. Arthur Goldhammer). Obviously, Thomas Piketty's findings are more complex and deserve a more differentiated judgement. The scope of the quantitative analysis provided a valuable argumentative base for mathematical discussions about the advantages and disadvantages of a capitalist economy. The theoretical underpinnings and sociological considerations are rather poor, though, and do not come anywhere close to the work of Marx at whose title Piketty's publication nods. *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* serves as a statistical starting point for much-needed debates within economics. Furthermore, it sparked wide interest for questions of equality and inequality beyond the borders of economic thought.

[104] Hall, Stuart, Doreen Massey and Michael Rustin. "After Neoliberalism: Analysing the Present." *After Neoliberalism? The Kilburn Manifesto*. Ed. Hall, Stuart, Doreen Massey and Michael Rustin. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2013. 3-19. Quotation. 4.

[105] Cameron, David. Speech at the Conservative Conference 2009. *The Guardian*. 08.10.2009. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/oct/08/david-cameron-speech-in-full [01.04.107].

[106] For instance, it "was vividly illustrated in Britain by the transformation of the Labour Party in the 1990s, from the parliamentary party of the working class, to 'New Labour' (that is, 'Neoliberal Labour'), a party that embraced financial capitalism and focused its policy efforts on privatization of welfare and the deregulation of financial markets." Tyler, Imogen. "Classificatory Struggles: Class, Culture and Inequality in Neoliberal Times." *The Sociological Review*. 63 (2015): 493-511. Quotation 497. Other chapters of this study explore changing discourses in UK politics and media, with excursions to Thatcherism and New Labour as well as the Big Society, and provide a rough overview of political developments from the post-9/11 atmosphere in Britain to austerity measures and the Brexit referendum.

protest, only the overarching question persists: How can a form of capitalism which was proven dangerously illogical[107] survive[108], make subjects accountable for its flaws and keep deepening inequalities? Drawing on Joseph Vogl's analysis of economic theories, *Das Gespenst des Kapitals* (2010), I claim it is precisely its irrationality which enables financial capitalism to persist as a reality after the crash. Vogl tests the coherence of economic models, the contradictory interpretations of irregular events in finance business and carves out the unreadability of the markets.[109] In the economic theories which he investigates rational agents compete on decentralised markets undisturbed by chaotic coincidences. However, these completely decentralized markets do not exist and neither does the perfect distribution of economic resources. As an answer to this dilemma, Vogl introduces economic theorists who state that the abstraction might not be true.[110] They claim the abstraction could be true. It just needs to have the opportunity to become true although it might not be realistic. These economic theorists in Vogl's account trade a powerful imaginary which shapes everyday discourses and practices in all spaces of society. They immortalise a liberal *Oikodizee* because it is not defined by the present situation but by a projected reality.[111] "This forms the double structure of modern economic thought or […] its performative power: Its concept of the market is both model and veridiction and hence connected with the imperative to make the laws of the market real yourself."[112] The subjects are responsibilised to enact an idea which appears as truth and thus make it real – and true – according to theory. If the process of realisation fails, it can consequently be declared the mistake of the individual, a failure to perform truth. And the process of realisation could fail in a non-ideal world of chaotic

[107] Cf. Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.
[108] "Nothing substantial has been altered in the infrastructure of the global financial system from its state before the crisis. […] Neoliberalism is alive and well; those on the receiving end need to know why." Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to* Waste. 8, 28. See also Crouch, Colin. *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2011.
[109] Vogl, Joseph. *Das Gespenst des Kapitals*. Zürich: diaphenes, 2010. 21
[110] "Wahr" in the original text also means 'real' or 'just'. This adds an interesting moral notion to economic thought. In *Das Gespenst des Kapitals*, Vogl examines numerous connections between religions and economic theories. I do not discuss these connections here but the general idea should be kept in mind when looking at the normativisation of a neoliberal market ideology.
[111] Vogl. *Das Gespenst des Kapitals*. 54, 55.
[112] Ibid. 55. [Translation by J. F.] The original text says: "Das prägt die doppelte Struktur des modernen ökonomischen Wissens oder […] seine performative Kraft: Das Konzept des Markts ist darin Modell und Wahrheitsprogramm zugleich und also mit der Aufforderung verbunden, Marktgesetze selbst wahr zu machen."

coincidences, increasingly monopolised markets and irrational[113] agents, who are competing rather than competitive. In fact, the process of realisation unquestionably has to fail. And as a result, the individual is doomed to fail. Cameron, after all, proved to be a well-versed economic theorist when he framed British citizens personally for a 'broken Britain'. The formula his ideas might stem from can broadly be called 'neoliberalism'.

Definitions of Neoliberalism

In order to "name neoliberalism" (as Stuart Hall urged us to do[114]) without having to blend out the complexity of conceptualisations[115], its processual nature[116] and historical developments, the diversity of agents involved, or temporal and geographic characteristics[117], David Harvey and Philip Mirowski's delineations of neoliberalism serve as elementary definitions in my study[118]. Harvey states:

> Neoliberalism is […] *a theory of political economic practices* that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional

[113] "[H]umans are not rational but rationalizing." Fischer, Peter et al. "The Theory of Cognitive Dissonance: State of the Science and Directions for Future Research." Ed. Peter Meusburger, Michael Welker and Edgar Wunder. *Clashes of Knowledge. Orthodoxies and Heterodoxies in Science and Religion*. Heidelberg: Springer, 2008. 189-198. Quotation 195.

[114] "[N]aming neoliberalism is politically necessary, to give resistance content, focus and a cutting edge." Hall, Stuart. "The Neoliberal Revolution." *The Neoliberal Crisis*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford and Sally Davison. *Soundings* (2012): 8-26. Quotation 9.

[115] See, for instance, Holborow. *Language and Neoliberalism*. 7. Holborow also hints at the fluid boundaries between political activism and academic analysis in past investigations of neoliberalism. Sociologist, philosopher and activist Pierre Bourdieu, for example, termed neoliberalism at once an "immense political project" and a "strong discourse". Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Essence of Neoliberalism." *Le Monde diplomatique* December 1998: 3. ("L'essence du néolibéralisme." *Le Monde diplomatique* March 1998: 3, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro).

[116] In some cases, 'neoliberal', 'neoliberalisation' or 'neoliberalisms' are used in order to prevent a generalisation of specific discourses and practices 'neoliberalism' might imply when read as a universal and ahistorical clear-cut coherent concept.

[117] See, for instance, Gooptu, Nandini, ed. *Enterprise Culture in Neoliberal India. Studies in Youth, Class, Work and Media*. London and New York: Routledge, 2013.

[118] Harvey and Mirowski provide more detailed information about the history of neoliberalism and individual actors involved in their publications. Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste*. Mirowski, Philip. "Postface: Defining Neoliberalism." *The Road from Mont Pèlerin. The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*. Ed. Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009. 417-455.

> framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. [119] [Emphasis added by J. F.]
>
> Neoliberalism has […] become *hegemonic as a mode of discourse*. It has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world. [120] [Emphasis added by J. F.]

And he claims that "[n]eoliberalisation has meant, in short, the financialisation of everything."[121] I argue that this equation is probably too simple, and one might need to consider reformulating it: neoliberalisation has meant, in short, the *marketisation*, or rather the *economisation*[122], of everything and in any given situation.[123] More helpful are the first two classifications. They contain rather abstract definitions of neoliberalism: a) "a theory of political economic practices" foregrounds neoliberalism's programmatic nature with a focus both on the individual's assumed entrepreneurial spirit in need of liberation and an institutional, i.e. constructed, officially approved and maintained framework of private property rights, free markets, and free trade. This could be seen as the general intention of a neoliberal

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[119] Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 2. This brief yet well-rounded overview, written by an anthropologist and geographer, serves as a general reference point in many academic publications about neoliberalism.

[120] Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 3. Whenever I use the term 'ideology' in this research project, it is in Antonio Gramsci's sense of the word unless otherwise stated. Marnie Holborow encourages the preference of the term 'ideology' over 'discourse' as it "explicitly retains the link with the material and social world which an extensive understanding of discourse obscures." Holborow. *Language and Neoliberalism*. 11. For the purpose of this research project, I use both terms. Also, I believe with Daniel Wrana and Antje Langer that, ultimately, a separation between discursive and non-discursive practices is not productive. Wrana, Daniel and Antje Langer. "An den Rändern der Diskurse. Jenseits der Unterscheidung diskursiver und nicht-diskursiver Praktiken." *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*. 8.2. 2007. http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/253/558 [12.04.2015].

[121] Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 33.

[122] "Im neoliberalen Kontext wird [das Ökonomische] nicht auf der Ebene von Tauschprozessen festgemacht, sondern noch allgemeiner in den Konstellationen zweckrationaler Entscheidungen unter Bedingungen knapper Ressourcen." Reckwitz, Andreas. *Subjekt*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2008c. 131. And Nicholas Kiersey, too, comes to a similar conclusion: "Financialisation thus appears to foreclose any understanding of the source of capitalist value as occurring anywhere other than in the brain and body of the individual. However, […] the extension of techniques of capital accumulation into the non-economic sphere, via the recruitment of such nonlinear capacities as care and intuition, bespeaks the extent to which accumulation today is in fact heavily reliant on social production." Kiersey, Nicholas. "Everyday Neoliberalism and the Subjectivity of Crisis: Post-Political Control in an Era of Financial Turmoil." *Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies* 4 (2011): 23-44. Quotation 40.

[123] "Never forget: for neoliberals, the preordained answer to any problem, economic or otherwise, is more market." Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste.* 332.

ideology whereas b) "a hegemonic discourse" could be regarded the overall consequence – the common-sense, which provides an orientation for the way we live. Obviously, these two aspects feed into each other and can hardly be separated. For the analytical part further below, it is necessary to first differentiate a) the intended, maybe more contained model and b) the adaptation as well as reinterpretation or, ultimately, reinvention of this model in collective appropriations of it. In a second step I revisit the model and the adaptation as the two sides of one and the same discourse.

These two rather abstract definitions by Harvey should be informed by Mirowski's more concrete definitions which bridge the theory-common-sense divide. Mirowski gives neoliberalism a 'physicality': time, energy, actions and actors are needed to crystallise a coherent essence and to stabilise neoliberal power.

> [N]eoliberalism has not existed in the past as a settled or fixed state, but is better understood as a transnational movement requiring time and substantial effort in order to attain the modicum of coherence and power it has achieved today. It was not a conspiracy; rather, it was an intricately structured long-term philosophical and political project, or in our terminology, a "*thought collective*."[124] [Emphasis added by J. F.]

And he demystifies the stabilisation of its power by unravelling the forces which uphold the promotion of neoliberalism in governmental and non-governmental spheres through academia, journalism, think tanks, organisations, educational programmes, for instance.

> [N]eoliberal knowledge has been *mobilized* in a few more recent decades to shape public discourse and policies at national and international levels, and thus to establish what is widely perceived nowadays as "simple common sense" in the realm of politics.[125] [Emphasis added by J. F.]

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[124] Mirowski. "Postface: Defining Neoliberalism." 426. The introduction of this publication includes a historical social network analysis of the Mont Pèlerin Society, the neoliberal thought collective, by Dieter Plehwe in order to lay out the various backgrounds, interests and aims which informed a wide variety of neoliberal programmes. Philip Mirowski adds in his 2013 publication that although the diversity of the thought collective made neoliberalism "a pluralist entity (with certain limits) striving to distinguish itself from its three primary foes: laissez-faire classical liberalism, social-welfare liberalism, and socialism." it is not a "diffuse or ill-defined movement." Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste.* 48, 49.

[125] Mirowski. "Postface: Defining Neoliberalism." 427. Essential for the successful shaping of public discourses were the thought collective's numerous connections to academic departments, foundations for the education and promotion of neoliberal doctrines, think

Mirowski makes available an explanation for a potent ingredient in Harvey's definition – that of 'common sense'. Taken together, these selected statements about neoliberalism mark four cornerstones of my uses of the term 'neoliberalism' in this research project: neoliberalism exists as 1) a plan and 2) an effect at the same time – on a discursive level. This is mirrored by 3) the actors involved and 4) the concrete efforts to create und keep up neoliberalism – on a level of practice. Without a doubt, these four cornerstones are highly reductive to the complexity of neoliberalism. In want of a framework which allows *ein Zusammendenken*, a 'thinking together', of discourses and practices, of fictional and factual narratives, of ideology and subject, in short, a framework for the analysis of subjectification in the context of neoliberalism, these coordinates merely serve as structuring elements without a claim to fully cover the extent of the workings of neoliberalism.

Doctrines of Neoliberalism

In order to be able to sketch the formation of the neoliberal self, one also needs to first understand the field the 'thought collective' has prepared for it, i.e. the above-mentioned intentional aspects of neoliberalism, the philosophical and political programme behind the current economic and social situation stated. Philip Mirowski published a "temporary configuration of doctrines that the thought collective had arrived at by roughly the 1980s"[126], doctrines which, as such, were not directly implemented but which can serve as a starting point for an investigation of shared beliefs of what constitutes neoliberalism in the eyes of its most influential proponents. The list is problematic because it is incomplete and because the doctrines listed lack coherence. Nevertheless, thanks to Mirowski's well-researched groundwork, it provides a useful compendium of generally agreed-upon observations about neoliberal projects and individual statements of some of their most prominent representatives.

> 1. The starting point of neoliberalism is the admission, contrary to classical liberal doctrine, that their vision of the good society will triumph only if it becomes reconciled to the fact that the conditions for its existence must be **constructed** and will not come about "naturally" in the absence of concerted political effort and organization.[127]

tanks, journalism and staged local grass-roots movements, for example. See Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste.* 44-46.

[126] Mirowski. "Postface: Defining Neoliberalism." 435.

[127] Mirowski. "Postface: Defining Neoliberalism." 434-440. Quotation 435. Emphases in the original. All following points are cited from this publication unless otherwise stated.

Quoting Peck in a later publication, Mirowski adds:

> What is 'neo' about Neoliberalism [is] the remaking and redeployment of the state as the core agency that actively fabricates the subjectivities, social relations and collective representations suited to making the fiction of markets real and consequential.[128]

In contrast to classical liberalism, neoliberalism asks for an active protection of circumstances which allow for unrestricted market dynamics. This is a clear move away from Adam Smith's invisible-hand theory towards an acknowledgement of the market's 'inventedness' which demands subjects that work towards its realisation.

> 2. This assertion of a constructivist orientation raises the pressing issues of just what sort of ontological entity the neoliberal market is, or should be. […] Perhaps the dominant version at MPS emanated from Hayek himself, wherein "*the market" is posited to be an information processor more powerful than any human brain, but essentially patterned on brain/computation metaphors*. […] From this perspective, prices in an efficient market "contain all relevant information" and therefore cannot be predicted by mere mortals. In this version, the *market always surpasses the state's ability to process information*, and this constitutes the kernel of the argument for the necessary failure of socialism.

In his later, 2013 publication Mirowski questions the contradiction between the constructivist idea and the assumption of the market as a given, universal, ahistorical monolithic entity. And he deduces that it is solved by "increasingly erasing any distinctions among the state, society, and the market, and simultaneously insisting their political project is aimed at reformation of society by subordinating it to the market."[129] So, the kind of subjectivities which the neoliberal state needs to actively fabricate are always subordinate and, what is more, perceive their subordination and the constructedness of the market as an inevitable given:

> 3. Even though the market is not treated as existing independently of the social and cultural framework […], *market society must be treated as a "natural" and inexorable state of humankind*.

As can be seen, it is the state which has to take over this task of naturalising and therefore it is the state which has to be synchronised with neoliberal strategies in the first place.

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[128] Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste.* 54.
[129] Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste.* 55.

> 4. A primary ambition of the neoliberal project is to redefine the shape and functions of the state, not to destroy it.

The 'synchronisation' in turn transforms the state into a supermarket democracy in which citizens choose and buy rather than vote. Doreen Massey quite rightly observes, "[t]he assumption that markets are natural is so deeply rooted in the structure of thought […] that even the fact that it is an assumption seems to have been lost to view." To separate the idea of 'the market' from its initial purpose, i.e. introducing the notion of 'competition' to every sphere of life, and therefore to ignore the ideological implication of the market metaphor, undermines questioning and resistance. "This is real hegemony. […] It removes 'the economic' from the sphere of political and ideological contestation. […] It removes the economy from democratic control."[130] Naturalising the market allows for an electoral system which prevents its own deselection:

> 5. […] Neoliberals seek to transcend the intolerable contradiction [of democratic rejection of the neoliberal state] by treating politics as if it were a market and promoting an economic theory of democracy. In its most advanced manifestation, there is no separate content of the notion of citizenship other than as customer of state services.

This philosophy, which degrades the individual to the role of a customer, simultaneously demands of the individual to be an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself even:

> 6. Neoliberalism thoroughly revises what it means to be a human person. [Mirowski quotes Foucault here]: "In neoliberalism […] *Homo Economicus* is an entrepreneur, an entrepreneur of himself."[131]

This implies that the perfect subject of neoliberalism is the entrepreneurial self and it entails excessive individualisation:

> 7. Neoliberals extol freedom as trumping all other virtues; but the definition of freedom is recoded and heavily edited within their framework. […] In practice, Freedom is not the realization of any political, human, or cultural telos, but rather is the positing of autonomous self-governed individuals, all coming naturally equipped with a neoclassical version of rationality and motives of ineffable

[130] Massey, Doreen. "Ideology and Economics in the Present Moment." *The Neoliberal Crisis*. Ed. Jonathan Rutherford and Sally Davison. Soundings (2012): 97-106. Quotation 20.
[131] Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste.* 58.

> self-interest, striving to improve their lot in life by engaging in market exchange[132].

The subject is 'free' within the range of options provided by neoliberalism. The subject if free to choose but the choice is regulated – for instance, when it comes to the (not so) free flow of labour:

> 8. Neoliberals begin with a presumption that capital has a natural right to flow freely across national boundaries. (The free flow of labor enjoys no similar right).

Inequality, as already mentioned, is both a pillar and the motor for competition and endless striving to improve, or more correctly, adapt to ever-changing demands of the market:

> 9. Neoliberals see pronounced inequality of economic resources and political rights not as an unfortunate by-product of capitalism, but as a necessary functional characteristic of their ideal market system. Inequality is not only the natural state of market economies, but is actually one of its strongest motor forces for progress. Hence the rich are not parasites, but (conveniently) a boon to humankind. People should be encouraged to envy and emulate the rich.

The state is needed to maintain this market system. The state is an entity which subjects and naturalises in the service of and, as a democracy synchronised with a neoliberal setup, also in the role of the market. However, the state is not allowed to restrict economic activities in any way.

> 10. Corporations can do wrong, or at least they are not to be blamed if they do.

This goes hand in hand with what I laid out above. The neoliberal answer to any problem is more market:

> 11. The market (suitably reengineered and promoted) can always provide solutions to problems seemingly caused by the market in the first place.

So, the state's power over the market is capped. Its power over the individual that tries to circumnavigate the market, in contrast, expands.

> 12. The neoliberal program ends up vastly expanding incarceration and the carceral sphere in the name of getting the government off our backs. […] The function of criminal sanction […] is to prevent individuals from bypassing the efficient market. [133]

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[132] In accelerated versions of neoliberalism, the stress is put on 'competition' rather than 'exchange'.

[133] Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste.* 66.

This means, an anti-subject or foil-character to the entrepreneurial self is required as well as criminalised or pathologised for its refusal or incapability to identify with the proposed subject position of the entrepreneurial self. Criminalising a resistance to neoliberalism's proposed subject position of the entrepreneurial self can only work if neoliberalism is not only considered a political or economic project but also – and I would claim even more so – a system of values.

> 13. *The neoliberals have struggled from the outset to make their political/economic theories do dual service as a moral code*. [Mirowski quotes Hayek 1960, 68 who worshipped]: "[I]individual freedom, which it is most appropriate to regard as a moral principle of political action. Like all moral principles, it demands that it be accepted as a value in itself."

This brings us back to the very first doctrine: neoliberalism needs to construct subjectivities which naturally make the fiction of the market *wahr*, i.e. real, true and just. All of these doctrines entail a great array of paradoxes, in particular their key concepts such as 'individuality', 'autonomy', 'freedom', 'choice', 'agency', or 'competition'. Worse, these doctrines have had devastating consequences, for instance as neo-imperial endeavours.[134] And still, neoliberalism is widespread. So, who or what enables these doctrines? How does a neoliberal discourse become hegemonic[135] and the subjectification to it common-sense?

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[134] See Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Klein, Naomi. *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Canada: Knopf, 2007. Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste*. Mirowski understands the contradictions as a "doctrine of 'double truth'" (68) and dedicates a whole chapter of his monograph to "The Red Guide to the Neoliberal Playbook". The aim of this study is not a quantitative analysis of the 'impact' of neoliberal practices. (Harvey problematises the discrepancy between theories and pragmatics of neoliberalism: neoliberalism is, on the one hand, a utopia of reorganising capitalism internationally, and, on the other hand a political project to revitalise capital accumulation and the power of economic elites, in other words, a restoration of class hierarchies, as Duménil and Lévy have shown. Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 19) Rather, my aim is to unearth the complexities and inconsistencies of neoliberal agendas on a discursive level. I do this with a strong awareness of the nexus between their hegemony and the subject positions neoliberal agendas constitute.

[135] Please note that I follow Antonio Gramsci's idea that hegemony is never static or completed. Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from Prison Notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971. (Trans. and ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith).

2.3 Governmentality and the Entrepreneurial Self

Governmentality: The Lectures at the Collège de France (1978-1979)

In his lectures at the Collège de France (1978-1979) about the birth of biopolitics[136], Michel Foucault says that his aim is to show (as in earlier investigations, e.g. of madness and sexuality) "how a particular regime of truth, and therefore not an error, makes something that does not exist able to become something."[137] In his opinion "an apparatus (dispositive) of knowledge-power", which is the combination of real practices and the regime of truth, "effectively marks out in reality that which does not exist and legitimately submits it to the division between true and false."[138] Very early on Foucault senses how important a discussion of neoliberalism is for the comprehension of contemporary processes of subject formation. He not only lays open the continuities between liberalism and neoliberalism but also the various turns and shifts in the positioning of 'the market' in relation to sovereignty and social life from the Middle Ages onwards. From the question whether, once, one governed in line with "moral, natural, or divine laws" on to the question in the 16th and 17th century, with the raison d'État, if one governed with "sufficient intensity, depth, and attention to detail so as to bring the state […] to a maximum strength" to the contemporary problem of not knowing whether one governs "too much or too little" [139], Foucault narrates the history of the neoliberal subject around the epicentre of economic activity – the market. By doing so, he convincingly shows how the market eventually became "a site of veridiction"[140], how the market became the central perspective from which (with liberalism) at one point even the utility value of the government became calculable. He traces how the ordoliberals adjusted the traditional liberal doctrines (with neoliberalism) in order to not only provide the market with enough free space in a state but rather make the market the space in which the state exists, to model the "overall exercise of political power […] on the

[136] The publication of the lectures as a book in 2004, and the English translation in 2008, sparked a new interest in Foucault's philosophy and a reassessment of his previous publications. "[The 21st century Foucault] is poised to address a range of trends characteristic of our contemporary predicament: the intensifying commodification of personal and social life, […] the 'responsibilization' of individual economic conduct and the more general embrace of market rationalities as the penultimate model for all social forms." Binkley, Sam. "Introduction." *A Foucault for the 21st Century: Governmentality, Biopolitics and Discipline in the New Millennium*. Ed. Binkley, Sam, and Jorge Capetillo. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. xi-xix. Quotation xi.
[137] Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 19.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Ibid.
[140] Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 33.

principles of a market economy".[141] So-called shifts were, for instance, a reinterpretation of the market not as site of exchange but of competition[142]. And with competition, which "is absolutely not a given nature"[143], as the prime characteristic of the market, the "essence of the market"[144], a reconsideration of the principle of laissez-fare. Finally, also a substitution of laissez-faire by an active, vigilant and intervening governmentality, in order to safeguard the "formal game between inequalities"[145]. And the last step to "govern for the market, rather than because of the market."[146] Foucault interweaves this narration with a genealogy of the *homo economicus* until he arrives at the entrepreneurial subject. He keeps the two threads together by introducing the concept of 'governmentality', "the way in which one conducts the conduct of men"[147]. It is a lens through which Foucault analyses the relations of power. From his point of view "[s]omething called Power, with or without a capital letter, which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused form, does not exist."[148] So, Foucault does not apply a fixed theory of power. Instead he meticulously examines the relations constituting what is perceived as power. And in particular the relations between human beings and society, with civil society as an interesting focal point for an analysis of liberalism and neoliberalism's ideas of 'the subject' and 'sovereignty'.

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[141] Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 131. Foucault contextualises the turns historically: German liberalism (1948-62) and American liberalism's (Chicago School) demand for minimum governments were also a reaction to their "excessive governments" of their own past (e.g. Nazism) or in other states (e.g. Soviet socialism). Ironically, with neoliberalism, we have come back to 'excessive governments', in my opinion. Only, these 'excessive governments' serve neoliberal projects.

[142] Please note that this reinterpretation of the market as site of competition had started in the 18th century already. Eisenberg, Christiane. "Auktionen und die Erfahrung der Konkurrenz als Marktmechanismus – Betrachtungen zur britischen Wirtschafts- und Kulturgeschichte des 18. Jahrhunderts." *Konkurrenz in der Geschichte. Praktiken – Werte – Institutionalisierungen*. Ed. Ralph Jessen. Frankfurt und New York: Campus Verlag, 2014. 232. Interestingly enough, the meaning of "competition" had changed profoundly since the middle ages and is, in my opinion, paradigmatic for the changing perception and self-definition of subjects. Eisenberg (ibid.) elucidates some of the older translations: until the 17th century, the Latin term *competere* was broadly understood as "looking for something together", "to come together for an event", "to pursuit something together". [Translations by J.F.] So semantically, 'togetherness' was foregrounded in the past meaning of 'competition'.

[143] Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 120.

[144] Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 121.

[145] Ibid.

[146] Ibid.

[147] Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 186.

[148] Foucault, Michel. "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry* 8.4 (1982): 777-795. Quotation 788.

For the purpose of coherence, I stay here with Foucault's definition of 'civil society': civil society is "the correlate of a technology of government the rational measure of which must be juridically pegged to an economy understood as process of production and exchange." [149] In this role, it is a self-limiting medium to lawfully govern economic subjects that inhabit a space of sovereignty. A government which respects the right as well as the economy, "will be a government that manages civil society, the nation, society, the social." Civil society is the space in which the *homo economicus* can be managed. Civil society is a transactional reality (*réalités de transaction*) created through the dynamics between power and that which eludes it, between governers and subjects. It serves as an 'economic bond'. The economic bond is a "principle of dissociation with regard to the active bonds of compassion, benevolence, love for one's fellows, and sense of community" and furthers the isolation of the individuals. (The subchapter "Agency" below discusses the importance of relational autonomy and the question of excessive individualisation.) In civil society the art of governing economically and the art of governing juridically are conflated. And as governmentality in a neoliberal situation means disciplining the subjects through themselves[150] by making them entrepreneurs of themselves it is left to (civil) society to define through their real, i.e. economic practices, what is true, if we stay in Foucault's line of argument. This suggests that only civil society, as an apparatus of knowledge-power, could "truly" free the individual from his narrow definition as an entrepreneurial subject. This would require a denaturalisation of the life-market nexus. Or, as Foucault stated: "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political 'double bind,' which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures."[151] So, again, who or what enables the neoliberal thought collective's discourses, which Mirowski dares to freeze into doctrines? How does a neoliberal discourse become hegemonic and the subjectification to it common-sense? I propose it is the neoliberal subject and civil society as outlined above. It is the entrepreneurial subject which is commonly considered the 'natural subject' and which, in turn, considers subjectification to a neoliberal

[149] Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 296.
[150] Might this, at one point, make 'institutions' obsolete? Hardt and Negri, in their discussion of Foucault still mark the institution as a kind of switch between subject and sovereignty while the authors are aware that "the exercise of discipline is absolutely immanent to the subjectivities" in Foucault's logic. However, their text predates the publication of *The Birth of Biopolitics* and might need to be revised. Hardt and Negri. *Empire*. 329.
[151] Foucault. "The Subject and Power." 785.

government, and even governmentality, common-sense.[152] (I derive this from Foucault's claim that "*homo economicus* and civil society belong to the same ensemble of the technology of liberal governmentality"[153] by translating it into a neoliberal situation, i.e. entrepreneurial subject and civil society belong to the same ensemble of the technology of neoliberal governmentality.) The entrepreneurial subject is a subject that is self-disciplining, i.e. involved in the maintenance of the regime of truth. The real practices as well as the regime of truth[154] perpetuate the classification of neoliberalism as truth. Through this truth they perpetuate a subject formation which regards the neoliberal doctrines as true. Therefore, I claim, with the conceptual toolbox of Foucault, that a particular regime of truth makes neoliberalism able to become real by making human beings become entrepreneurial subjects. And a particular regime of truth makes neoliberalism able to become real by making human beings *want* to turn themselves into entrepreneurial subjects. The expectations by society intersect with the desire of the individual. One wants to be entrepreneurial – and one should be.[155]

The Entrepreneurial Self

> [The entrepreneurial subject] is not just an employee or student, but also simultaneously a product to be sold, a walking advertisement, a manager of her résumé, a biographer of her rationales, and an

[152] This self-referential cycle seems hermetically sealed – a problem to which I will later return. Jason Read's short discussion about neoliberalism as "capitalism without capitalism" which brings into dialogue Marx and Foucault makes us aware of challenges which neoliberalism poses to paradigmatic works of economists and philosophers. Read, Jason. "A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus: Neoliberalism and the Production of Subjectivity." Ed. Binkley, Sam, and Jorge Capetillo. *A Foucault for the 21st Century: Governmentality, Biopolitics and Discipline in the New Millennium*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. 2-15.

[153] Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 296.

[154] I am tempted to go as far as saying that not only neoliberalism but also civil society could be defined as a dispositif, i.e. the combination of 'real practices' and the 'regime of truth'. Is a distinction here helpful at all after Foucault elaborated that the intricate relationship between subject and civil society, defined as a transactional reality, is reciprocal? Byung-Chul Han und Alexandra Rau, who take the concept of *homo economicus* into their research about subjectivities of the 21st century, put neoliberalism and civil society on the same level when it comes to the question of the dispositif. Han, Byung-Chul. *Psychopolitik. Neoliberalismus und die neuen Machttechniken*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2014. Rau, Alexandra. *Psychopolitik: Macht, Subjekt und Arbeit in der neoliberalen Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt und New York: Campus, 2010.

[155] This is a parallelism inspired by Andreas Reckwitz's "Man will kreativ sein – und man soll es sein." which refers to the contemporary 'creatives' who are, and have to be, entrepreneurs par excellence. Reckwitz, Andreas. *Die Erfindung der Kreativität. Zum Prozess gesellschaftlicher Ästhetisierung*. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014.

> entrepreneur of her possibilities. […] She is all at once the business, the raw material, the product, the clientele and the customer of her own life. She is a jumble of assets to be invested, nurtured, managed, and developed; but equally an offsetting inventory of liabilities to be pruned, outsourced, shorted, hedged against and minimized.[156]

The entrepreneurial subjects are an offspring of the *homo economicus* and as such a *Realfiktion*[157], real fiction. They are human beings who turn *themselves* into a subject. They are the shiny icon of every neoliberal theorist believing in those defective doctrines. They reproduce neoliberalism by conforming to "the market principles of discipline, efficiency, and competitiveness"[158]. And they are proud of it. They are not like the old *homo economicus*, partners of exchange. No, they are "entrepreneur[s] of [themselves], being for [themselves their] own capital, being for [themselves their] own producer, being for [themselves] the source of [their] earnings."[159] They are human capital. And they trade it. In fact, they economise all aspects of their life and index all their decisions according to the highest rationality under the condition of scarce resources. No matter which identity they take on, which role they perform, all their investments – even in the form of competences, skills, social contacts – are meant to generate a rise in value or improve their status, their material wealth or their relationships. The entrepreneurial selves are known for their "rational self-optimisation, emotional-affective abilities like enthusiasm or resilience, a know-how for developing [their] own brand, [their] good nose for market opportunities, [their] readiness to assume a risk."[160] All their behaviour is geared to offer minimum means for maximum return. Best of all, the entrepreneurial subjects are "eminently governable", says Foucault with reference to Gary Becker who marks the *homo economicus* as a person who "accepts reality or who responds systematically to modifications in the variables of the environment [and] appears precisely as someone manageable, someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced into the environment." [161] In addition, the entrepreneurial

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[156] Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste.* 108.
[157] I use this term with reference to Michael Hutter and Gunther Teubner's definition of the 'homo economicus' and the 'homo juridicus' as both a fiction *and* a reality. Hutter, Michael and Gunther Teubner. "Der Gesellschaft fette Beute. Homo juridicus und homo oeconomicus als kommunikationserhaltende Fiktionen." Ed. Peter Fuchs and Andreas Göbel. *Der Mensch – das Medium der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994. 110-145.
[158] Ong. *Neoliberalism as Exception*. 4.
[159] Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 225.
[160] Reckwitz. *Subjekt*. 132. [Translation by J. F.]
[161] Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 270.

self stays competitive[162] at the same time. Traiano Boccalini's political principle for the maintenance of power relations, *divide et impera* (divide and rule), is therefore perfectly exercised by the entrepreneurial subjects themselves.

Foucault tells us there is neither a single, dominant theory nor a grand history of the notion of *homo economicus*, not to mention the entrepreneurial subject.[163] Rather, the idea of the entrepreneurial subject serves as an analytical tool. Marnie Holborow[164] thinks it is time to include the 'entrepreneur' in the list of terms Raymond Williams considered ideological keywords.[165] She wants to make it, with the help of Gramsci's conceptualisation of ideology as embedded in metaphors, a kind of neoliberal *leitmotif* whose power lies in the "apparent non-ideological character and [its] matter-of-fact, common-sense status as mere pointe[r] to adaptation and advancement in market society."[166] Marnie Holborow provides a varied etymology of the term 'entrepreneur' and explains how it was reinvented by neoliberalism. From the definition of the entrepreneur in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary – "a person who starts a business and is willing to risk loss in order to make money" – Holborow travels along contemporary discourses to investigate the multiple ways in which the term is negotiated. In the commercialisation and privatisation of social relations in everyday life she observes how "professionalism, skill, care, judgement and the concept of a public good or welfare" turn into goods and all social activities become "an opportunity to practice entrepreneurship."[167] This leads to an increased marketisation of time and outsourcing of the self, to excessive individualism. In the form of social enterprise which is supposed to tackle discrimination, marginalisation, poverty or unemployment, entrepreneurialism is instrumentalised in glossing over structural problems and social

[162] "Regieren heißt, den Wettbewerb, sich selbst regieren heißt, die eigene Wettbewerbsfähigkeit fördern." Bröckling, Ulrich. *Das unternehmerische Selbst. Soziologie einer Subjektivierungsform*. 5. ed. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2013. 107.
[163] Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 271.
[164] Holborow. *Language and Neoliberalism*. 71.
[165] The keywords Williams had chosen, carried for him "the explicit but as often implicit connections which people were making [and ways] of seeing many of our central experience." Williams, Raymond. *Keywords. A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. 15.
[166] Holborow. *Language and Neoliberalism*. 71, 72. Jim McGuigan lists "the successful entrepreneur, sovereign consumer and hard-working taxpayer [as the] key players in the capitalist world today." McGuigan, Jim. "The Neoliberal Self." *Culture Unbound* 6 (2014): 223-240. Quotation 225. From a Foucauldian perspective, however, these so-called key players are merely aspects of one and the same subject, that of the *homo economicus*. In the analysis of my novels I therefore regard the 'consumer' as an entrepreneurial subject as well.
[167] Holborow. *Language and Neoliberalism*. 73.

inequalities.[168] In fact, the neoliberal subjects always take responsibility for 'failing'. They are involved in a never-ending process of optimisation and self-optimisation. Their modus is 'becoming', not 'being'.[169] These features of the entrepreneurial subject do not represent a model for the analysis of the behaviour of neoliberal selves and they are not meant to be a model into which the primary source, i.e. the literary texts *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani*, *Greetings from Bury Park*[170], are read but rather an echo chamber for testing the quality of subject formations in the novels.

[168] Holborow. *Language and Neoliberalism*. 94
[169] Bröckling, Ulrich. "Enthusiasten, Ironiker, Melancholiker. Vom Umgang mit der unternehmerischen Anrufung." *Mittelweg* 36.4 (2008): 80-86.
[170] Ali. *Brick Lane*. Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. Malkani. *Londonstani*. Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*.

3 Novels of Transformation and Categories of Analysis

3.1 Literary Fiction as a Discourse of Subjectification

The Discursive Constitution of the Subject

In order to debate the discursive nature of the self, two elementary terms need to be clarified: 'subject' and 'discourse'. Michel Foucault explains 'subject' as follows: "subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to."[171] Foucault's choice of words mark his interest in the *making* of the subject, not in the subject as a universal, static concept. "Subject" for him makes sense as an adjective, 'to be subject to', or a verb 'to subjugate'. He is interested in the process through which individuals become subjects. Foucault defines 'discourse' as "the group of statements that belong to a single system of formation"[172]. This group of statements is specific to a time and a place, i.e. historically embedded. This group of statements form the possibilities of meaning-making processes. They are systems of statements or "socially organised knowledge" which in turn help to constitute a society.[173]

Daniel Wrana and Antje Langer show that Foucault conceptionalises 'discourse' at the margin between the linguistic and the non-linguistic. So, 'discourse' is a practice to produce meaning and, ultimately, 'truth' and, consequently, a relation between the linguistic [Sprachliche] and non-linguistic [Nicht-Sprachliche], between institutions and subjects and the spoken [das Gesprochene]. In fact, Foucault first differentiates between the discursive and the non-discursive practices in order to then put this differentiation aside: his object of investigation is the zone where discursive and non-discursive practices overlap.[174] One could say the artificial differentiation serves as a stepping stone in his explanations of how 'the spoken' interlaces with 'society'.

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[171] Foucault. "The Subject and Power." 781.

[172] Foucault, Michel. *Archaeology of Knowledge*. New York: Routledge, 2002. (*L'Archéologie du savoir*, 1969, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith). 121.

[173] See Villa, Paula-Irene. "Subjekte und ihre Körper. Kultursoziologische Überlegungen." Ed. Graf, Julia, Kristin Ideler and Sabine Klinger. *Geschlecht zwischen Struktur und Subjekt. Theorie, Praxis, Perspektiven*. Opladen, Berlin, Toronto: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2013. 59-78. Quotation 60, 61. [Translation by J. F.]. Paula-Irene Villa, with reference to Andreas Reckwitz (see Reckwitz 2008a and 2008b), also problematises the distinction between discourse and practice in her article. Andreas Reckwitz states it is not reasonable to assume a dualism between non-discursive practices and discourses. See Reckwitz. *Subjekt*. 138.

[174] See Wrana und Langer. "An den Rändern der Diskurse."

Based on these definitions, the notion of the 'subject' becomes less of a starting point or model for an examination of the individual's relation to a system but rather the result of discourses. Here, I follow Ulrich Bröckling's attempt to sketch contemporary subjectification processes as effects, not of a single ideology or centre of power but of multiple micro techniques and ways of thinking which "come to consolidate into macrostructures and wider discourses".[175] In the context of this study, I premise with Bröckling that 'society' and 'the self' are not the points of origin. Instead, they are the outcome.[176] In other words, I regard 'the subject' as an analytical strategy or "sensitising instrument".[177] Assuming this kind of discursive constitution of the subject allows me to consider

a) (fictional) *narratives* as potential contributions to dynamics of subjugation in the context of neoliberalism,

b) subject formation as a continuous *process* and

c) subjectification as an attempt to create *coherence* from contradictions which emerge from neoliberal discourses.

In her explanation of Foucault's thoughts about neoliberal subjectification, Marnie Holborow, too, highlights the role of *narrative*. She shows how it enables a regime of truth and thus the self-regulation which Foucault considers *the* ultimate controlling mechanism.[178] The *processual* nature of being subjugated and becoming a subject was already stressed by Judith Butler.[179] And, as mentioned above, it was Antonio Gramsci who very early conceptualises ideology as embedded in metaphors.[180] Metaphors – so I would claim – are possibilities of combining seemingly non-related semantic fields and help to create *coherence*.

Fictional Narratives

The novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park*, and what is defined as literature in general, are particular kinds of discourses: "Like ideology, literary texts frequently involve cognitive propositions."[181] Terry Eagleton assigns to literary fiction a specific type of

[175] Bröckling. *The Entrepreneurial Self.* 5.
[176] Ibid.
[177] Reckwitz. *Subjekt*. 11. [Translation by J. F.]
[178] Holborow. *Language and Neoliberalism*. 86.
[179] Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power. Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
[180] Gramsci. *Selections from Prison Notebooks*. More about the function of metaphors in the following chapters.
[181] Eagleton. "Ideology, Fiction, Narrative." 65.

encoding which can be compared to ideology in that it does not provide a one-to-one reference to what might be considered 'the real' but a script for the understanding of and relation to 'the real', an encoding which evades verification or falsification.[182] Or, in Monika Fludernik's words: "Alternative worlds in fiction, just like the supposedly real world of conversational storytelling, depend for their readability on natural, i.e. cognitive, parameters. The natural in my own theoretical setup is therefore both a construction […] and a pre-given frame of human cognization."[183] Both Eagleton and Fludernik ascribe a key role to literary fiction in the naturalisation and normativisation of discourses. They acknowledge fictional literature's role in the formation, confirmation and reformation of coordinates which define what is considered a 'given'. Hence, fictional literature can contribute to dominant discourses. In fact, literary narratives deserve particular attention. Eagleton argues that "[i]deology is that process of naturalization whereby the dominant discourse becomes the only one"[184] and that the narrative is "the most potent of all ideological forms"[185]. The cognitive propositions characteristic of ideology *and* of literary narratives drive dominant discourses. "We cannot think, act, or desire except in narrative; it is by narrative that the subject constructs that 'sutured' chain of signifiers which grants its true condition of division sufficient 'imaginary' coherence to enable it to act."[186] Narratives organise and create meaning of fragments of experience or 'reality' (epistemological approach) and create human experience (ontological approach). For Eagleton, narratives can be defined as weavings of signifiers which provide "'imaginary' coherence", a perspective which fuses, or even supersedes the two approaches.[187]

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[182] Ibid.

[183] Fludernik, Monika. *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*. London: Routledge, 1996. 10. Fludernik also states that the question of verification is secondary in the context of literary fiction; more likely, the context of production and reception are key for the categorisation of a narrative as fictional or factual. See Fludernik, Monika, Nicole Falkenhayner and Julia Steiner, eds. *Faktuales und fiktionales Erzählen. Interdisziplinäre Perspektiven*. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2015. So, what distinguishes fictional and factual narratives is the role a narrative is being assigned rather than a particular 'inherent' quality.

[184] Eagleton, Terry. 1991. *Ideology. An Introduction*. London: Verso, 2007. 133.

[185] Eagleton, Terry. "Ideology, Fiction, Narrative." 71. This goes hand in hand with Alexandra Strohmaier's claim that the practice of narrating has the function not only to explain but also to create worlds. Strohmaier, Alexandra ed. *Kultur – Wissen – Narration. Perspektiven transdisziplinärer Erzählforschung für die Kulturwissenschaften*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2013. 11.

[186] Eagleton, Terry. "Ideology, Fiction, Narrative." 78.

[187] For more detailed information about the main philosophical approaches to the narrative, see Meretoja, Hanna. "Narrative and Human Existence: Ontology, Epistemology, and Ethics." *New Literary History* 45.1 (2014): 89-109.

Now, what about the *literary* narrative? For Folkert Degenring fiction presents a non-pragmatic space for reflection, experimentation and exploration, for a transgression of limits and a deconstruction of hierarchies, a neutral space for new possibilities.[188] This is an idealised and limited understanding of fiction – one which Degenring contradicts with his own text.[189] I argue that these features are not specific to literary fiction only. And not all literary fiction is defined by these features. *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park* do negotiate power relations, for example, in their very own ways. However, this does not mean that the novels are independent from hegemonic discourses. Their fictional worlds shape and are shaped by co(n)texts. For Stefan Glomb, literary fiction is woven into the "cultural apriori" within which 'reality' takes on specific forms.[190] He ascribes to literature a deeply interdiscursive quality, a characteristic which I consider in the analysis of the novels. Birgit Neumann hints at the 'configurations of knowledge' through literary fiction and how they relate to dominant knowledge systems of cultures.[191] The list of scholars who provide definitions of fiction could go on.[192] Important for the following chapters of this study is the premise that literature and co(n)texts permanently recode[193] each other.

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[188] See Degenring, Folkert. *Identität zwischen Dekonstruktion und (Re-) Konstruktion im zeitgenössischen britischen Roman*. Tübingen: Narr Francke Attempto, 2008. 13-16.

[189] The same holds true for Michael Hofmann's claim that literature can contribute to a transgression of stereotypes and thus fulfil a "civilising function" [sic]. Hofmann, Michael. *Interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft*. Paderborn: Fink, 2006. 33. In my perspective, the two scholars generalise the potential of literary fiction and simultaneously restrict its value to functions which could diametrically oppose a 'complexity' of literary fiction they celebrate.

[190] Glomb, Stefan. "Jenseits von Einheit und Vielheit, Autonomie und Heteronomie – Die fiktionale Erkundung ‚dritter Wege' der Repräsentation und Reflexion von Modernisierungsprozessen." Ed. Glomb, Stefan and Stefan Horlacher. *Beyond Extremes. Repräsentation und Reflexion von Modernisierungsprozessen im zeitgenössischen britischen Roman*. Tübingen: Narr, 2004. 9-52. Quotation 49. [Translation by J. F.]

[191] Neumann, Birgit. "Kulturelles Wissen und Literatur." Ed. Gymnich, Marion, Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning. *Kulturelles Wissen und Intertextualität. Theoriekonzeptionen und Fallstudien zur Kontextualisierung von Literatur*. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2006. 29-51. Quotation 48.

[192] For a detailed discussion about the making of fictional worlds in answer to Nelson Goodman's oeuvre, *Ways of Worldmaking* (1978), for instance, see Neumann, Birgit, Ansgar Nünning and Vera Nünning. *Cultural Ways of Worldmaking: Media and Narratives*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2010.

[193] I draw the term "recode" in this case from van Uffelen, Herbert, Wynfrid Kriegleder, Ewald Mengel and Alois Woldan, eds. *Literatur im Kontext: ein gegenseitiges Entbergen*. Wien: Praesens Verlag, 2010. 7. This ties in with Stuart Hall's ideas about 'reality' and 'language' (see below) in Hall, Stuart. "Encoding, Decoding." *Culture, Media, Language*.

The Neoliberal Novel

Novels feed into and challenge ideology.[194] Emily Johansen and Alissa G. Karl take a similar position: the novel is a "historically specific means of interrogating and understanding neoliberalism in its various manifestations."[195] In their opinion, the novel plays a vital role in the history of capitalism and presents valid material for the exploration of current economic and political paradigms. The novel both complicates and confirms a value system which neoliberalism appropriates as being 'normal', a "'common sense' ethic of competition and individualism, and […] a commonplace historical association of market capitalism with representative democracy and other widely acknowledged public 'goods'."[196] The novel is thus part of a neoliberal programme in the widest sense, or as established above, one of the many discourses which potentially contribute to the hegemony of neoliberal projects. All scholars who wrote for the special issue of *Textual Practice: Neoliberalism and the Novel* (2015) acknowledge formal as well as thematic changes in the recent development of the novel. These changes relate to the formation of capitalism as neoliberalism and generate "new relations between subject and genre, materiality and form."[197] One could assume that this allows the novel to become a moment of resistance. Assessing the contributions to the special issue, however, a Foucauldian stance on neoliberalism as being all pervasive is confirmed. "It is potentially naïve […] to assume that the novel somehow avoids recapitulating the ideologies in which it is necessarily enmeshed," Johansen and Karl suggest; they propose to conceptualise the 'neoliberal novel'[198] as a bundle of textual discourses which *cannot* be divided into binary categories such as "resistance or capitulation, or by models of national or diasporic literature."[199]

For some, the *form* of the novel might imply a resistance to neoliberalisms, i.e. by questioning the "collapse of future into present".[200] I claim this does not automatically suggest a reading pro or contra neoliberalism. Matthias Nilges, for example, sees "neoliberalism as crucially operating upon a varied

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Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972–1979. Ed. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. London: Routledge. 1980: 128-138. 131, 132.

[194] Herman, Luc and Bart Vervaeck. "Ideology and Narrative Fiction." *The Living Handbook of Narratology*. 2013. http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/ideology-and-narrative-fiction [22.09.2016].

[195] Johansen and Karl. "Introduction: Reading and Writing the Economic Present." 202.

[196] Ibid.

[197] Ibid.

[198] According to Alissa G. Karl the 'neoliberal novel' refers to "all novels written within recent economic times." Karl, Alissa G. "The Zero Hour of the Neoliberal Novel." *Textual Practice: Neoliberalism and the Novel* 29.2 (2015): 335-355. Quotation 338.

[199] Johansen and Karl. "Introduction: Reading and Writing the Economic Present." 205.

[200] Karl. "The Zero Hour of the Neoliberal Novel." 338.

logical and structural field of immediacy."[201] For him, the novel formally is per se unable to conflate past, present and future. For that reason, "the novel takes on a crucial function in our ability to move beyond the limit of neoliberal immediacy."[202] Nilges ascribes to the form of the novel the capacity to go against and/or beyond traits of neoliberalism. In my opinion, we have to be more careful when linking critical potential to literary form. Unlike Hayden White[203] but like Fludernik, I argue that we have to disentangle form and content.[204] This does not mean that form and content do not speak to each other. However, shifting the sole responsibility for the message of a literary text to the formal level limits the potential of what is said on other levels – even in a traditional genre such as the novel of formation. Instead, I suggest asking: how is a literary form employed? To which end? In which ways does it correspond to other forms of narrating, i.e. of sense-making processes? How does it assist a portrayal of subjectification or of relations between individuals and societies?

Narrating the Self, Narrating Neoliberalism

Hanna Meretoja, too, stresses the role literary form plays, the function it takes on in critically reflecting on literary and non-literary discourses in general:

> [N]arrative form in itself does not make narratives either ethical or unethical. What is ethically relevant, instead, is precisely the awareness of the role narratives play in organizing our experiences, because such awareness enables critical reflection on how cultural narratives steer our self-understanding and regulate our being in the world with others.[205]

She is interested in the awareness of the function of narratives, in the sensitivity they can create. This awareness is needed for a critical evaluation of other narratives and how they contribute to *Realfiktionen*. And to this, Mathias Nilges would surely agree. As mentioned above, he stresses the formal possibility of the novel to speak back to neoliberalism. Still, he makes clear that connections between the novel and neoliberalism cannot be reduced to merely two categories: autonomy or subsumption.[206] In his opinion, there are novels which just reproduce neoliberal narratives. "[T]hese are

[201] Nilges, Mathias. "Neoliberalism and the Time of the Novel." *Textual Practice: Neoliberalism and the Novel* 29.2 (2015): 357-377. Quotation 364.
[202] Nilges. "Neoliberalism and the Time of the Novel." 376.
[203] White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987.
[204] Fludernik. *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*. 367.
[205] Meretoja. "Narrative and Human Existence." 104.
[206] Nilges. "Neoliberalism and the Time of the Novel." 360.

novels that are not only bad at dealing with neoliberalism, but, more importantly, […] they are novels which are bad at being novels."[207] To Nilges, they stay superficial in the sense that they simply touch upon the symptoms of neoliberalism instead of engaging with its inherent discrepancies.[208] So, the way in which a novel narrates its relationship to neoliberalism – and here I mean on both levels, form and content – is key to an investigation of the neoliberal novel. In which ways does it correspond to other forms of narrating, i.e. of sense-making processes? How does it assist a portrayal of subjectification or of relations between individuals and societies?

For this study, I assess in particular how a set of novels of transformation[209] narrate the self, the workings on the self within a neoliberal context. I hereby connect research about a Western ideal of the teleological development of a coherent self in normative narratives, such as the traditional *Bildungsroman*, an ideal which has become hegemonic, with research about hegemonic narratives of neoliberalism. As explained above, I do not assume that a particular form of narrating the self could challenge hegemonic discourses.[210] I see the chosen novels roughly as narratives of the self which "are part of a larger neoliberal life-writing trend, offering readers ways of working on the self."[211] Obviously, Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane* and Sarfraz Manzoor's *Greetings from Bury Park* come closer to the 'emancipatory' story of individualisation than Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* or Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's *Tourism*. Nevertheless, all the four debut novels deal with the transformation of their protagonists and suggest a personal development within the framework of a fictional British society. In this constellation, a character's development under neoliberal conditions, Emily Johansen identifies a highly relevant entry point for a discussion of neoliberalism:

> The developmental forms and presumptions that circulate under neoliberalism – which transform those from pre-existing cultural moments – become the tactic through which it becomes possible to

[207] Nilges. "Neoliberalism and the Time of the Novel." 357.
[208] Nilges. "Neoliberalism and the Time of the Novel." 372.
[209] The following subchapter deals with the 'novel of transformation', its characteristics and possible methods of analysing it in more detail.
[210] I agree with Elana Michelson's point of view that "the world often does not allow for […] a coherent experience of self," that the construct of a stable social identity rests on a "historically restricted form of meritocratic citizenship," i.e. a specifically Western idea of the self, and that it was successfully perpetuated by those who profited from it. I do not agree with her that magical realism posits a challenge to narrative conventions of the *Bildungsroman* which she quite simply defines as "the product of emerging capitalist individualism in Europe". Michelson, Elana. "If the Self Is a Text, What Genre Is It? Structure and Ideology in Narratives of Adult Learning." *Adult Education Quarterly* 63 (2013): 199-214. Quotation 210.
[211] Karlsson. "'This is a Book about Choices.'" 187.

> see neoliberalism for what it is. By asking readers to attend to the narratives that structure both the self and neoliberalism – and the oscillating relationship that necessarily emerges between the two – these texts consider how neoliberalism perpetuates itself and becomes understood as the only available option.[212]

Investigating how the self and how neoliberalism are narrated in the novels a) sheds light on a development of the self in relation to neoliberalism and therefore sketches what a 'neoliberal self' and a 'neoliberal society' are, b) traces the connections between narratives of the self and narratives of neoliberalism, i.e. how they are structured and maybe made coherent and c) how normativised narratives of individualisation might relate to the consolidation of neoliberalism as a hegemonic discourse. This is not to say that I have tried to impose a neoliberal critique on the novels from the beginning of my research process.[213] Rather, after having discovered that the novels tend to offer subject positions which resemble the *homo economicus* and ways of working on the self formerly described by Foucault, for example, I bring the novels and literary studies into dialogue with a neoliberal critique. As the analyses show, the novels do not contain clear-cut role models of the entrepreneurial self. Instead they show how subjects and anti-subjects[214] can be interwoven discursively within a neoliberal framework. In some cases, this is done quite subtly.

A Critique of Foucault through an Analysis of Fiction

Bringing fictional narratives into dialogue with neoliberalism and research about neoliberalism allows me take a step back from Foucault's partly abstract and often generalising view of neoliberalism. Concrete examples of neoliberal discourses, such as the novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park*, at first sight confirm what I explained in the chapters about neoliberalism and the entrepreneurial self. To quote David Harvey again: "Neoliberalism has […] become hegemonic as a mode of discourse. It has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret,

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[212] Johansen, Emily. "The Banal Conviviality of Neoliberal Cosmopolitanism." *Textual Practice: Neoliberalism and the Novel* 29.2 (2015): 295-314. Quotation 311.

[213] Clive Barnett evaluates how neoliberalism is conceptualised in many studies in critical human geography and warns of simplistic applications of theories to objects of study. Barnett, Clive. "Publics and Markets. What's Wrong with Neoliberalism?" *The Handbook of Social Geography*. Ed. Susan Smith, Sallie Marston, Rachel Pain, and John Paul Jones. London and New York: Sage, 2010. 269-296. Although this is a different discipline from literary studies, I generally agree: a blind application of neoliberal criticism produces undifferentiated research results.

[214] For a definition of 'anti-subject', see Reckwitz. *Subjekt*. 28.

live in, and understand the world."[215] So, the novels are part of a broader discourse of neoliberalism. Nevertheless, the concrete examples of narrating the neoliberal self in *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park* give me ample proof to refrain from assuming a *totally* naturalised and normativised presence of neoliberalism. Through the analysis of the novels I could disprove Jason Read's observation that we are immersed in a kind of monodimensionality. With reference to Foucault, he states: "[W]hat has disappeared in neoliberalism is the tactical polyvalence of discourse; everything is framed in terms of interests, freedoms and risks."[216] Also, I could show that literary texts, e.g. *Tourism*, can even play with references to neoliberalism. They can raise awareness for hegemonic discourses as stated above. They can indicate the cracks in Foucault's totalising assessment of processes of subjectification in relation to neoliberal discourses. The protagonist in *Tourism*, for instance, could be regarded as an anti-subject to a certain degree: the main character is ironic and passive. He does not resemble the ever self-optimising, resourceful figure of the entrepreneur at first sight. In fact, he could be regarded as the entrepreneurial self's 'deficient Other'[217], inactive and without agency. Nevertheless, he succeeds in accumulating social, cultural and financial capital. Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's narrator instrumentalises the anti-subject to question the legitimacy of the hegemonic discourse of subject formation and to reinstate the neoliberal subject at the same time.

Philip Mirowski and Marnie Holborow criticise Foucauldian theories from a historical and linguistic perspective. Mirowski problematises the belief that there is a "single coherent 'market mentality' seeping into every pore".[218] He points out that Foucault centred on theoretical writings and was not interested in the actual translations of these writings into practice; nor was Foucault particularly interested in historically specific, empirical analyses. From Mirowski's perspective, Foucault detaches 'the economy' from government, makes it an "independent Representative of the Real" and the "*sole legitimate site for the production of indubitable knowledge of the whole*".[219] Foucault ascribes too much power to the workings of a neoliberal economy and neglects the flaws of everyday neoliberalism. Mirowski goes as far as claiming that "Foucault's acquiescence in the neoliberal doctrine of the market as über-information-processor renders him pretty useless for our discussions of the crisis."[220] This is an exaggeration. Still, I understand

[215] Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 3.
[216] Read. "A Genealogy of Homo-Economicus." 12.
[217] See Reckwitz. *Subjekt*. 133.
[218] Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste.* 90.
[219] Mirowski 98. [Emphasis in the original.]
[220] Mirowski 99.

Mirowski's discontent about Foucault's 'flirting' with some of the theoretical assumptions of neoliberalism[221]. Instead of analysing specific micro-discourses and practices, concrete agents and institutions, Foucault enters the debate about neoliberalism on a fairly general level. He deducts from his analysis of texts by neoliberal theorists a model of neoliberalism which shares some of the premises he should have questioned in the first place. This is not to say that Foucault deliberately played into the hands of the Neoliberal Thought Collective. However, his totalising view on neoliberalism precludes a detailed analysis of highly diverse interpretations of neoliberal theories. And his idea of the individual as the main contributor to the neoliberal rule, this definition of power "limits the options for opposition to neoliberalism," so Holborow.[222] Despite the critique, Foucault offers a productive conceptual toolbox, allows for a reframing of my analytical grid with reference to cornerstones of neoliberalism and points at connections between the individual and a system previously not considered in this way. Foucault brings 'subjectification' to the fore. As explained below, I therefore consider this study to be situated in a field which Sam Binkley terms "Foucauldian cultural studies."[223] Besides an analysis of the primary material, the novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism, Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park*, I add a literary studies' critique to the debate about Foucault's *Birth of Biopolitics* and neoliberalism.

Writer, philosopher and activist Franco Berardi is convinced that the current form of capitalism "has created a closed reality, which cannot be overcome using the techniques of politics – of conscious organized voluntary action and government. Only an act of language can allow us to see and create a new human condition, where we now see only barbarianism and violence."[224] After the above excursions into the 'discursive constitution of the subject', 'fictional narratives', 'the neoliberal novel', 'narrating the self and narrating neoliberalism', Berardi's short statement perhaps looks naïve and definitely provoking. It seems to undermine my attempt to depart from binary oppositions like 'language' and 'politics'. I see language as part of the construction of neoliberalism. On the other hand, I see language as part of the challenge of neoliberalism. Berardi believes in a recoding on the level

[221] Foucault does this in his lectures about the "Birth of Biopolitics" at the Collège de France, 1978-1979, for example.
[222] Holborow. *Language and Neoliberalism*. 130.
[223] Binkley, Sam. *Happiness as an Enterprise. An Essay on Neoliberal Life*. New York: State University of New York Press, 2014. 9. According to Mirowski, cultural studies is one of the fields of research which contributed most to an understanding of contemporary neoliberalism. Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste.* 91.
[224] Berardi, Franco. *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*. Cambridge, Mass., and London, England: MIT Press, 2012. 157.

of signifiers. I would like to expand this entry point to the narrative.[225] My examination of *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park* shows the impossibility of reducing the literary texts to one reading only, the impossibility of subsuming these neoliberal novels to neoliberalism only. They show various ways of negotiating neoliberal discourses.

3.2 Novels of Trans/Formation

In *Transformations of the Liminal Self. Configurations of Home and Identity for Muslim Characters in British Postcolonial Fiction*, Alaa Alghamdi offers a celebratory reading of Monica Ali's novel *Brick Lane*: the main character Nazneen, a migrant woman from Bangladesh, successfully integrates into her fictional British society while staying true to her identity, e.g. as a Muslim.[226] "The novel is an exploration of Nazneen's developing hybrid identity as well as of the setting in which it takes place. Brick Lane in London is depicted as a multicultural haven, allowing immigrants to continue to participate in the social behaviours of their country of origin despite the move to England."[227] Nazneen shows that to be British and to be a Muslim is not exclusive, states Alghamdi. In her interpretation, Alghamdi stresses the protagonist's independence on the one hand and her participation in society on the other. "Nazneen gains her independence and participates in elements of English society as she chooses, without giving up treasured elements of her culture of origin."[228]

According to Alghamdi, Nazneen gains agency, has free choice *and* manages to exist within a given social system. "[Nazneen] very gradually attains agency. By the end of the novel, she is in a position where she can sustain and maintain herself without a loss of respectability in the eyes of society. Moreover, she can choose for herself the practices and behaviours that she will accept or discontinue."[229] For Alghamdi, Nazneen's story of becoming an 'English woman' entails choice and agency, independence and participation. And Nazneen's choice and independence entail keeping selected aspects of her Bangladeshi identity. The protagonist has become an English woman "because of the presence of choice, control and agency, which are […] identifiable with English values and identity. For Nazneen […] this is

[225] As stated above the narrative is defined here as the "'sutured' chain of signifiers which grants its true condition of division sufficient 'imaginary' coherence". Eagleton, Terry. "Ideology, Fiction, Narrative." 78.
[226] Alghamdi, Alaa. *Transformations of the Liminal Self. Configurations of Home and Identity for Muslim Characters in British Postcolonial Fiction*. Bloomington: iUniverse, 2011.
[227] Alghamdi. *Transformations*. 133.
[228] Alghamdi. *Transformations*. 133.
[229] Alghamdi. *Transformations*. 143.

a positive choice – indeed, within the *Bildungsroman* structure, this movement towards greater agency is seen as evidence of development."[230] I argue that Alghamdi's interpretation of the 'multiculturalism' in *Brick Lane* is too optimistic. In this novel, difference and choice is possible only within a set of neoliberal parameters.[231] The novel is built on the "cultural myths of neoliberal diversity".[232] In her development, Nazneen might resemble a conventional *Bildungsroman* heroine. However, the kind of agency she gains is debatable.

Selfhood: Construction of Unity, Continuity, Coherent Development

"Homo narrator est."[233] The practice of narrating is one aspect which defines us.[234] The *Oxford English Dictionary* refers to the Latin origin of the word, which meant 'knowing' and 'relating'.[235] Narratives can assist creating a causality, ordering events, recounting. Roland Barthes lists various ways in which one encounters the narrative and highlights it as the primary concern of structuralism.[236] Obviously, contemporary narratology has come a long way since Roland Barthes and my aim is not to provide a purely

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[230] Alghamdi. *Transformations*. 148. This is a highly debatable claim. Kalpana Wilson, for example, criticises the wide-spread instrumentalisation of representations of 'Third World Women' as being active, i.e. 'active' in line with neoliberal projects which aim at enhancing agency or empowerment. She points at the connections between "colonial representations of women workers and today's images of micro-entrepreneurship within the framework of neoliberal globalization." According to her, these current images gloss over power relations and issues of oppression or exploitation. Wilson, Kalpana. "'Race', Gender and Neoliberalism: Changing Visual Representations in Development." *Third World Quarterly* 32.2 (2011): 315-331. Quotation 315.

[231] I discuss this point below, in the chapter about *Brick Lane*.

[232] Johansen. "The Banal Conviviality of Neoliberal Cosmopolitanism." 296. To this Johansen adds on the same page: "Neoliberal alterity becomes hyper-individualised, acting as a catalyst for selfactualisation, rather than as the point where a variety of global systems and histories coalesce."

[233] Boesch, Ernst. "Homo narrator – der erzählende Mensch. Handlung, Kultur, Interpretation." *Zeitschrift für Sozial- und Kulturwissenschaften* 9 (2000): 205-230. Jürgen Straub answers to this "narrare humanum est" and points out that the first version upholds a very specific image of the human, one which idealises the autonomous person. Straub, Jürgen. "Kann ich mich selbst erzählen – und dabei erkennen? Prinzipien und Perspektiven einer Psychologie des *Homo narrator*." *Kultur – Wissen – Narration. Perspektiven transdisziplinärer Erzählforschung für die Kulturwissenschaften*. Ed. Alexandra Strohmaier. Bielefeld: transcript, 2013. 75-144. Quotation 80. I question Straub's claim at the very end of the chapter about 'agency' where I discuss Cavarero. *Relating Narratives*.

[234] Obviously, other definitions abound. In this chapter, I use a constructivist definition.

[235] *Oxford English Dictionary* https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/narrate [11.07.2017].

[236] Barthes, Roland. "Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits." *Communications* 8.1 (1966): 1-27. Quotation 1.

structuralist analysis of my primary material. Instead, I would like to stress the importance of narratives for the construction of subject positions and for the portrayal of subjectification. This is connected to the previous chapter about literary fiction as a discourse of subjectification and how the self is narrated in the context of neoliberalism.[237]

Narratologist Michael Bamberg explains – with reference to philosopher Paul Ricœur – that it is possible to create a "temporal continuity, unity, and coherence" of the self through narration.[238] In *Rewriting the Self. Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*[239], Roy Porter gathered critical contributions about representations of the self from Petrarch to postmodernism. He delineates this history of selfhood as predominantly infused by Western values: autonomy, self-realisation, authenticity and individuality defined the characteristics of the self-made man as promoted in the "Enlightenment myths".[240] During the eighteenth century it was the novel which "established itself as the literary vehicle for the minute exploration of intense inner consciousness […]."[241] Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (1796), for instance, tells the story of the protagonist's development in the form of *Bildung*, an "odyssey of self-discovery"[242], and thereby puts the individual at the centre

[237] For a possible narratological theory about the relation between narratives and contexts or cultures, I refer to Ansgar Nünning's three-dimensional model which borrows from Paul Ricœur's concept of the threefold mimesis in *Time and Narrative* (1984). Nünning, Ansgar. "Wie Erzählungen Kulturen erzeugen." *Kultur – Wissen – Narration. Perspektiven transdisziplinärer Erzählforschung für die Kulturwissenschaften*. Ed. Alexandra Strohmaier. Bielefeld: transcript, 2013. 15-48. Quotation 32. In my constructivist approach I premise Stuart Hall's statement about 'reality' and 'language': "Reality exists outside language, but it is constantly mediated by and through language: and what we can know and say has to be produced in and through discourse. Discursive 'knowledge' is the product not of the transparent representation of the 'real' in language but of the articulation of language on real relations and conditions. Thus, there is no intelligible discourse without the operation of a code. […] There is no degree zero in language." Hall. "Encoding, Decoding." 131, 132.

[238] Bamberg, Michael. "Identity and Narration." *The Living Handbook of Narratology*. 2012. http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/identity-and-narration [15.10.2015]. Angela Walz criticises Ricœur's emphasis of continuity, coherence and consistency in his hermeneutic model. In her analysis of contemporary British novels, she rather stresses the moments of uncertainty. In my opinion, Ricœur's model can serve as a starting point for a better understanding of meaning-making processes in narratives and does not necessarily preclude a consideration of frictions, contradictions or gaps. Walz, Angela. *Erzählstimmen verstehen. Narrative Subjektivität im Spannungsfeld von Trans/Differenz am Beispiel zeitgenössischer britischer Schriftstellerinnen*. Münster: LIT, 2005. 16.

[239] Porter, Roy ed. *Rewriting the Self. Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.

[240] Porter, Roy. "Introduction." *Rewriting the Self. Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*. Ed. Roy Porter. London and New York: Routledge, 1996.1-14. Quotation 5.

[241] Porter. *Rewriting the Self*. 5.

[242] Porter. *Rewriting the Self*. 5.

of philosophical and political interests.[243] Stuart Hall stresses the importance of the (perceived) constructedness of the self, in particular with post-modernism, and claims: "If we feel we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or "*narrative* of the self" about ourselves."[244] This narrative puts the emphasis on the individual again. This narrative does not represent the 'world'. Instead, it represents a personal relation to the world.[245]

A concept which accentuates this relation between individual and system, or between the self and state, is the *Bildungsroman*. "[W]e seek with it to indicate one of the most harmonious solutions ever offered to a consubstantial dilemma of modern bourgeois civilization: the conflict between the ideal of 'self-determination' and the just as imperious demands of 'socialization.'"[246] The ideal *Bildungsroman* implies that after a more or less difficult journey through conflicts with the 'world', the protagonist finds a position in society which consolidates individual and collective demands. This consolidation is portrayed as desirable, as 'natural' even. "It is also necessary that, as a 'free individual,' not as a fearful subject but as a convinced citizen, one perceives the social norms as *one's own*. One must *internalize* them and fuse external compulsion and internal impulses into a new unity until the former is no longer distinguishable from the latter. This fusion is what we usually call 'consensus' or 'legitimation.'"[247] Literary scholar Franco Moretti postulates that the *Bildungsroman* "succeeded in representing this fusion with a force of conviction and optimistic clarity that will never be equaled again."[248] According to him, the narrative of the *Bildungsroman* pretends that there is "no conflict between individuality and socialization, autonomy and normality, interiority and objectification."[249] Thus, the genre of the *Bildungsroman*, from his perspective at least, is very likely to offer narratives of selfhood defined by unity, continuity and coherent development.

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[243] At the same time new economic theories, such as Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) gained ground [see Porter. *Rewriting the Self*. 5, 6] and the 'Robinson Crusoe' figure became ever more popular. I would like to thank Prof. Jürgen Schlaeger for his advice on this.

[244] Hall, Stuart. "The Question of Cultural Identity." *Modernity. An Introduction to Modern Societies*. Ed. Stuart Hall, et al. Malden and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1996. 596-634. Quotation 598. [Emphasis added by J. F.]

[245] Boothe, Brigitte. *Das Narrativ. Biografisches Erzählen im psychotherapeutischen Prozess*. Stuttgart: Schattauer, 2011.

[246] Moretti, Franco. "The Comfort of Civilization." *Representations* 12 (1985): 115-139. Quotation 115.

[247] Moretti. "The Comfort of Civilization." 116.

[248] Ibid.

[249] Ibid.

Novels of Formation

I briefly sketch Marianne Hirsch's definition of the 'novel of formation' and Mark Stein's definition of the 'novel of transformation' in order to arrive at a sound working model for the analysis of my primary sources. The main point of relating the novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park* to this model is to trace precisely the development of their protagonists in their changing fictional societies, the characterisation of both individual and system as well as the individual's relation to it. It is not the aim of this research project to elaborate the vast genre debate.

In her article "The Novel of Formation as Genre: Between Great Expectations and Lost Illusions"[250] Marianne Hirsch aims at defining a set of thematic and formal categories "which make it possible to speak of the *Bildungsroman* as a European […] genre".[251] For this, she delineates the genre in its peak period and in its two main strands, the German and the French as well as English. The generic model[252] Marianne Hirsch proposes for the 'novel of formation' includes the following points:

1. The novel of formation focuses on one central character. It is "the story of a representative individual's *growth and development* within the context of a defined social order". The main character is "essentially a p*assive* character, a plaything of circumstance". His [or her] development is "explored from various perspectives [in order to present] a *total personality*, physical, emotional, intellectual and moral."

2. The novel of formation is *biographical* and *social*. "Society is the novel's *antagonist* and is viewed as a school of life" which does not mean that a complete overview of society is provided, as, for instance in the social novel.

3. The plot of the novel of formation resembles the quest story. It "portrays a search for a meaningful existence within society […]. The *linear chronological plot* [is] to emphasise character in narrative […]. Growth is a *gradual process* consisting of a number of encounters between subjective needs and an unbending social

[250] Hirsch. "The Novel of Formation as Genre."
[251] Hirsch. "The Novel of Formation as Genre." 294.
[252] All listed points are either quoted directly or indirectly from the following pages: Hirsch. "The Novel of Formation as Genre." 296-298. [All emphases in the original.]

order." The protagonist is faced with various options which opens room for wrong decisions.

4. The main concern of the novel of formation is the "development of selfhood" and the events which shape an individual's life. "*Its projected resolution is an accommodation to the existing society*." Although each protagonist can choose whether to accept this "projected resolution" or not, "each novel ends with his *assessment of himself and his place in society*."

5. "The narrative point of view and voice […] is characterized by *irony* […]. There is always a distance between the perspective of the narrator and that of the protagonist."

6. Other characters in the novel of formation have "fixed functions": *educators* mediate between self and society; *companions* reflect on the protagonist and represent alternative aspirations and achievements; *lovers* serve the education of the sentiment.

7. The novel of formation is regarded as a *didactic* novel: "[It] educates the reader by portraying the education of the protagonist."

Hirsch distinguishes between the *Bildungsheld*, the picaresque hero and the protagonist of the confessional novel. In contrast to the picaro, a "social outcast", and the confessor, a "spiritual outsider", the *Bildungsheld* is a "representative member of society".[253] In the picaresque novel episodes are loosely connected. The picaro is turned outward toward society, which is also expressed in the novels' focus on the material and on adventures. The confessional novel, in contrast, is an achronological retrospection which emphasises reflections with a protagonist who is turned inward. The *Bildungsroman* generally portrays a progression of events which culminate with a denouement. In order to present a "total personality", the protagonist's thoughts and actions are equally described. As mentioned above, the main character's personal relation to society is highlighted.[254]

Novel of Transformation

Marianne Hirsch manages to provide a scheme which is useful for a wide range of European novels of formation, mainly of the 19th century. For an updated model which takes into account contemporary narratives, I turned to Mark Stein's *Black British Literature: Novel of Transformation* (2004). In

[253] Hirsch. "The Novel of Formation as Genre." 299.
[254] Ibid.

his work we find "[a] sense of literature offering the means for the reconceptualization of the connection between political discourse and the individual […]."[255] Also, it is a model which is based on a similar set of primary sources: I consider the novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park* BAME literature[256] and their British Asian protagonists members of an imagined community which was in a difficult position in Britain after 9/11, i.e. the focus of xenophobic discourses.[257] Mark Stein would identify these characters as "outsider[s] within". In his opinion, they contribute to a transformation of British cultures and are essential for his definition of the 'novel of transformation'. The novel of transformation "portrays *and* purveys the transformation, the reformation, the repeated 'coming of age' of British cultures under the influence of 'outsiders within'."[258] According to Stein, a wide range of black British literatures can be read as *Bildungsromane*: this group of narratives "describes and entails subject formation under the influence of political, social, educational, familial, and other forces and thus resembles the *bildungsroman*."[259] The black British novel of transformation, therefore, is both about formation and about transformation. It is about the "*formation* of its protagonists" and about the "*transformation* of British society and cultural institutions".[260] His model for the novel of transformation shows features which overlap with the points of Marianne Hirsch's model for the novel of formation.

1. Both the novel of transformation and the novel of formation focus on a *central character*.[261]

2. Part of what Hirsch considers biographical/social aspects in the protagonist's life and 'other characters with fixed functions', such as educators, companions or lovers, is what Stein terms *family situation or direct social environment*. With 'family' Stein means "the modern family" which "can also be an extended family"[262] and thus forms the biographical/social aspects.

3. What Hirsch calls 'the quest story', i.e. the search for a meaningful existence – a search which includes clashes with fixed social

[255] Gunning, Dave. *Race and Antiracism*. 9.
[256] 'Black British literature' includes British Asian literature in Stein's book. Today, the term 'black, Asian, and minority ethnic' (BAME) indicates this inclusiveness.
[257] The choice of primary sources and the situation of British Asian citizens after the attacks on 9th of September 2001 is explained in previous chapters.
[258] Stein. *Black British Literature*. xii. Emphasis in the original.
[259] Stein. *Black British Literature*. xiii. Emphasis in the original.
[260] Ibid. Emphasis in the original.
[261] Stein. *Black British Literature*. 26. Hirsch see above.
[262] Stein. *Black British Literature*. 25.

positions and wrong decisions – is part of what Stein calls *alienation and relations to the larger society* which the protagonist has to deal with.[263]

4. 'The quest story' can also be traced in Stein's *radical generational conflict* which involves cultural aspects: "in many cases this is a conflict between a generation that migrated to Britain and one that was born there."[264]

5. In addition, 'the quest story' resembles the *journey* in Stein's model although his concept is a slight variation of the "journey" in more traditional models of the *Bildungsroman*.[265]

6. Both Hirsch and Stein, see *distanced narration* as an important feature in their models: the narrative point of view is characterised by a distance between the narrator and the main character.[266]

7. 'The development of selfhood' and a final 'accommodation to the existing society' which Hirsch lists in her model can be found in Stein's idea of the *happy ending*.[267]

In one major point the novel of formation and the novel of transformation diverge. Hirsch claims that the novel of formation is a didactic novel: "[It] educates the reader by portraying the education of the protagonist."[268] In Stein's model one can assume educational aspects. More importantly, however, is that the novel of transformation goes beyond education: it is about *finding a voice*. Stein postulates that finding a voice is the "main distinction from the traditional *bildungsroman*"[269]. He explains: "Apart from coming to terms with the protagonist's identity, the genre is about the *voicing* of this identity; the very voice becomes manifest through the novel. Thus, the black British novel of transformation does not predominantly feature the privatist *formation* of an individual: instead, the text constitutes a symbolic act of carving out space, of creating a public sphere."[270] The private becomes

[263] Ibid. He states: "[A] lienation and relations to the larger society are often dealt with, through the protagonist's experiences in school, for example, or the way they feel (mis)represented in the media or by politicians."
[264] Stein. *Black British Literature*. 29. On page 25 he claims: "[T]he conflict of generations is part and parcel of the novel of transformation, and it is of particular importance in that different generations correspond to different cultural and social affiliations."
[265] Stein. *Black British Literature*. 25.
[266] Stein. *Black British Literature*. 26.
[267] Ibid.
[268] Hirsch. "The Novel of Formation as Genre." 298.
[269] Stein. *Black British Literature*. 30.
[270] Ibid.

political in the novel of transformation. Or rather, the private is understood to be political and encouraged to be politically voiced. This voice of the novel of transformation supports a narrative which can "supplement, revise, confront, and reject other discourses".[271] For Mark Stein finding a voice serves significant functions in the black British novel of transformation: it multiplies the diversity of stories in British literature, i.e. it adds to a "polyphony" and it "points to agency and the creation of agency".[272] Moreover, finding a voice is the foundation for the performative function which Stein ascribes to the novel of transformation.[273]

The Performative Function of the Novel of Transformation

For Mark Stein the performative function of the black British novel means that this kind of novel of transformation has a wide reach and might change the definition of Britishness. In the novel of transformation the subject formation is entangled with the "social world that is encountered and shaped"[274]. The protagonist's struggle with his or her immediate social context and the wider society 'influences' the cultures within which this struggle is staged, so Stein. "This means that the process of 'coming of age,' which is associated with the novel of formation, is here understood in a double sense. On the one hand, on the thematic level, novels of transformation depict the process of growing up. On the other hand, these fictions are not only inscribed by the cultures they inhabit, they in turn mold those very cultures." This is in line with what I elaborated in the previous chapters about the relationship between fictional and factual discourses, and between discursive and non-discursive practices.

I sympathise with the constructivist dimension of Mark Stein's argument: "[The] performative functions of the novel of transformation […] involve the construction of new subject positions."[275] The major problem I see in Mark Stein's work, however, is that he does not define the "social world" in which the protagonists of the black British novel of transformation are embedded. Ideological themes which underpin the *Bildungsroman* narratives and connect it to contemporary Britain are not explained in Stein's project. Although he believes the novel of transformation to have a performative function, to be able to initiate a "reimagination"[276] of Britain, he

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[271] Stein. *Black British Literature*. 171.
[272] Ibid.
[273] Stein. *Black British Literature*. 173.
[274] Stein. *Black British Literature*. 30.
[275] Stein. *Black British Literature*. 42.
[276] Ibid. On the same page Stein gives examples for the reimagination of Britain: "the transgression of national boundaries, the depiction of racism, and most importantly, the representation, exertion, and normalization of black British cultural power."

at no point defines precisely the existing imaginations of Britain. Literary scholar Dave Gunning strongly criticises Stein:

> The novelistic subject positions that are presented in the *Bildungsroman* [Stein] identifies are assembled from, and inextricably intertwined with, elements of the cultural, political, and literary landscapes of Britain; in order fully to understand the potential transformations that may be set in motion by the literary intervention, the novels' relationship to these ideological currents must be elaborated.[277]

The aim of my study is exactly that: the investigation of the novel's relationship to ideological currents – and hegemonic discourses of neoliberalism specifically. My primary sources, the novels *Brick Lane* (2002), *Tourism* (2006), *Londonstani* (2006) und *Greetings from Bury Park* (2007), are all black British novels of transformation. The protagonists of these novels might well voice their identity affiliations. Yet, they hardly voice new subject positions in a public space. Rather, they adapt to the space provided for neoliberal subjects. The *Bildungsroman* models provided by Marianne Hirsch and Mark Stein inform my research to a certain extent, in particular when it comes to the trans/formation of the main characters. In order to arrive at a more critical evaluation of the literary works, I employ an extended approach, though.

3.3 Analytical Approach

From the theories about the novel of formation by Marianne Hirsch and the novel of transformation by Mark Stein explained in the previous chapter, I deduct the following analytical categories:

- central character and direct social environment,
- alienation and relations to the larger society,
- generational and cultural conflict,
- setting and spatial dynamics,
- linguistic devices,
- agency[278] in relation to finding a voice.

[277] Gunning. *Race and Antiracism*. 10. He also praises the work of Stein as a "useful account of the specific transformations that may be staged within the literary work". Gunning 10.
[278] The concept of 'agency' is explained in the following chapters.

My approach for the analysis of the novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park* combines postclassical narratology with critical discourse analysis. Postclassical narratology[279] connects the established terminology of structuralism with newer models which consider co(n)texts and allow for interdisciplinarity. The contributions to Monika Fludernik and Jan Alber's publication *Postclassical Narratology. Approaches and Analyses* (2010)[280] or to Greta Olson's volume *Current Trends in Narratology*[281] of the *Narratologia* series serve as examples for a revision of the classical frame. Opening up narratology to co(n)texts allows me to integrate critical discourse analysis in my approach as a means to investigate ideological configurations in literary fiction. With this, it becomes possible to explore neoliberal narratives and to relate them to other forms of neoliberal discourses, e.g. of contemporary British politics.

Hence, I arrive at a kind of *kulturwissenschaftliche Narratologie* as described by literary scholar Ansgar Nünning. A narratology informed by cultural theory premises that the narrative is not merely a literary form. This type of postclassical narratology assumes that the narrative is a cognitive mode of experience and of social and cultural construction of *Wirklichkeit*, i.e. reality and truth. Narrations are not just a literary form or a medium of expression. Narrations are an epistemological and cognitive mode of knowing the 'self' and the 'world'.[282] Central to the critical discourse analysis in my study are aspects such as intertextuality, e.g. references to academic works and biographies in the novels which help to naturalise the portrayal of the protagonists, and linguistic devices including metaphors.

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[279] Roy Sommer provides a short but well-structured survey of current approaches in postclassical narratology. His overview takes into account existing attempts to map the diverse field and aims at carving out the connections "both between structuralist and postclassical narratologies, and between corpus-based and process-oriented contextual approaches." Sommer, Roy. "The Merger of Classical and Postclassical Narratologies and the Consolidated Future of Narrative Theory." *DIEGESIS. Interdisciplinary E-Journal for Narrative Research* 1.1. (2012): 143-157.

[280] Alber, Jan and Monika Fludernik, eds. *Postclassical Narratology: Approaches and Analyses*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010.

[281] Olson, Great ed. *Current Trends in Narratology*. Narratologia. Contributions to Narrative Theory. Vol. 27. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011.

[282] Nünning. "Wie Erzählungen Kulturen erzeugen." 33. The original says: "Die kulturwissenschaftliche Narratologie geht somit von der inzwischen weithin akzeptierten konstruktivistischen Prämisse aus, dass das Narrativ nicht bloß eine literarische Form, sondern ein kognitiver Modus der Selbst- und Wirklichkeitserfahrung sowie der kulturellen und sozialen Wirklichkeitskonstruktion ist. Die Erkenntnis, dass Erzählungen nicht bloß eine literarische Form oder ein Ausdrucksmedium, sondern ein epistemologischer und kognitiver Modus der Selbst- und Welterkenntnis sind, wird sowohl von […] narrativen Psychologen als auch von Repräsentanten der ‚narrativistischen' Schule von Historikern und Geschichtstheoretikern geteilt."

Metaphors

Metaphors play a key role in my analysis: they are of major interest to both narrative theory and critical discourse analysis.[283] I understand them as 'mininarrations'[284] and narratives as a form of discourse. Like discourses and similar to the idea of *Realfiktion* mentioned above, metaphors "create the very realities they purport merely to describe."[285] Linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson even claim that "the people who get to impose their metaphors on the culture get to define what we consider to be true […]."[286] Lakoff and Johnson correlate metaphors with the construction of truths. In Antonio Gramsci's theory, metaphors are vital for the relationship between ideology and language, too. "Language is always metaphorical" [287] and ideology enters language via the metaphor[288]. Thus, the metaphor becomes a relevant analytical category in the examination of factual and fictional discourses.

Significant in this context are not just the metaphors themselves but also a particular preference for some of them at a certain historical time, so-called *Leitmetaphern*. "The images that form the source domain of such

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[283] Monika Fludernik and Greta Olson highlight the particular role of metaphors in their article about contemporary narratology. Fludernik, Monika and Greta Olson. "Introduction." *Current Trends in Narratology*. Ed. Greta Olson. Narratologia. Contributions to Narrative Theory. Vol. 27. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011. 1-33.

[284] Eubanks, Philip. "The Story of Conceptual Metaphor: What Motivates Metaphoric Mappings?" *Poetics Today* 20.3 (1999): 419-442. Quotation 437.

[285] Grabes, Herbert, Ansgar Nünning und Sibylle Baumbach. "Introduction: Metaphors as a Way of Worldmaking, or: Where Metaphors and Culture Meet." *Metaphors Shaping Culture and Theory.* Ed. Herbert Grabes, Ansgar Nünning und Sibylle Baumbach. REAL – Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature. Vol. 25. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2009. xi-xxviii. Quotation xvii.

[286] Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1980. 160.

[287] Gramsci. *Selections from Prison Notebooks*. 450.

[288] Metaphors are "the understanding of something in one conceptual domain […] by conceptual projection from something in a different conceptual domain." Turner, Mark and Gilles Fauconnier. "A Mechanism of Creativity." *Poetics Today* 20.3 (1999): 397-418. Quotation 403. As mentioned above, metaphors function as implicit epistemological tools, help to create coherence or "to conceptualize our experience". Lakoff and Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. 41. They carry "a wide range of cognitive, emotional, and ideological connotations." Grabes, Nünning und Baumbach. "Metaphors as a Way of Worldmaking." xii. With reference to Philip Eubanks (Eubanks. "The Story of Conceptual Metaphor." 437), Nünning, Grabes and Baumbach conclude that metaphors narrativise and naturalise cultural phenomena. Therefore, metaphors could be defined as "important sense- and indeed worldmaking devices. [They provide] ideologically charged plots and explanations of cultural and historical changes rather than neutral descriptions thereof." Grabes, Nünning und Baumbach. "Metaphors as a Way of Worldmaking." xii.

metaphors do not arise out of nowhere and do not by mere chance suddenly become favoured suppliers of schemas to be mapped onto important target domains."[289] The choice of source domain is connected to cultural changes, for instance to technological developments or to formations of social groups.[290] Also, a metaphor highlights certain aspects of a concept and, automatically, hides others in order to enable consistency and coherence.[291] Hence, two or more seemingly incompatible notions can be combined congruently in a metaphorical concept. Moreover, "metaphoric projection is anything but a one-sided, uni-directional affair. On the contrary, what is involved is a process of mutual integration of two distinct conceptual domains."[292] All this make metaphors highly specific. As elementary parts of discourses of a particular historical time, they therefore provide an entry point into the understanding of "those habits and structures of thought, feeling, and ideas that Foucault christened the episteme […]."[293]

In line with my critique of Foucault's deterministic conceptualisation of neoliberal discourses mentioned in the previous chapters, I would like to point out that metaphors might reinforce a hegemonic discourse; however, they might also allow for changes in discourses. Greta Olson reminds us that

> the conceptual metaphors are not numbered, universal, or unchanging, but are subject to constant reformulations and possible multiplications. […] Creating metaphors involves a process of mapping one or more domains onto another; yet it also contributes to the formation of new conceptualizations of the domains which the mapping process enacts.[294]

The primary sources for this study all pick up the notion of the 'entrepreneur' which is prevalent in hegemonic neoliberal discourses. At the same time, the fictional texts all exchange aspects of the concept of the 'entrepreneur' as established by Foucault, Marnie and Mirowski, for instance. By transforming these aspects, the novels show variations of the 'entrepreneur' and/or add to a new conceptualisation of the 'entrepreneur'.

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[289] Lakoff and Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. 10.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Lakoff and Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*. 10.
[292] Grabes, Nünning und Baumbach. "Metaphors as a Way of Worldmaking." xviii.
[293] Grabes, Nünning und Baumbach. "Metaphors as a Way of Worldmaking." xx.
[294] Olson, Greta. "Metaphors and Cultural Transference: Mediating Cognitivist and Culturalist Approaches." *Metaphors Shaping Culture and Theory.* Ed. Herbert Grabes, Ansgar Nünning und Sibylle Baumbach. REAL – Yearbook of Research in English and American Literature. Vol. 25. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 2009. 17-30. Quotation 28.

Encapsulated Imaginaries

In *Language and Neoliberalism*, linguist Marnie Holborow stresses the capacity of metaphors to combine seemingly divergent aspects convincingly and to articulate neoliberal ideology in language. She shows that "the market as metaphor, in different forms and guises, carries deep ideological significance and serves as reinforcement of the neoliberal message. […] The appropriation of words from the past for the neoliberal lexicon – such as *entrepreneur* […] – […] adds the authority of tradition to new ideological turns."[295] With reference to Antonio Gramsci, Marnie Holborow studies the metaphorical interior of current discourses. She approximates the 'entrepreneur' as characterised by neoliberalism and thus exposes how it forms our worldview through language.[296] Metaphors unite contradictions and enable ideologies. But because of the contradictions and the various ways a metaphor is embedded there is potential for change. A conceptual metaphor is not universal and unchanging.

With the analysis of the novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park* I aim at finding out how a *Leitmetapher* or strong metaphor like the 'entrepreneur' is embedded in these fictional texts. It assumes different forms in each novel, i.e. it is not universal or unchanging, and it might contribute to a new reading of the *homo economicus*, i.e. there might be a change. Nevertheless, the metaphor of the 'entrepreneur' plays a central role in the way the novels feed into a hegemonic discourse and why I regard the novels as neoliberal narratives. The metaphor of the 'entrepreneur' "encapsulates a social imaginary in which individuals are centre stage, wealth is understood in individual terms and wealth-seeking individuals are the role models. *Entrepreneurs* are the social icons of our neoliberal age."[297] The entrepreneurial self is the star subject of neoliberal projects as I explained above. As a metaphor it carries a neoliberal imaginary. The types of metaphorical entrepreneurs which encapsulate a neoliberal imaginary in

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[295] Holborow. *Language and Neoliberalism*. 3.

[296] For Gramsci, language is the key ingredient in the legitimisation of common sense. "Common sense, for Gramsci, consists of a spontaneous set of beliefs which together express a conception of the world which takes the social order as 'the way things are'. […] Common sense gains currency through language." (Holborow. *Language and Neoliberalism*. 4.) Ultimately, it means that the naturalisation and normativisation of neoliberal doctrines is bound to language and to metaphors specifically. For Gramsci 'common sense' is "inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed." (Gramsci. *Selections from Prison Notebooks*. 333.) Holborow, however, emphasises that "this does not mean that it does not contain contradictions and the potential for change. […] [I]deological hegemony is not a settled question, neither from the point of view of those who promote it nor for those at its receiving end." Holborow. *Language and Neoliberalism*. 4-5.

[297] Holborow. *Language and Neoliberalism*. 72.

the novels are an ice skater, a flâneur, a reformed rudeboy or a fan of Bruce Springsteen.

In *Transformations of the Liminal Self*, Alaa Alghamdi ascribes Nazneen's successful integration to the protagonist's entrepreneurial spirit:

> Nazneen's systematic assimilation comes from her participation in the marketplace on her own terms. […] When she and Razia start a business, and that traditional element of a male middleman [, i.e. first Chanu, then Karim,] is eliminated, Nazneen begins to participate in the economy and the larger society in a way that benefits her. By contributing her designs and her products to the marketplace, she is participating in the market, giving and taking from it. […] In return, she receives not only her livelihood but also the reward of a niche within the society.[298]

In fact, Alghamdi *reduces* Nazneen's "true" integration into the fictional British society to her integration into an economic system. According to Alghamdi, the main character emancipates herself and becomes an independent woman – in order to participate "in the marketplace on her own terms." In Alghamdi's reading Nazneen's acceptance by and a place in society is guaranteed through marketing "something that is integrally hers"[299]. Nazneen's development resembles the transformation of a *Bildungsroman* heroine into a successful entrepreneur. However, the question of agency remains.

3.4 The Concept of 'Agency'

Generally, the concept of 'agency' connects to questions of "who is able to do what with whom in which way, which effect can be assigned to whom (the individual, the society, anonymous powers etc.) and what is in the power of the individual (factually or imagined)."[300] Some of the most prominent sociological and political debates about agency circle around the work of sociologist Anthony Giddens[301]. He stresses capability as a key component in the agency of an individual:

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[298] Alghamdi. *Transformations*. 161.
[299] Ibid.
[300] Bethmann et al. *Agency.* 10. [Translation by J. F.]
[301] For a detailed discussion of the various traditions of defining 'agency' from a sociological perspective, see Emirbayer, Mustafa and Ann Mische. "What Is Agency?" *American Journal of Sociology* 103.4 (1998): 962-1023 and for another, detailed and updated critique of Gidden's theory, in particular, see Lieblich, Amia, Tammar B. Zilber and Rivka Tuval-Mashiach. "Narrating Human Actions: The Subjective Experience of Agency, Structure, Communion, and Serendipity." *Qualitative Inquiry* 14 (2008): 613-631.

> Agency refers no to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing things in the first place (which is why agency implies power: cf. the Oxford English dictionary definition of an agent, as 'one who exerts power of produces an effect'). Agency concerns events of which an individual is the perpetrator, in the sense that the individual could, at any phase in a given sequence of conduct, have acted differently.[302]

The premise of Gidden's theory of agency, however, is an 'ideal' individual who is self-reflexive[303], acts purposefully, and chooses and carries out actions rationally. Giddens acknowledges the structure a subject is embedded in but does not fully consider their relation in terms of free will and limitations put on the individual. He takes into account Bourdieu's idea of 'habitus' but ignores that 'habitus' is "central to the reproduction of class differences and inequalities."[304] In his conceptualisation of agency, Giddens isolates contemporary individuals, their formations, capabilities and limitations from the context of neoliberal capitalism. This parallels the portrayal of the protagonist in *Brick Lane*, for instance. Nazneen seems to gain agency in her story of emancipation. The type of choices she is capable to make, though, is not put in the wider framework of her fictional British society. I claim that 'agency' in Gidden's theory and in the novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park* is, in fact, a limited conceptualisation – one that goes back to Aristotle and his delineation of the subject which acts with an aim and a purpose, rationally, reflexively and with the freedom of choice[305]. Their idea of agency presupposes a number of points which I problematise in the following: (excessive) individualism, freedom, autonomy.

Individualism vs. Uniqueness – Residing Together or Being Together?

Central to the theory of Giddens is a subject which chooses and acts independently of others "with reference only to the plans and choices of an *individual*."[306] With sociologist Ian Burkitt, I strongly question this approach as it "ignores […] identity to be always primarily based in a *relational* life with others […]."[307] How we define ourselves is entangled with

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[302] Giddens, Anthony. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984. 9.
[303] Reflexivity, for Giddens, is "grounded in the continuous monitoring of action". Giddens. *The Constitution of Society*. 3.
[304] Burkitt, Ian. *Social Selves. Theories of Self and Society*. London: Sage, 2008. 172.
[305] Straub, Jürgen. "Handlungstheorie." *Handbuch Qualitative Forschung in der Psychologie*. Ed. Günter Mey and Katja Mruck. Wiesbaden: VS Springer, 2010. 107-122. Quotation 107.
[306] Burkitt. *Social Selves.* 173. [Emphasis in the original.]
[307] Burkitt. *Social Selves.* 173. [Emphasis added by J. F.]

how others define us. The philosopher Adriana Cavarero made this the principle of her work about subjectivity, of her fundamental deconstruction of liberal individualism. Cavarero emphasises dependencies and vulnerability to others and structures and thereby challenges "the political project of modernity – especially its individualistic corollaries: unrelatedness, self-sufficiency and sovereignty".[308] Indirectly – as I explain below – this challenges the project of neoliberalism and the figure of the entrepreneurial subject as well as the formation of the fictional subjects in the four novels, too. Cavarero criticises classical individualism because it premises that the individual always opts for self-maximisation and that a functioning co-existence, therefore, has to be artificially constructed and regulated. Classical individualism does not conceive a primary 'being together'. It believes in the need for discipline for a 'residing together'. "[A]ccording to the doctrine of natural law, in the classical formulation of individualism, *residing together* […] – rendered possible and disciplined by politics – is the 'artificial' result of an agreement, not the founding condition of humans, in so far as they are constituted by a *being together* […]."[309] Cavarero refers to Hobbes's "theory of the war of all against all" as an example for the way in which "the individualist doctrine ignores precisely the constitutive relation of the self with the other"[310]. As beings originally disconnected from each other "the individuals of the modern doctrine are sources of values and rights for themselves. Their greatest burden is that they must take account of others – they must negotiate rules, accept limits, make compromises."[311]

According to the individualist doctrine, the individual is independent and seemingly unrelated. Neither classical individualism nor neoliberalism, and this I claim, take into account the "constitutive relation of the self with the other". Both classical individualism and neoliberalism see others as the "greatest burden" – either because of the rules, limits and compromises, or because of the permanent competition in which the others act as competitors and potential existential threat. In the novels analysed in this study, the protagonists' 'constitutive relations' are depicted as a restrictive network of relations to be freed of[312] in order for Nazneen, for example, to become a subject with agency. The novels' protagonists approximate the prototype of classical individualism and, by extension, the neoliberal

[308] Guaraldo, Olivia. "Thinkers that Matter. On the Thought of Judith Butler and Adriana Cavarero." *AG About Gender – International Journal of Gender Studies* 1.1 (2012): 92-117. Quotation 108.
[309] Cavarero. *Relating Narratives.* 89.
[310] Ibid.
[311] Ibid.
[312] The protagonists' 'constitutive relations' are depicted as a restrictive network of relations to be freed of *or* to be exploited as resources. See, for example, the case of *Tourism*.

subject[313]. For Cavarero, individuality is "[a]s the elementary lexicon of democracy demonstrates, […] indeed a repeatable, atomized, serial paradigm. Each individual, in and of [herself or] himself, is as valid for *one* as [she or] he is for any other; [she or] he is equal because [she or] he is equivalent."[314] She opposes individuality with 'uniqueness' which is defined by the very relations an individual has and is constituted of. "Uniqueness […] ends up rendering useless both the concept of repetition and the principle of generalization that nourishes the individualist theory. Uniqueness is an absolute difference, which […] changes the very notion of politics."[315] Not despite, but *because* of their relations, individuals are unique. "Not because she is free from any other; on the contrary, the relation with the other is necessary for her very self-designation as unique."[316] This leads to the question of freedom.

A Peculiar Brand of Freedom

A neoliberal agenda regards a subject that has agency, and the figure of the entrepreneur specifically, as a free subject. Individual freedom is one of the philosophical pillars of neoliberal projects. It is a value which the founding fathers of neoliberalism employed "as [a] compelling and seductive [ideal which was] threatened not only by fascism, dictatorship, and communism, but by all forms of state intervention that substituted collective judgements for those of individuals free to choose."[317] Thus, it appears – in theory – as if an individual's freedom stays completely untouched by the workings of neoliberal politics or a neoliberal state. Taking a closer look with Foucault, however, I see 'individual freedom' instrumentalised by, or rather as a *necessary* element for, neoliberal forms of subjection. For Foucault, freedom is intertwined with power in general and with governing in particular.

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[313] See the following chapters about *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park*.
[314] Cavarero. *Relating Narratives*. 89.
[315] Cavarero. *Relating Narratives*. 89.
[316] Cavarero. *Relating Narratives*. 89. Cavarero explains the idea of the uniqueness of the *who* in detail and distinguishes it from the "self-centered and titanic subject of romanticism." The *who* for Cavarero, (is the individual which) is "exposed, relational, altruistic". Cavarero 89.
[317] Harvey. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. 5. Harvey continues on p. 37 that "this liberal utopian vision [of freedom in neoliberalism] can only be sustained by force, violence, and authoritarianism." In his discussion, he uses the term 'freedoms' and distinguishes between 'good' and 'bad' ones. In my discussion, I do not use the plural form in order to consider as many forms of freedom as possible. Instead, I focus only on the use of the word 'freedom' in the context of neoliberal subjectification. This does not mean I abandon the idea of 'freedom' as a value – or what Harvey would term 'good freedoms' – altogether.

> Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments, may be realized. Where the determining factors saturate the whole, there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains. (In this case it is a question of a physical relationship of constraint.) Consequently, there is no face-to-face confrontation of power and freedom, which are mutually exclusive (freedom disappears everywhere power is exercised), but a much more complicated interplay. In this game freedom may well appear as the condition for the exercise of power […].[318]

In Foucault's understanding, power and freedom are not binary oppositions. Instead, power works via the idea of freedom. Neoliberal projects need free subjects with agency. These subjects can then be governed by the way their "possible field of action [is structured]"[319]. With this in mind, the idea of 'individual freedom' inevitably generates contradictions within a neoliberal framework and in the novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park*. The transformations of the protagonists lead me to question the relationship between freedom and agency. As mentioned above, the emancipation of Nazneen is merely a shift from one state of subjection to another. The philosopher Byung-Chul Han goes as far as claiming that the neoliberal instrumentalisation of 'freedom' is a particularly effective form of subjectification and subjection. To exploit someone against their will, is not efficient, he suggests. The profit is too low. In contrast, the exploitation of freedom produces maximum profit.[320] The 'free' neoliberal selves consider themselves as projects to be continuously optimised in order to compete on the market as discussed in the initial chapters of this study. They have to become and they want to become autonomous, entrepreneurial subjects, as I concluded before. They have no other choice than choosing, even among options they don't like: "People have freedom forced upon them."[321] They are aware of the potential consequences of their 'free' decisions and increasingly subject to options and constraints of agency.[322] A belief in the myth of meritocracy, which promises the

[318] Foucault. "The Subject and Power." 790.
[319] Ibid.
[320] Han. *Psychopolitik.* 2014. 9 and 11.
[321] Bröckling. *The Entrepreneurial Self*. xiv. In his text about choice architecture and nudging, Bröckling questions the idea of 'choice' in general. Bröckling, Ulrich. "Gesteigerte Tauglichkeit, vertiefte Unterwerfung. Transformationen des Regierbarmachens." *Soziopolis*. 16.09.2015. www.soziopolis.de/beobachten/kultur/artikel/gesteigerte-tauglichkeit-vertiefte-unterwerfung/ [23.03.2017].
[322] Hirseland, Andreas and Werner Schneider. "Biopolitik und Technologien des Selbst: zur Subjektivierung von Macht und Herrschaft." *Die Natur der Gesellschaft:*

individual social mobility, reinforces this awareness.[323] Meritocracy is proven to "perpetuate, and create, social and cultural inequality"[324] through the individualisation of structural problems stemming from neoliberal governance. This inequality in turn is needed to uphold a competitive spirit on a neoliberal market. I regard freedom in the context of neoliberalism and the novels analysed, therefore, as highly ambivalent for the agency of individuals. Freedom is watered down to serve as a rhetorical tool in neoliberal discourses:

> [Neoliberals'] peculiar brand of freedom is not the realization of any political, human, or cultural telos, but rather the positing of autonomous self-governed entities, all coming naturally equipped with some version of "rationality" and motives of ineffable self-interest, striving to improve their lot in life by engaging in market exchange.[325]

Freedom in the context of neoliberalism frames the individual as autonomous: isolated, not related.[326] In the discussion of agency, this calls for a careful treatment of the novels and neoliberalism's 'peculiar brand of freedom' and for a reconsideration of autonomy.

Relational Autonomy

This positing of autonomous self-governed entities contradicts a fundamental thought about agency as an effect of subjectification. With Judith Butler, Paula-Irene Villa postulates that subjectification is both subjecting and enabling.[327] Subjectification is paradoxical. As I have highlighted in the chapter about the entrepreneurial self, this paradox is smoothed in

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Verhandlungen des 33. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in Kassel 2006. Ed. Karl-Siegbert Rehberg. Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2008. 5640-5648. 5647.

[323] See also Berlant. *Cruel Optimism*.

[324] Littler, Jo. "Meritocracy as Plutocracy: The Marketising of 'Equality' under Neoliberalism." *New Formations* 80-81 (2013): 52-72. Quotation 53. Jo Littler's excellent article gives an overview of the history of the concept and its translation into the context of British politics. "[The meaning of meritocracy] has moved from a disparaging reference to an embryonic system of state organisation creating problematic hierarchies through a dubious notion of 'merit', to a celebratory term connecting competitive individualism and an essentialised notion of 'talent' with a belief in the desirability and possibility of social mobility in a highly unequal society." Littler 68.

[325] Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste.* 62.

[326] This stands in strong contrast to the original meaning of freedom of which Han reminds us of: "Originally, 'to be free' means to be with friends. Freedom and friend have the same root in Indo-Germanic. Essentially, freedom is a word which refers to relationship. […] The total isolation to which a neoliberal regime leads does not really make us free." Han. *Psychopolitik.* 2014. 11. [Translation by J. F.]

[327] Villa. "Subjekte und ihre Körper." 72.

neoliberal discourses.[328] Andreas Hirseland points at the consequences of disconnecting subjectification from agency or, rather, of defining autonomy as "Entpflichtungszwang", as a collective's enforced detaching from its commitments to the individual: it prevents collective agents which could induce political change.[329] Therefore, I argue, autonomy becomes a negation of relatedness and a problematic element in the definition of agency. Why? If freedom, in the context of neoliberalism, has to be re-conceptualised as autonomy[330] and if autonomy means a negation of relatedness, then the meaning of freedom is ultimately reduced to this one dimension: freedom then is the negation of relatedness. And agency is rendered ineffective.

In the following, I oppose the confusion of agency with autonomy and highlight again the importance of relationality for the definition of 'agency'. The model of the "autonomous agent", as John Christman explains, "assumes a conception of human identity […] which is blind to the embeddedness of our self-conceptions, the fundamentally relational nature of our motivations, and the overall social character of our being."[331] The 'relational nature' has been stressed in various disciplines. Studies in psychology, in particular, criticise the conflation of autonomy with agency. Like other psychologists, Çigdem Kagitçibasi observes a strong emphasis on individual autonomy and asks for a "recognition of the possible coexistence of relatedness with autonomy"[332]. Similar to Adriana Cavarero, psychologist Mona DeKoven Fishbane criticises Western individualism and the idea of autonomy as "unembedded self-creation"[333]. She proposes a model of a "relational narrative of the self [which challenges] the excessive emphasis on competition and 'power over' in our culture"[334]. All this runs counter to definitions of the autonomous agent of classical individualism

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[328] Hanna Meissner, too, concludes from her analyses of Butler, Foucault and Marx, that neoliberalism evades this paradox. Meissner, Hanna. *Jenseits des autonomen Subjekts. Zur gesellschaftlichen Konstitution von Handlungsfähigkeit im Anschluss an Butler, Foucault und Marx*. Bielefeld: transcript, 2010. 13.

[329] Hirseland and Schneider. "Biopolitik und Technologien des Selbst." 5647.

[330] Gooptu. *Enterprise Culture in Neoliberal India*. 7.

[331] Christman, John. "Relational Autonomy, Liberal Individualism, and the Social Constitution of Selves." *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 117.1/2 (2004): 143-164. Quotation 143.

[332] Kagitçibasi, Çigdem. "The Autonomous-Relational Self. A New Synthesis." *European Psychologist* 1.3 (1996): 180-186. Quotation 185.

[333] DeKoven Fishbane, Mona. "Relational Narratives of the Self." *Family Process* 40.3 (2001): 273-291. Quotation 288.

[334] Ibid. Furthermore, psychologists Andersen and Chen propose a concept of the 'relational self' as an *interpersonal* social-cognitive theory of the self and personality which, like Cavarero, highlights the importance for the 'significant other'. Andersen, Susan and Serena Chen. "The Relational Self: An Interpersonal Social-Cognitive Theory." *Psychological Review* 109.4 (2002): 619-645.

and theories of neoliberalism explained in the previous chapters. Integrating the aspect of 'relationality' in a conception of a subject that has agency, I argue, extends the limited range of possibilities of agency that discourses of neoliberalism and the novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park*, can offer. Generally, these critical perspectives on 'autonomy' tend to encourage a model of 'relational autonomy'[335]. It is a "label that has been given to an alternative conception of what it means to be a free, self-governing agent who is also socially constituted and who possibly defines her basic value commitments in terms of interpersonal relations and mutual dependencies."[336] Feminist critics, too, have drawn upon this "more robust conception"[337] of autonomy as it allows one to investigate "implications of the intersubjective and social dimensions of selfhood [...] for conceptions of individual autonomy and moral and political agency."[338] Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar employ the term 'relational autonomy' in order to show how important the stabilisation of social conditions is for the unfolding of autonomy. These 'social conditions' include very concrete ideas regarding education, basic resources and housing, for instance.

Narrating Agency

As explained above the narrative is important in my constructivist analysis of the neoliberal novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park*. It is key at this point to not leave the discussion of 'agency' on the level of critical sociology and psychology but to integrate the concept into narratological considerations of the discursive constitution of the subject and discourses of subjectification. As pointed out before, I do not directly correlate the literary form with the content. Their relationship is more complex than a one-to-one reading might suggest. Or as Hanna Meretoja put it: "[N]arrative form in itself does not make narratives either ethical or unethical. What is ethically relevant, instead, is precisely the awareness of the role narratives play in organizing our experiences [...]."[339] What

[335] Christman. "Relational Autonomy." 143.
[336] Ibid. For Hanna Meissner, this means that agency is not just rooted in the core of an individual unrelated to society. For her agency originates in very specific ways from *historical contexts*. Meissner. *Jenseits des autonomen Subjekts.* 12. In addition, Cavarero highlights the role of altruism as a fundamental element in the conception of the self: "Prior to being a generous life-style in the service of others, altruism is indeed the foundational principle of a self that knows itself to be constituted by another: the necessary other." Cavarero. *Relating Narratives*. 84.
[337] Mackenzie, Catriona and Natalie Stoljar. *Relational Autonomy. Feminist Perspectives on Autonomy, Agency, and the Social Self*. New York und Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 147.
[338] Mackenzie and Stoljar. *Relational Autonomy*. 4.
[339] Meretoja. "Narrative and Human Existence." 104.

is remarkable, however, is the role the above-mentioned 'relationality' plays not only for the definition of agency but also for the discursive constitution of the subject as such. Discourses about the neoliberal self and the fictional narratives *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park* often offer monodimensional, teleological 'success stories' of the entrepreneurial self similar to many we find in traditional novels of formation. In contrast, I claim, a more complex discursive construction of the subject in general and of agency in particular could include the idea of 'relationality'. In my opinion, narrating 'relationality' might allow for a problematisation of the 'neoliberal subject' by making impossible the story of excessive individualisation, isolation and competition, and, ultimately, of the individual of classical individualism. Narrating relational subjects and relational agency might raise an awareness which "enables critical reflection on how cultural narratives steer our self-understanding and regulate our being in the world with others"[340]. Adriana Cavarero offers such an intersubjective narrating of the self: dialogically, not monologically like many conventional constructions of the subject.[341] It is an alternative narration to the one Bröckling observes in his analyses of the enterprising self. Here, Bröckling traces a narration which limits selfhood and agency to the paradigmatic "[t]aking one's life in one's own hands means, first of all, becoming the author of one's own story."[342] The story of the neoliberal subject is not told by related others but by or with a strong focus on the unrelated individual. The novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park* are apt examples of this.[343]

The 'narratable self' Adriana Cavarero has in mind, though, does not follow this subject formation of hegemonic discourses. It does not show aspects of subjectivity the neoliberal self and the protagonists of the analysed novels show: "interiority, psychology, agency, self-presence, mastery and so forth. Rather, the 'narratable self' is a unique *existent*, 'who' someone is. Also, this 'narratable self' is constitutively *in relation* with others."[344] Judith

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[340] Ibid.

[341] Fahrenwald, Claudia. *Erzählen im Kontext neuer Lernkulturen. Eine bildungstheoretische Analyse im Spannungsfeld von Wissen, Lernen und Subjekt*. Wiesbaden: VS Springer, 2011. 203, 204. Adriana Cavarero sees a new political potential in the connection between narration and the "revelation of 'who' someone is through that narration". Kottmann, Paul A. "Translator's Introduction." Cavarero, Adriana. *Relating Narratives. Storytelling and Selfhood*. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. (*Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti*, 1997, trans. Paul A. Kottmann). vii-xxxi. x.

[342] Bröckling, Ulrich. "Gendering the Enterprising Self. Subjectification Programs and Gender Differences in Guides to Success." *Distinktion* 11 (2005): 7-23. Quotation 18.

[343] Interestingly, all these novels have a first-person narrator or the protagonist as focaliser. The narratological multiperspectivity is very limited in these cases.

[344] Kottmann. "Translator's Introduction." x.

Butler[345] investigates options in the process of subjectification which allow for a kind of 'autonomous' agency. Cavarero, instead, sees political action in narrative relations already: in the need for narrating the story of the other's life and recognising who the other is, and vice versa, I add, in the need for having the story of one's life told by the other and by being recognised by the other. This narrating each other's lives becomes a political act for Cavarero if politics is defined, with Hannah Arendt, as a 'plural and interactive space of exhibition'. This linking of discourse and life or "suspension of the disjunction between discourse and life", as Kottmann calls it, allows one "to imagine a relational politics that is attentive to *who* one is, rather than to *what* one is. For within the context of telling someone the story of [their] life, within the scene of a narrative relation, the focus is shifted from the generalizable qualities of those involved, to the unique existents with whom the tales correspond."[346] For this study, I draw upon Cavarero's idea of the subject's discursive constitution through relational narrations. It allows for a differentiated definition of agency, not as the characteristic of an isolated individual in competition but as interactions of related, unique existents.

A Voice that Matters?

This comes close to the concept of 'voice' which Nick Couldry offers and which he diagnoses to be endangered in neoliberal systems: "Voice is one word for that capacity [of giving an account of oneself], but having a voice is never enough. I need to know that my voice matters […]."[347] Couldry stresses the significance of the voice as a means for subjects to "give an account of the world in which they act"[348]. 'Voice', thus, draws together the unique narratives of individuals about themselves and about the others.[349] 'Voice' symbolises what was termed 'relational autonomy' above. Couldry warns that it is a problem to consider markets as the only possible model for social organisation because, ultimately, 'voice' does not matter in this

[345] Romele, Alberto. "Narrative Identity and Social Networking Sites." *Études Ricœuriennes / Ricœur Studies* 4.2 (2013): 108-122.
[346] Kottmann. "Translator's Introduction." xxiii.
[347] Couldry. *Why Voice Matters.* 1. Couldry's explanations of 'voice' actually start out from Cavarero and "a notion of embodied experience that emerges through an *intersubjective* process of perception and action, speech and reflection". Couldry 96. [Emphasis added by J. F.]
[348] Couldry. *Why Voice Matters*. 91.
[349] Couldry explains facets of the concept of 'voice' in detail. Voice, for instance, is socially grounded, a form of reflexive agency, an embodied process; voice requires a material form which may be individual, collective or distributed; and voice is "undermined by rationalities which take no account of voice and by practices that exclude voice or undermine forms for its expression". For a summary, see Couldry. *Why Voice Matters*. 7-11.

neoliberal model. This might appear illogical at first as the type of freedom neoliberalism spotlights might look like

> a celebration of voice since what we do as participants in markets can […] contribute to voice, whether individual (consumer boycotts or buycotts), collective (fan communities or user groups) or distributed (the type of clothes I buy, the food choices I make). [But] the notion of freedom underlying neoliberalism is abstracted from any understanding of the social processes that underpin 'voice' in its full sense […]."[350]

This brings us back to my discussion of the notion of freedom at the beginning of this chapter. 'Freedom' spelled as 'autonomy' does not automatically read 'agency'. Without the relational aspects in the narration of subjectification and in the discursive constitution of the subject agency does *not* matter. Relational autonomy is needed for agency, or rather, for a voice that matters. A neoliberal logic creates a gap between the subjects and between the subjects and their voice. According to Couldry, "articulating a voice means challenging the distance that neoliberal logic installs".[351] As the analyses in the following chapters show, the novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park* do not challenge this distance. These novels of transformation do not articulate voices which matter. Their protagonists might find their 'voice' in Mark Stein's sense[352] but they do not find a 'voice which matters' in Nick Couldry's sense: the protagonists might transform into subjects who manage to express their individuality. Yet, they do so only as neoliberal subjects of their fictional British societies, not as a unique existents with a politically relevant form of agency.

As I concluded in the preceding chapter, Nazneen's emancipating development resembles the transformation of a *Bildungsroman* heroine into a successful entrepreneur. The question of agency is problematic in her case. Neoliberal discourses create real fictions of individuals as entrepreneurial selves which allow only for a limited range of interpretations of what it means to be a human being. Narratives of subjectification in neoliberalism "only ever actualize excerpts of possible human action, expanding them out to universals".[353] In this chapter I have dissected some of the definitions of 'agency' in order to indicate that it is essential to not just ask whether agency is gained but *which type* of agency is gained in the novels *Brick Lane*, *Tourism*, *Londonstani* and *Greetings from Bury Park*. The types of agency

[350] Couldry. *Why Voice Matters*. 11, 12.
[351] Couldry. *Why Voice Matters*. 13.
[352] See the chapter about "Novels of Transformation" and the critique of Mark Stein's conceptualisation of voice.
[353] Bröckling. *The Entrepreneurial Self*. 12.

the protagonists achieve inform us about the ways these novels are entangled with hegemonic discourses of neoliberalism. For instance, some of the types of agency echo a 'suffering agency' as termed by Jane Elliott. Suffering agency is a result of the way subjects are governed, i.e. a result of the way their possible field of action is structured. According to Elliott, neoliberal governance offers inacceptable choices which come across as "options with perceptibly different and meaningful consequences"[354] but which are painful and unjust. A good example is the kind of choice the main character of *Brick Lane* is confronted with: is Nazneen's choice between exploitation by her husband and exploitation by the neoliberal market a valid choice? I claim it is a choice which results in suffering agency not in a voice that matters as outlined above. Nazneen's subjectification is a determined process of individualisation as *homo economicus*. It is an "equalising mechanism"[355] which does not leave Nazneen equally empowered to the rest of her fictional British society but which makes her a human resource equally exploitable in a neoliberal system. I read her transformation as a working on the self in the spirit of the entrepreneurial self[356] and as a reproduction of existing power relations.[357] Her agency is bonsaied to the agency of a neoliberal subject.

[354] Elliott, Jane. "Suffering Agency: Imagining Neoliberal Personhood in North America and Britain." *Social Text* 115 (2013): 83-101. Quotation 87. 'Suffering agency' relates to rational choice theories in which the freedom of choice is a basic principle. Rational choice theories put the *homo economicus* centre stage as a subject which chooses according to rational criteria. (See, for example, Bethmann et al. *Agency.* 18,19.) This theory does not consider how a field of possible choices is structured for the *homo economicus*, though. The *homo economicus* might choose according to the most rational criteria. The outcome of their choice, however, might not be a satisfying at all. The choice architecture does not allow for true choice but forces the subject to choose one of equally 'wrong' options. Why does it still work? Elliott explains that "'suffering agency' may simply appear a contradiction in terms. Of course, it is because the type of choices generated under neoliberal rule — genuine, individual, self-directed, and *wrong* — are so difficult to map against our usual political categories that neoliberal governance manages to appear so transparent and blameless." Elliott 88. [Emphasis in the original]

[355] Ahmed, Rehana. "*Brick Lane*: a Materialist Reading of the Novel and its Reception." *Race & Class*. 52.2 (2010): 25-42. Quotation 41.

[356] Nazneen is, for example, innovative, resourceful, risk-taking, searches for and uses opportunities of success, rationally calculates and weighs the choices. She resembles the entrepreneurial self as defined by Bröckling or Mirowski. Bröckling. "Enthusiasten, Ironiker, Melancholiker." 119.

[357] *Brick Lane* and the research results of Alexandra Rau about power and subjectification in neoliberal societies show some striking parallels. Rau. *Psychopolitik*.

4 The Ice skater: Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2002)

Monica Ali's debut *Brick Lane* (2002) is the most famous of the four narratives of transformation I analyse in this study. It was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize for Fiction in 2003. Shortly after, screenwriters Laura Jones and Abi Morgan adapted the story for the film *Brick Lane* (2007) directed by Sarah Gavron.[358] For literary scholar Garrett Ziegler *Brick Lane* is not just a novel but a "phenomenon" due to the "constellation of a ripe market, a notable personal background, and a sensational publishing history"[359]. Monica Ali, born to English and Bangladeshi parents in Dhaka, came to England at the age of three. Later she read Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford University, worked in marketing for two publishing houses and at a branding agency, married a management consultant and had two children.[360] It was then, as a mother of two toddlers, that she started to write the novel as she felt she needed a "space for herself"[361]. Through her connections to Doubleday, she got an offer from the publisher after she had written only a couple of draft chapters. Next, Granta named her as one of the Best of Young British Novelists in 2003 although they had just seen the manuscript.[362] Monica Ali met the demands of a literary market which wanted stories of and about British Asian or rather British Muslim identities after the events of 9/11[363]. *Brick Lane* is the first novel worldwide[364] which mentions the attack on the twin towers, individual reactions to it and local consequences for a British Asian community. Monica Ali's debut quickly became a bestseller. *The Observer* was thrilled. "*Brick Lane* has everything: richly complex characters, a gripping story and an exploration of a community that is so quintessentially British that it has given us our

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[358] IMDb. "Brick Lane." n.d. https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0940585/ [05.07.2018].

[359] Ziegler, Garrett. "East of the City: 'Brick Lane', Capitalism and the Global Metropolis." *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts* 1.1 (2007): 145-167. Quotation 147.

[360] Lane, Harriet. "Ali's in Wonderland." *The Guardian*. 01.06.2003. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/jun/01/fiction.features1 [05.07.2018].

[361] Ibid.

[362] Ellam, Julie and Tom Wright. "Monica Ali." British Council. 2003 and 2007. https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/monica-ali [05.07.2018].

[363] Although they refuse to define 9/11 as a rupture, Ann Keniston and Jeanne Follansbee Quinn see changes in the literary field after 9/11. "[W]hile the initial experience of 9/11 seemed unprecedented and catalysmatic, the experience of incommensurability generated a culture-wide need for explanatory narratives, not simply as a means for countering the trauma, but as a means for refusing incommensurability, prompting attempts to place 9/11 into an historical framework." Keniston and Follansbee Quinn. "Representing 9/11." 3.

[364] Bentley, Nick. *Contemporary British Fiction*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. 92.

national dish, but of which most of us are entirely ignorant."[365] In her review, Geraldine Bedell praised Monica Ali's skill at having constructed an inclusive concept of Britishness. *Brick Lane* might be read as a literary text against the waves of xenophobia and Islamophobia in post-9/11 Britain.[366] At the same time, I argue, the novel's main notion of Britishness offers little else than a variation of neoliberal discourses. Essentially, it is a story about successful migrant entrepreneurship.

In 21 chapters, *Brick Lane* depicts the transformation of the protagonist Nazneen starting with her birth in former East Pakistan in 1967 and ending with her accommodation into the fictional British society of London in 2002. Through an arranged marriage she reaches London at the age of 18 and becomes part of the local Bangladeshi community in Tower Hamlets. Although she lives in the same council estate, she is quite isolated from the rest of the migrant community. In the first part of the novel, she sacrifices herself for her husband Chanu and their daughters Shahana and Bibi. She spends most of her time as a housewife and mother in their apartment before she slowly starts to gain an independent life within her means. The heterodiegetic narration with the central character as the focaliser is complemented by letters from Hasina, her sister in Bangladesh, which often serve as flashbacks to Nazneen's past. This literary device helps to cover a period in Nazneen's life in which she fell silent because of her first child's early death.[367] And it helps to contrast this silence with Nazneen's gradual opening up through her affair with Karim – one of the major turning points in the plot. Next to their love story, Alistair Cormack identifies two other narrative lines which push Nazneen's development and thus function as a motor for the whole novel: "the potential return to Bangladesh planned by Chanu and the extraction of the debt incurred by Chanu to buy a computer – and perhaps more importantly a sewing machine [for Nazneen's work] – by the villainous Mrs. Islam."[368] Key to Alistair Cormack's argument is that the dénouement of all three stories is entangled with the actions of the

[365] Bedell, Geraldine. "Full of East End Promise." 15.06.2003. *The Observer*. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/jun/15/fiction.features1 [05.07.2018].

[366] This reading was not shared by protesters who saw the Bangladeshi community misrepresented in the novel and the film *Brick Lane*. This, however, was only beneficial for both the author and the director as their work received even more publicity. See Ahmed. "*Brick Lane*." 26. For more details about the protests and the general reception of the novel, see Bentley. *Contemporary British Fiction*. 2008. Benwell, Bethan, James Procter and Gemma Robinson. "Not Reading *Brick Lane*." *New Formations* (2011): 64-90. Head, Dominic. *The State of the Novel. Britain and Beyond*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008.

[367] Walz. *Erzählstimmen verstehen.* 200.

[368] Cormack, Alistair. "Migration and the Politics of Narrative Form: Realism and the Postcolonial Subject in *Brick Lane*." *Contemporary Literature* (2006): 695-721. Quotation 706.

protagonist. I go a step further in my analysis and investigate the *type* of agency Nazneen eventually gains through her transformation, in her process of subjectification as enterprising self.

4.1 Emancipation as Formation

Nazneen is unusual as a central character for a novel of (trans)formation. Biologically, she would be defined as an adult, considering that she is a grown-up woman and mother. The formation of her personality, in contrast, is portrayed as ongoing. It is only after years of being married in England that she starts to become aware of herself and to 'integrate' into the fictional British society. One could interpret this comparably late point of becoming a full member of society as a bold move of the author to break with traditional definitions of adulthood. Typically, the age of majority is 18. So, *Brick Lane* challenges conventional conceptions of coming of age during teenagehood and could, hypothetically, complicate clear-cut definitions of what it means to attain adulthood. With Nazneen's process of subjectification in mind, I propose a more critical analysis, however. Nazneen's relatively late (trans)formation towards the normativised model of classical individualism, and by extension, of British citizenship implicates a relatively long childhood. Indirectly *Brick Lane* creates a female migrant subject that easily slips into the category of the dependent, immature subaltern before she develops into an emancipated, responsible and self-sufficient member of society – much to the relief of its educated, middle-class readership. Obviously, this evokes forms of Othering which stem from Britain's colonial past. It confirms an old ideal of a teleological, linear development of the enlightened subject in Western philosophy. This ideal in turn is intertwined with hegemonic discourses about the entrepreneurial self and should be kept in mind when investigating transformations of British society or, in this case, the formation of Nazneen. I argue that it is the protagonist's emancipation from the constrictions imposed on her by her family and closest social environment which make up the main part of her formation. This emancipation is easily interpreted as an awakening to and embracing of neoliberal ideas about what it means to be British.

Nazneen's Nanocosm

After a dedication to her father, Monica Ali opens her novel with an epigraph about the aporia of fate. "'Sternly, remorselessly, fate guides each of us; only at the beginning, when we're absorbed in details, in all sorts of nonsense, in ourselves, are we unaware of its harsh hand.' Ivan Turgenev" and "'A man's character is his fate.' Heraclitus".[369] With these two quotes,

[369] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 9.

she offers two opposing positions about one's destiny and the influence one has or does not have on it. Thus, the epigraph already points to the central theme of the novel: Nazneen's navigation between fate and free will. Depending on her degree of emancipation, the text highlights either the subordination to a perceived bigger, divine plan or independent decision-making based on rational choice. In the beginning of *Brick Lane*, the third-person narrator introduces Nazneen as a patient, passive, almost apathetic protagonist. She is convinced that her opinion does not count and that self-determined actions do not have any effect on the course of her life. She succumbs to a fatalism which prevents agency and stems from her childhood memories. The first chapter, which starts *ab ovo* with Nazneen's birth in East Pakistan in 1967, contains the defining narrative of a major part of her life. As a weak newborn she was not brought to the doctor because her mother was convinced that any intervention would be useless. Instead, Nazneen was left to her fate. In hindsight, she stylises her mother's refusal to help into a 'wise decision' with beneficial consequences for Nazneen's further development.

> As Nazneen grew she heard many times this story of How You Were Left To Your Fate. It was because of her mother's wise decision that Nazneen lived to become the wide-faced, watchful girl that she was. Fighting against one's Fate can weaken the blood. Sometimes, or perhaps most times, it can be fatal. Not once did Nazneen question the logic of the story of How You Were Left To Your Fate. […] What could not be changed must be borne. And since nothing could be changed, everything had to be borne. This principle ruled her life.[370]

The story that she was told as a child, the story of How You Were Left To Your Fate, leaves a long-lasting imprint on her convictions: resistance and self-will are dangerous, change is impossible, endurance is everything. Nazneen translates the logic of her childhood story into her behaviour as an adult without ever questioning her mother's attitude. For years she stoically accepts the monotonous narrowness of her personal universe which is restricted to household chores, the care of her children and husband, as well as religious rituals. The limitedness of her agency in the first part of the novel is emphasised by the claustrophobic environment of their home, the council estate in the London borough of Tower Hamlets. "A red and gold sari hung out of a top-floor flat in Rosemead block. A baby's bi band miniature dungarees lower down. The sign screwed to the brickwork was in stiff English capitals and the curlicues beneath were Bengali. No dumping. No parking. No ball games."[371] The diversity of the inhabitants' lives,

[370] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 15, 16.
[371] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 17, 18.

symbolised by the clothes (a sari and dungarees) and the languages used in their common space (English and Bengali) is controlled by rules and prohibitions. Assuming the role of a traditional Muslim wife and mother, Nazneen further reduces this complexity. Faithful to the motto "If God wanted us to ask questions, he would have made us man"[372], she submits to the dictation of her dominant husband Chanu.

Her spouse, who is twenty years older than Nazneen, is constructed as a foil character in contrast to the protagonist and thereby indirectly defines Nazneen as well. In the character constellation of *Brick Lane*, he is not a flat but a round character who develops into a likeable persona. At the beginning of the novel, however, he is portrayed as a "self-congratulating but deluded failure"[373], as an unattractive and narcissistic loser who patronises his wife and tries to hide his flaws behind empty rhetoric. His position contributes, for example, to Nazneen's continuous isolation. He keeps her in her domestic space by arguing that there is no need for her to go out, that he could get everything she needs and that their community might talk badly about him if they saw Nazneen alone in a public space, i.e. outside his sphere of control. Nazneen's reaction to his utterances is always the same, at least for the first part of the novel: "[s]he never said anything to this."[374] Although Chanu claims to be 'westernized' or 'educated' and that he does not prevent her from doing what she wants, Nazneen follows his implicit demands and stays within his reach. In order to avoid any conflict, she falls silent and thus leaves decisions to Chanu. He even shapes facets of her cultural identity including the plan to return to Bangladesh which had never been Nazneen's explicit wish. In order to cope better with his failure of finding a suitable job, he shifts his concern to their challenges of being Bangladeshi migrants in Britain: "the clash between Western values and [their] own [, or] the struggle to assimilate and the need to preserve one's identity and heritage."[375] Chanu constructs an idealised version of his country of origin in order to feel more stable. Because of the letters of her sister, Nazneen knows that this imaginary homeland does not exist, that Chanu ignores dire realities in Bangladesh. Nonetheless, she does not dare to discuss this with him. As long as she stays faithful to her husband, she stays faithful to his story. Chanu tells her who she is and thus outlines her ability to speak and act.

Nazneen's relationship with Karim, her secret affair, initially functions in a similar manner. Her young lover was born in Britain but searches for his

[372] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 80.
[373] Head. *The State of the Novel*. 82.
[374] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 45.
[375] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 113.

'Bangladeshi roots'. He turns into a religious radical through a local underground movement, the Bengal Tigers. He also assumes his conservative concepts of gender, for which Nazneen is supposed to sign up, would bring him closer to an 'authentic' home. To him she is "the real thing"[376]. For a while Nazneen again performs her role as voiceless, uncomplicated partner who adapts to the needs of a male character. After the death of Karim's mother, she represents for him the link to an 'authentic' Muslim community Karim feared to have lost.[377] Interestingly, Nazneen finds an attraction and a form of coherence in Karim which she connects with a 'westernised' lifestyle. Although her lover differs in many respects from Chanu, both her male partners force their idea of Nazneen upon her. Only in the penultimate chapter of the novel does Nazneen begin to grasp the idea Karim had of her: "[a] Bengali wife. A Bengali mother. An idea of home. An idea of himself that he found in her."[378] For the first part of *Brick Lane* Nazneen is constructed as a submissive migrant woman in strong contrast to her male partners and the power she allows them to exert over her.

Some of the women in the Bangladeshi community of the estate also serve as foil characters helping to define the protagonist. Through them, too, Nazneen appears to have little agency in the beginning. The two strongest female characters in this respect are the influential Mrs Islam, an elderly woman from Bangladesh, and the independent Razia, a friend of Nazneen. Mrs Islam would like to turn the community into a kind of Bangladeshi village over which she rules, "exploiting the vulnerability of Bangladeshi immigrants in her role as a moneylender"[379]. Razia represents a different model of what an empowered British Asian woman could be: "Razia is more adaptable to her new circumstances, symbolised by her clothing, which combines traditional Bangladeshi dress with a Union Jack sweatshirt."[380] She combines traditional Bangladeshi and more contemporary British elements in her value system whereas Mrs Islam clings on to a long-gone version of her rural Bangladeshi past. Nazneen does not identify with either of them. Nevertheless, they are important points of reference for Nazneen who eventually has to orientate herself and find a place as a Bangladeshi woman in London.

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[376] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 385.
[377] Cormack. "Migration and the Politics of Narrative Form." 706.
[378] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 454.
[379] Preston, Peter. "Zadie Smith and Monica Ali: Arrival and Settlement in Recent British Fiction." *Philologia* (2007): 7-23. Quotation 16.
[380] Ibid.

Outside the Migrant Community

Nazneen perceives white British women and their lives only from a distance. This applies not only to the tattooed alcoholic smoking at one of the windows of the opposite building block but also to the business woman at whom Nazneen stares in the streets of London.

> A woman in a long red coat stopped and took a note book from her bag. She consulted the pages. The coat was the colour of a bride's sari. It was long and heavy with gold buttons that matched the chain on her bag. Her shiny black shoes had big gold buckles. Her clothes were rich. Solid. They were armour, and her ringed fingers weapons.[381]

For Nazneen, the woman is a warrior. Her outfit protects her. The quality of the clothes is described as "long", "heavy" and "solid" and compared to a suit of armour. Also, her accessories speak of success. She shines in every aspect: from the gold of the buttons and her bag to the deep black of her shoes. The jewellery on her hands are like weapons to Nazneen. And the fact that the woman is wearing the type of red which is usually worn by Bangladeshi brides leaves the impression that extraordinary luxuries are the norm for her. It also leaves the impression that the woman is married to her war, the work or entrepreneurial life, symbolised by the strategic plan, her note book. Nazneen, in her role of the domestic wife and mother, is fascinated by this female warrior. At the same time, she is intimidated by the sight and suddenly aware of her own naivety, inexperience or insecurity. "Nazneen pulled at her cardigan. She was cold. Her fingertips burned with cold. The woman looked up and saw Nazneen staring. She smiled, like she was smiling at someone who had tried and totally failed to grasp the situation."[382] Through the judgemental smile of the business woman, Nazneen understands how different her life is from a possible life in Britain, a life that is portrayed as successful in the novel.

Through the construction of stereotypes and the use of essentialisms in *Brick Lane*, Nazneen's dilemma as an oppressed woman in a 'liberal' society is underlined. She starts to relativize her idea of a meaningful existence. The central character is increasingly aware of how she is being exoticised or othered. This is accompanied by a growing emphasis on difference in the course of the novel which leads to a hardening of stable positions before they break in the last part of the text. These cracks are entangled with and power Nazneen's attempts to 'liberate' herself. The most obvious moment

[381] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 57.
[382] Ibid.

of exoticisation[383] was already mentioned above: Karim reduces the female protagonist to the ideal of a submissive Bangladeshi wife and mother. Nazneen notices the intensification of difference on multiple levels. The double discrimination she, as a migrant woman faces, results from essentialisations by mainstream society and by men of her direct social environment. It is what Alistair Cormack calls a "double bind that female migrants face, treated as alien by their host nation and as commodities by the men in their own communities."[384] It is a discrimination which excludes Nazneen from participating in the fictional British society of *Brick Lane*. At the same time Nazneen is at the centre of attention. She is an object of desire, not only for Chanu and Karim but also for white media who take photos of her on the street without asking for permission[385] and thus objectify Nazneen into a willingless puppet without rights.

It is Mrs Azad, another member of Chanu and Nazneen's Bangladeshi friends, who strongly criticizes the role of the migrant women most and celebrates a Western lifestyle. From her point of view, women like Nazneen easily shift the responsibility for their situation to society when in fact migrant women themselves contribute to their marginalised position.

> 'Some women spend ten, twenty years here and they sit in the kitchen grinding spices all day and learn only two words of English. […] They go around covered from head to toe in their little walking prisons and when someone calls to them in the street they are upset. The society is racist. The society is all wrong. Everything should change for them. They don't have to change on thing. That,' she said, stabbing the air, 'is the tragedy.'[386]

For her argument, Mrs Azad employs the stereotype of a traditional female migrant who works like a slave in the household without learning English, who is trapped in conservative clothes and avoids any communication with mainstream society. Mrs Azad compares a simplified, idealised version of a 'Western' lifestyle to this in order to make her point.

> 'Fact: we live in a Western society. Fact: our children will act more and more like Westerners. Fact: that's not a bad thing. My daughter is free to come and go. Do I wish I had enjoyed myself like her when I was young? Yes!' […] 'I go out to work. I work with white girls

[383] See Perfect, Michael. "The Multicultural Bildungsroman: Stereotypes in Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* (2008): 109-120. Quotation 113.
[384] Cormack. "Migration and the Politics of Narrative Form." 700.
[385] See Procter, James. "New Ethnicities, the Novel, and the Burdens of Representation." 117.
[386] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 114.

> and I'm just one of them. If I want to come home and eat curry, that's my business.'[387]

In contrast to the life of the stereotyped migrant woman, Mrs Azad glorifies 'the West' by highlighting the evergreens of liberalism: freedom, autonomy, the pursuit of happiness or pleasure, agency, equality. In *Brick Lane* this discrepancy is accentuated by the portrayal of Bangladesh. The letters of Nazneen's sister Hasina speak of hardship, oppression, blind naivety, exclusion, abuse, prostitution, lack of education, and violence. For Nazneen the prospects of being liberated from her status as object and of participating in a more attractive model of society activate her transformation or process of subjectification as (neo)liberal self.

9/11 as Catalyst

The consequences of 9/11 complicate the situation for Muslim women in *Brick Lane*'s Britain: the discriminations Nazneen faces as a migrant woman are now multiplied by a growing Islamophobia. The last quarter of the novel euphemistically represents the events of 9/11 – "a piece of New York dust blew across the ocean and settled on the Dogwood Estate"[388] – in opposition to the violent effects it has on the Muslim communities in *Brick Lane*. Old mechanisms of exclusion resurface. "That the violence suggests repetition of earlier urban tensions is a depressing representation, as London's historic exclusion of difference is resurrected. […] Things indeed may have changed, but 2001 – perhaps – presents its own unique circumstances that raze progress far more quickly that [sic] it has been achieved."[389] In her analysis of *Brick Lane*, Sara Upstone clearly distinguishes between the racism 'black British identities' experience and the specific discrimination which British Muslims encounter because of their religious affiliation. Furthermore, she connects the tense atmosphere in Tower Hamlets after 9/11 to the war in Iraq and the protests in Oldham.

> Not only 9/11 but also post-Iraq War tensions consume the 2001 section of the narrative. Even before 9/11, police are visiting the mosque and questioning the imam (169). [Nazneen's daughter] Shahana turns the television on to find images of 'hooded young men, scarves wrapped Intifada-style around their faces, hurling stones, furious with cars that they set alight' (228). These riot scenes […] contextualizes [sic] the mentioning of 9/11 within a wider discourse of race relations in Britain involving events in Iraq, Palestine, and the

[387] Ibid.
[388] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 368.
[389] Upstone, Sara. *British Asian Fiction*. 172.

growing moral panic inspired by the Western media's Islamophobia.[390]

The most prevalent form of Othering is played out in the category of 'religion' now. Chanu fittingly states, "Thing is, see, they is getting more sophisticated. They don't say race, they say culture, religion."[391] The abovementioned moments of alienation induce Nazneen to reflect about her social position. The tensions in the fictional British society after 9/11 intensify her marginalised situation. They add to her impression of being confined and, simultaneously, open possibilities of change. Nazneen starts to question conditions of her life which she had taken for granted. Very gradually she emancipates herself from dominating power relations and naturalised practices.

Emancipation

Nazneen becomes increasingly aware of her position and of the distance between who she is and who she aspires to be. This process of awakening and emancipation leads to conflicts with other characters in the novel. The main character fights the dominance of her husband – although in small acts of revenge at first. When Chanu refuses to help her sister Hasina in an emergency Nazneen realises how helpless she is, that she is at the mercy of her husband's decisions because of their traditional gender constellation. She is furious and finds consolation in hidden subversion, for example of the tasks she carries out for Chanu. "[S]he chopped two fiery red chillies placed them, like hand grenades, in Chanu's sandwich. Unwashed socks were paired and put back in his drawer. The razor slipped when she cut his corns. His files got mixed up when she tidied."[392] The daily household chores she used to do with devotion turn into weapons against her husband. The food she prepares for him becomes munition, body care turns into physical harm, and instead of tiding up Nazneen creates more chaos for Chanu. She harms him to the extent that is possible for her. "All her chores, peasants in his princely kingdom, rebelled in turn. Small insurrections, designed to destroy the state from within."[393] Nazneen hopes that her small revolts will finally lead to a revolution undermining Chanu's power.

The contact with her young, radical lover Karim makes Nazneen understand how much she had compromised her needs for her husband, how limited her life is, how cut off she is from dynamics in society and from the freedom a younger generation enjoys. The beginning of the affair between

[390] Upstone. *British Asian Fiction*. 172, 173.
[391] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 241.
[392] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 63.
[393] Ibid.

her and Karim is therefore not a further act of revenge against Chanu. It is a demonstration of Nazneen's freedom of choice which now weighs more than her conservative religious belief or the opinion of others. For Ruth Maxey, the relationship between the protagonist and her lover forms the main turning point in Nazneen's emancipation. "Passive and reactive for much of the novel, she achieves a sense of self through her sexual awakening following her love affair with a young middleman, Karim […]."[394] I disagree. The reactions to the events of 9/11 are more important and lasting for the main character than her relationship with Karim. Simply put, they are a stronger catalyst for her (trans)formation regarding independence and agency than her fling with a lover who, just like Chanu, degrades Nazneen to an exoticised object. Dominic Head outlines the biggest changes for the Nazneen's life which were triggered after 9/11: "Chanu determines, finally, to go back to Bangladesh; and Nazneen is galvanized with a new mood of self-assertion, breaking things off with Karim, standing up to Mrs Islam, and determining to defy Chanu and stay with her daughters in England."[395] The spatial distance to Chanu releases Nazneen from the relationship of dependence, from her position as an obedient housewife who lives for her husband and children. With her separation from Karim she also abandons a conservative model of gender relations in which she is objectified. In her confrontation with Mrs Islam she reacts to years of exploitation and humiliation which were made possible through traditional expectations of respect for the elderly and religious blindness.

Nazneen shows confidence and intransigence in the face of injustice now. This does not mean that she joins the radicalised religious groups in the Bangladeshi community in order to be more self-determined. Nor does she give up her belief system completely – although she makes religion responsible for the suffering and suicide of her mother. Nazneen takes on a more independent position but one which still provides her with a sense of continuity and coherence for her new situation in life. "Rather than an instance of cultural assimilation, we can read this as a more benign form of integration, in which the abiding independent spirit of East End immigration supplies the bedrock for a newly politicized Muslim identity,"[396] claims Dominic Head. Indeed, Nazneen's transformation leads to a position in which a Muslim identity, the participation in British society and gender emancipation do not exclude each other. However, I warn of labelling Nazneen's process of subjectification a 'benign form of integration'. By the end of the

[394] Maxey, Ruth. "'Representative' of British Asian Fiction? The Critical Reception of Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*." *British Asian Fiction. Framing the Contemporary*. Ed. Neil Murphy and Wai-chew Sim. Amherst: Cambria Press, 2008. 217-236. Quotation 222.
[395] Head. *The State of the Novel.* 90.
[396] Ibid.

novel the only relevant form of integration Nazneen has achieved is along the lines of hegemonic neoliberal discourses. This is also why I would like to problematise Chris Weedon's generalising opinion about contemporary literature written by British Asian women writers. "Yet if oppressive relations of class, gender, and racism figure consistently in the texts [of British South Asian women writers], they do not produce passive victims, but rather forms of resistance and negotiation that lead to positive identities."[397] As I detail below, Nazneen does gain agency and might represent what Chris Weedon calls a 'positive identity'. The scholar explains that "texts [like *Brick Lane*] make visible and challenge racist and ethnocentric white British ideas of otherness and explore the processes that give rise to new, hybrid forms of culture and identity."[398] Nevertheless, I urge to investigate what kind of agency Nazneen gains and in which ways these 'new, hybrid forms of culture and identity' feed into established discourses of the neoliberal self.

4.2 Bangladesh in London, London in Bangladesh

Nazneen's emancipation and liberation is supported by the depiction of spaces in the novel *Brick Lane*, the combination of letters from her sister Hasina with the main, third-person narration, as well as the intertextual reference to the socio-economic study *The Power to Choose* by Naila Kabeer[399]. These narratological devices help to naturalise the kind of formation Nazneen experiences and the type of agency she gains. The "rooted, realist prose"[400] of *Brick Lane* makes possible a coherence of the narration which is mirrored in the choice of the narrator. Although Nazneen is the focaliser, the third-person narrator implies an authority who can describe characters and events in a relatively distanced and consistent way. The chronological order of the storyline is only interrupted by Nazneen's silence after the death of her first child and by the letters from Hasina. Generally, the protagonist' story follows a linear development. So, on the whole, "the chronology moves forward based on a realist framework of cause and effect."[401] Pieces of information from scientific studies and the mass media add to the realistic depiction of East London: the dialogues in *Brick Lane* quote newspaper articles, official statistics and studies; the novel portrays poverty and unemployment as well as the tensions in British

[397] Weedon, Chris. "Migration, Identity, and Belonging in British Black and South Asian Women's Writing." *Contemporary Women's Writing* 2.1 (2008): 17-35. Quotation 24.
[398] Ibid.
[399] Kabeer, Naila. *The Power to Choose. Bangladeshi Women and Labour Market Decisions in London and Dhaka*. London and New York: Verso, 2000.
[400] Upstone. *British Asian Fiction*. 9.
[401] Bentley. *Contemporary British Fiction*. 85.

society after the events of 9/11.[402] By employing a realist mode in her novel, Monica Ali tries to bring closer to her readership the social groups with whom they would normally not be in contact, claims Susanne Cuevas. For her argument Susanne Cuevas compares *Brick Lane* with literary texts of the 19th century.

> *Brick Lane* suggest[s] a revival of social realist modes of writing and show[s] parallels to late 19th-century naturalist accounts of the life of the poorest in the city slums by authors like George Gissing and Arthur Morrison. It is certainly no coincidence that [*Brick Lane*] also take[s] in the Thatcher years, the period which most closely resembles Victorian Liberalism, for enquiring into the condition of those parts of society which are the victims of a free market economy and a greatly reduced welfare state. Similar to their 19th-century predecessors, […] Ali strive[s] to inform and enlighten an audience which is largely ignorant of the life of these groups […].[403]

It might partly be true that Monica Ali has an interest in pointing to the social ills of contemporary Britain. I argue, however, that employing a realist mode in her debut novel is less about informing readers about 'victims of a free market economy' and more about creating an atmosphere which highlights the resilience Nazneen, as a migrant woman, develops in order to finally accommodate to the existing society. In fact, the optimistic ending of the novel cares little about 'victims'. Instead it frames the free market economy as *the* social structure into which Nazneen happily integrates.

Othering London

Nazneen's transformation goes hand in hand with the novel's settings and spatial dynamics. She is on a quest through various fictional locations starting in East Pakistan and quickly shifting to London where the protagonist's actual formation takes place. Here, she embarks on a journey through the different realities of the city spanning the decades between the 1980s and 2001. Nazneen's first excursion through East London without Chanu sketches the fictional contrast between life in the district of Tower Hamlets, with Brick Lane in particular, and the financial district in Bishopsgate. In the 1980s, Brick Lane and the surroundings are mainly inhabited by migrants of Bangladeshi origin. As a newcomer Nazneen perceives its street life in a poetically alienating way.

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[402] Walz. Erzählstimmen verstehen. 204.

[403] Cuevas, Susanne. "'Societies Within': Council Estates as Cultural Enclaves in Recent Urban Fictions." *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+. New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts*. Ed. Lars Eckstein, et al. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008. 383-395. Quotation 392.

> Twice she stepped into the road and drew back again. To get to the other side of the street without being hit by a car was like walking out in the monsoon and hoping to dodge the raindrops. […] A horn blared like an ancient muezzin, ululating painfully, stretching his vocal cords to the limit. […] A pair of schoolchildren, pale as rice and loud as peacocks, cut over the road and hurtled down a side street, galloping with joy or else with terror.[404]

In the beginning the central character still filters the world around her through her eyes as a migrant. She conceptualises the impressions with the terminology she acquired in rural East Pakistan. The stream of cars is compared to rainfall, their sound echoes the voice of an old muezzin. The schoolchildren look like rice, sound like birds and move like horses. Nazneen draws on a vocabulary of 'nature', one which had shaped everyday life in her village before she moved to London. So, the protagonist translates her new experience into a familiar but seemingly unfitting discourse. Despite the poetic rendering of her fictional East London, symptoms of poverty, neglect and dependencies do not escape from Nazneen's view. "Two men were dragging furniture out of a junk shop to display on the pavement. One of them went inside and came out again with a wheelchair. He tied a chain around it and padlocked it to an armchair as if arranging a three-legged furniture race."[405] The part of the city is associated with junk, with leftovers blocking the way. Everything is kept in the hope that it might still be of value and generate an income. Rubbish piles up, takes the upper hand, obstructs the streets. It becomes a symbolic empire of waste. "And the streets were stacked with rubbish, entire kingdoms of rubbish plied high as fortresses with only the border skirmishes of plastic bottles and grease-stained cardboard to separate them."[406] The fictional Brick Lane of the 1980s could be a hint at Thatcher's politics. The cuts in public spending become visible in urban space and in particular in marginalised places.[407] So, first Nazneen is repelled by the situation in Brick Lane. She feels lonely despite the migrant background she shares with its population. She realises that women are not visible in Brick Lane. "[T]he waiters [of restaurants in Brick Lane] were at home asleep, or awake being waited on themselves by wives who only served and were not served in return except with board and lodging and the provision of children whom they also, naturally, waited upon."[408] The invisibility of women in the public space of Brick Lane is a sign for their and for Nazneen's inability to act, for their lack of power, for

[404] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 54, 55.
[405] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 54.
[406] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 55.
[407] Procter. "New Ethnicities." 116.
[408] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 55.

their dependency. By exploring her surrounding spaces this becomes clear to Nazneen.

She encounters a very different scenario in the financial district. Women are not only visible there; they even appear confident and fierce. One example is the business woman mentioned in the analysis above. Other people who move through this part of the city as well as its architecture emphasise the impression of power, coldness and competition. "Men in dark suits trotted briskly up and down the steps, in pairs or in threes. They barked to each other and nodded sombrely. […] Every person who brushed past [Nazneen] on the pavement, every back she saw, was on a private, urgent mission to execute a precise and demanding plan."[409] Again, Nazneen draws on a vocabulary that is familiar to her in order to describe the unfamiliar. In this case, the men she observes are like dogs, in packs, barking. The speed of their movements is part of the nervousness of a capitalist metropolis. Gigantic buildings made of glass and steel, or of white stone, symbolise the economic system, the 'urgent mission', which sucks in or spits out people.

> The entrance [of one of the glass buildings] was like a glass fan, rotating slowly, sucking people in, wafting others out. […] Nazneen craned her head back and saw that the glass above became dark as a night pond. The building was without end. […] The next building and the one opposite were white stone palaces. There were steps up to the entrances and colonnades across the front.[410]

Nazneen is impressed. The light glass tower turns into a dark space the higher up she looks: intransparent, alien, intimidating. The top of the tower, i.e. the leadership of the system is obscured by the clouds. The tower, a pars pro toto referring to the economic system, cannot be fully seen or understood by the protagonist. Even the neighbouring majestic buildings made of white stone symbolise a seemingly invincible empire. For Nazneen the architecture in the financial district, the heart of the fictional Britain, is new, overwhelming, alienating. At the same time, she is stimulated by this unfamiliar space. "Nazneen, hobbling and halting, began to be aware of herself. Without a coat, without a suit, without a white face, without a destination. A leafshake of fear – or was it excitement? – passed through her legs."[411] She is not equipped for her new environment yet but she begins to be aware of her position. So far, she was led by destiny. Now she is thrilled by the thought of finding a destination in life.

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[409] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 56.
[410] Ibid.
[411] Ibid.

In the novel the streets of East London change and by the beginning of the 21st century the formerly run-down quarters around Brick Lane are gentrified spaces. Here, people come to consume an exoticised version of Bangladeshi cultures. The place Nazneen now sees does not resemble the Brick Lane of the 1980s anymore.

> The bright green and red pendants that fluttered from the lampposts advertised Bangla colours and basmati rice. In the restaurant windows were clippings from newspapers and magazines with the name of the restaurant highlighted in yellow or pink. There were smart places with starched white tablecloths and multitudes of shining silver cutlery. In these places the newspaper clippings were framed. The tables were far apart and there was an absence of decoration that Nazneen knew to be style. In the other restaurants the greeters and waiters wore white, oil-marked shirts. But in the smart ones they wore black. A very large potted fern or a blue and white mosaic at the entrance indicated ultra-smart.[412]

Rubbish and chaos have given way to an ordered world: culture is clearly indicated by colour, cuisines are advertised and the quality of the restaurants is documented by framed clippings, the interior is trendy because of the purist design, the starched tablecloths and the shiny cutlery. The black outfit of the waiters or an entrance with orientalised decoration adds to the elegance of these new spaces. Thus, the cultural influences of the Bangladeshi migrant community have become a commodity ready to be consumed. Nazneen is made part of the Orientalised version of Brick Lane when she serves as a clichéd motif for the British media as mentioned above. According to James Procter, ethnicity becomes a style or fashion in this new version of Nazneen's fictional multicultural London.[413] In this setting Nazneen is perceived as 'authentic' and, just like the space 'Brick Lane', reduced to a few characteristics. The exoticisation of Nazneen in this space corresponds with the essentialisation by Chanu and Karim.

Public and Private Space Redefined

Only when Nazneen starts to liberate herself does she move more freely and confidently through the city. In the last chapter of the novel, i.e. toward the end of her process of formation, Nazneen "makes her most definitive entry into public space"[414]. She takes part in a demonstration against Islamophobia and racism after 9/11. "In doing so, she not only challenges the oppression and stereotyping of Muslim women from both within her own community and outside it, she also becomes part of a wider Muslim

[412] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 252.
[413] See Procter. "New Ethnicities." 117.
[414] Upstone. *British Asian Fiction*. 173.

alliance bridging the distance between migrant and British-born subject,"[415] observes Sara Upstone. As part of her emancipation Nazneen moves through the city on public transport in order to meet Karim and break up with him. Afterwards, she searches the streets determinedly for her daughter. Her autonomous movements through the fictional spaces of London show that she has left her position as an obedient housewife ruled by patriarchy and objectified by both her own migrant community and the wider mainstream society. In her newly found position the protagonist feels empowered enough to ask a policeman, representative of the state, the rhetorical questions "*Do you see me now? Do you hear me?*"[416] Nazneen wants to be seen and heard. She wants to be perceived as a full member of society. Birgit Neumann states about *Brick Lane*: "[a]s in many other novels of formation, the process of self-empowerment involves the transgression of spatial boundaries and is thus modelled as an act of claiming new spaces."[417] I would add that Nazneen's process of self-empowerment entails an act of *re*-claiming old spaces, too. After her separation from Chanu and Karim Nazneen renovates her small apartment in the council estate. She realises that she had never fully settled in during all these years with Chanu who had claimed to take her back to Bangladesh anytime. Finally, she is able to create a home for herself.

> She should have bought plants and tended and loved them. All those years ago she should have bought seeds. She should have sewn new covers for the sofa and the armchairs. She should have thrown away the wardrobe, or at least painted it. She should have plastered the wall and painted that too. She should have put Chanu's certificates on the wall. But she had left everything undone. For many years all the permanent features of her life had felt temporary. There was no reason to change anything, no time to grow anything.[418]

In hindsight she regrets that "she had left everything undone". This relates not only to her flat. In the widest sense it also relates to her life in London. She was not able to "change anything" although she could have started something new. Caught in a situation of waiting for her husband's decision, she was not able to grow roots in her new home. At the end of her process of transformation she springs into action. Once she decides to stay in England and to live an independent life, she starts to reconstruct the space that

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[415] Upstone. *British Asian Fiction*. 174.
[416] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 469.
[417] Neumann, Birgit. "Fictions of Migration: Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2004), Andrea Levy's *Small Island* (2004) and Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* (2006)." *The British Novel in the Twenty-First Century. Cultural Concerns – Literary Developments – Model Interpretations*. Ed. Vera Nünning and Ansgar Nünning. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2018. 87-100. Quotation 92.
[418] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 342.

surrounds her. "She looked up at the wallpaper, shyly turning in on itself. Nothing would stick to those walls. They would have to be scraped clean and begun afresh."[419] The agency Nazneen gained finds expression in the reconstruction of her 'home'. She rids herself of old, obsolete ideas and wants to start afresh in the fictional society of *Brick Lane* to which she finally accommodates.

Language and Letters from Bangladesh

Nazneen's story is told by a third-person narrator in standard English. Nazneen's direct speech in the dialogues of the characters is written in standard English, too. That her language repertoire is actually informed by her Bangladeshi background is only revealed in the images she employs to make sense of her new life in London. As mentioned above, the protagonist compares the traffic with the monsoon rain, the honking of cars with the call of a muezzin, the schoolchildren with excited peacocks. In Nazneen's mind the buildings in the financial district turn into intimidating palaces and on her flight from the City she discovers a small park which to her is a protected 'treasure'. "In this city, a bit of grass was something to be guarded, fenced about, as if there was a sprinkling of emeralds sown in among the blades."[420] Nazneen holds the little patch of green in the city against her memories of the lush fields in Bangladesh. Her neighbour, who spends the day drinking and smoking at the window, reminds Nazneen of the sadhus that passed her village. "Every time Nazneen saw her she wore the same look of boredom and detachment. Such a state was sought by the sadhus who walked in rags through the Muslim villages, indifferent to the kindness of strangers, the unkind sun."[421] And she compares Chanu's interest in education, specifically in the classics of European literature, with the reading addiction of a man who was considered mad in her old home.

> 'This is a very good book. *Sense and Sensibility*.' [Chanu] said it in English. 'It's difficult to translate. Let me think about it.' […] Chanu had fallen asleep with his face in the book, the page marked with dribble. All that reading was not good for him. He could end up like Makku Pagla. […] People said he was soft in his head because he was always reading. Books had cracked him, and the more cracked he became the more books he read. That was how he earned his name, Makku Pagla, or Lunatic Makku.[422]

Ironically, these signs of Chanu's 'madness' show most clearly in the passages when he praises British literature while denying Nazneen an English

[419] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 437.
[420] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 57, 58.
[421] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 18.
[422] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 76, 78.

language course. He is certain that his wife and mother-to-be will soon have better things to do than to learn English. Nazneen thinks that Chanu's missing pragmatism and his otherworldliness stem from his excessive appetite for books which she had also observed in Makku Pagla. The image of her husband who falls asleep over *Sense and Sensibility*, drivelling, emphasises her impression. Sara Upstone claims that these comparisons or metaphors function as a vital strategy. "[They serve] Nazneen's emotional survival in her first year in London, but also marks her out as archetypal diasporic subject, with one foot in present location [sic], another in the geography of the past."[423] The figurative language allows the reader access to the protagonist's relationship to her environment. In the first part of the novel, the prospect of returning to Bangladesh influences this relationship and her feeling of isolation in the Western megacity. In the last part of the novel, these linguistic devices, such as similes, appear less. This parallels Nazneen's transformation, her emancipation and growing desire to make London her new home.

Nazneen's use of standard English, particularly in the letters to her sister in Bangladesh, is another way of underlining her development. On page 36 of *Brick Lane*, the reader finds out that Nazneen hasn't learned any English in London so far. This raises the question of how the protagonist communicates with her sister. Hasina uses a non-standard variety of English which is grammatically incorrect. Nazneen must usually speak a variety of Bengali while the text is written in English. Unlike some other British Asian authors who mark the language use of their protagonists, Monica Ali evades a definition. Thus, language becomes an issue – not so much for Nazneen but for the reader. Until the point when the main character cannot pronounce the word "ice skating"[424] correctly, the dialogues do not contain changes of languages; the text suggests that Nazneen is able to speak English although she could say only 'sorry' and 'thank you' when she arrived in London. Alistair Cormack deduces that this is "an act of control that *translates* all experiences and indeed words into an English register"[425] and which creates an effect of realism. By narrating Nazneen's story in standard English – both indirectly by the third-person narrator and directly by Nazneen, it is transferred into a conventional form of realism. Cormack claims that translation as "productive impossibility has been replaced by an unproblematic rendering of one culture's signifying systems in another's. [Instead of] a mode of representation that is fragmentary or provisional, we find a voice that confidently synthesizes different experiences to one

[423] Upstone. *British Asian Fiction*. 170.
[424] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 36.
[425] Cormack. "Migration and the Politics of Narrative Form." 17.

identifiable reality."[426] Monica Ali employs this technique also in order to put in opposition the two worlds of the sisters. Hasina writes her letters in vernacular, for instance: "[i]n London do roads ever melting? Aleya have cousin is Londoni. She tell me in London the people have no God. I keep quiet when she say."[427] This use of pidgin English has an effect on two levels, according to John Marx: first, it "confirms the hierarchical arrangement that elevates Nazneen's entrepreneurship while devaluing Hasina's romantic impulse. [Second, it] implies a hierarchy between the localities in which Hasina and Nazneen operate."[428] Thus, one could say that Hasina's language in the letters reinforces stereotypes about Bangladeshi women workers, such as a lack of education, oppression, dependencies, abuse, or victimhood in general. However, literary scholars, like John Marx, tend to ignore passages of the novel which suggest a different reading of Hasina's language. Pages 93 and 94, for example, show how Nazneen interprets the letters of her sister.

> Whenever she got a letter from Hasina, for the next couple of days she imagined herself an independent woman too. The letters were long and detailed. Nazneen composed and recomposed her replies until the grammar was satisfactory, all errors expunged along with any vital signs. But Hasina kicked aside all such constraints: her letters were full of mistakes and bursting with life.[429]

The main character tries to perfect her writing and erases all errors but also all signs of life. Hasina seems to have freed herself of conventions. Her life is exciting and the way she writes about her adventures is as irregular. Her messages help Nazneen to imagine to become just as independent. Hence, Hasina does not just fulfil a stereotype but is admirably autonomous in the eyes of Nazneen.

Literary scholars Alistair Cormack and Michael Perfect at least refer to an ambiguity in Hasina's language use. "Without any account by the narrator, it is hard to know exactly what we are reading – whether the letters represent inept attempts at English or are a free translation from illiterate Bengali."[430] Despite this ambiguity, Cormack chooses the second variation. Because Nazneen has not learned English yet when she receives her sister's first letters, she would not be able to read them in English at this point. Interpreting these letters as translations influences the effect Hasina's lines have. Despite her texts' lightness mentioned above, one can trace a certain

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[426] Ibid.
[427] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 154.
[428] Marx, John. "The Feminization of Globalization." *Cultural Critique* (2006): 1-32. Quotation 21, 22.
[429] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 93, 94.
[430] Cormack. "Migration and the Politics of Narrative Form." 715.

fragility. This becomes a key factor in Nazneen's process of emancipation. Toward the end of the novel not Hasina but Nazneen, the main character, seems to be an empowered woman who has gained agency. In comparison Nazneen has a better life in London – at the expense of the representation of Hasina's life in Bangladesh.

The Power to Invert

The references to the publication *The Power to Choose*, or rather how the study is employed in the novel *Brick Lane*, create a similar effect. In her acknowledgments Monica Ali thanks the author, social economist Naila Kabeer, and states that her debut novel was inspired by Kabeer's analysis about Bangladeshi women.[431] Thus, the novel appears to be academically informed. Readers might assume to gain an insight into the Bangladeshi communities in London, although fictionalised. Just like Naila Kabeer, Monica Ali focuses on Bangladeshi garment workers in London and Dhaka. Drawing on interviews from the socio-economic study helped the novelist to narrate Nazneen's story in a realist mode. Nazneen seems to be a convincing representative for the Bangladeshi female workers in East London, Hasina for the female workers in Dhaka. In his detailed comparison between *Brick Lane* and *The Power to Choose*, Michael Perfect arrives at a very different result though. The protagonists who gain agency or 'the power to choose' in Naila Kabeer's study are not the workers in London but mainly the female factory workers in Dhaka. These Bangladeshi women give a report about their growing wealth and autonomy. The migrant workers in London who were interviewed by Kabeer report their financial difficulties, abuse, racism and isolation.

> While Kabeer certainly draws attention to the exploitative conditions which Bangladeshi women in both London and Dhaka have been exposed to by the garment industry, she finds in the emergence of garment factories in Dhaka a narrative of ongoing social and economic emancipation, but takes the "home-based piecework" carried out in London as being symptomatic of ongoing social and economic exclusion.[432]

Monica Ali used for the portrayal of the women in Bangladesh, whom Hasina mentions in her letters, the most negative examples from the socio-economic study and dramatised them. According to Michael Perfect, Dhaka thus appears more oppressive than in Kabeer's most drastic accounts. The portrayal of Nazneen comes closest to the most positive interviews with Kabeer's informants. Hence, the literary text twists the results

[431] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 493.
[432] Perfect. "The Multicultural Bildungsroman." 118.

of the socio-economic study. As a consequence, Hasina's letters about the dramatic situation in Dhaka create the backdrop to Nazneen's emancipation in London. In this context, Nazneen's work as a seamstress is not a means of oppression but the key to more independence and freedom of choice. In *Brick Lane* 'the power to choose' is given to the main character, not to the protagonists in Bangladesh. "Over the course of *Brick Lane*, Hasina becomes increasingly powerless and socially excluded while Nazneen undergoes such a powerful emancipation that she is finally 'startled by her own agency' […]."[433] Albeit fictional, the positive note on which Monica Ali's debut novel ends suggests new possibilities for Bangladeshi women in London. To gloss over these implications of Monica Ali's glorious tale can be dangerous. Framing the novel as utopian realism, Sara Upstone, for example, puts forward that the "hopefulness of *Brick Lane* might actually have become more 'real'"[434]. Evidence for this are in her opinion the "optimistic position on multiculturalism"[435] and "the rise in Britain of a socially progressive and more inclusive Islam"[436] as well as "a broader agenda for social justice"[437]. I say that the 'hopefulness' of *Brick Lane* is tightly intertwined with promises of neoliberal discourses and *as such* has definitely become more real, but perhaps not in the sense Upstone means since the only agency ascribed to Nazneen is heavily circumscribed by neoliberalist imaginaries and practices.

4.3 Empowered to Have a Hobby

The possibilities that *Brick Lane* sketches for Nazneen might transgress limitations set by categories of gender or of religion but are still within the framework of hegemonic neoliberal discourses. I argue that in her process of subjectification, Nazneen aspires to become, and as a result of her transformation approximates, a version of the entrepreneurial self. This includes gaining autonomy but not necessarily a voice that matters. Central for her motivation and a leitmotif of the novel is the metaphor of the ice skater. I read this as a variety of the entrepreneurial self to which Nazneen aspires.

In Search of the Mini-skirted Entrepreneurial Self

Nazneen first watches ice skating on TV. It is a couple which performs in a competition and it is the woman in particular who impresses Nazneen.

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[433] Perfect. *Contemporary Fictions of Multiculturalism.* 128.
[434] Upstone, Sara. "Representation and Realism. Monica Ali's *Brick Lane*." *Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing*. Ed. Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin. New York and London: Routledge, 2012. 164-179. Quotation 177.
[435] Ibid.
[436] Ibid.
[437] Ibid.

"She […] flung her arms above her head with a look so triumphant that you knew she had conquered everything: her body, the laws of nature [and her male partner]."[438] It is obvious that the female ice skater represents the binary opposition to Nazneen's position at this point of her story. The main character is fully controlled by her husband, by her community, by her religion, by her belief in fate. Nazneen has not conquered a single aspect of her life; the multiple dominations she suffers are anything but triumphant. She is curious. "'What is this called?' said Nazneen. Chanu glanced at the screen. 'Ice skating,' he said, in English. 'Ice e-skating,' said Nazneen. 'Ice skating,' said Chanu. 'Ice e-skating.' 'No, no. No e. Ice skating. Try it again.' Nazneen hesitated. 'Go on!' 'Ice es-kating,' she said, with deliberation."[439] For Chanu the scene on TV is ordinary; for Nazneen it is so extraordinary that she did not even know what it is called and has trouble pronouncing the word. Her husband belittles her for being so inexperienced. He patronises her and makes her understand that this new world of ice skating is beyond her grasp anyway. "Chanu smiled [about her pronunciation]. 'Don't worry about it. It's a common problem for Bengalis. Two consonants together causes a difficulty. I have conquered this issue after a long time. But you are unlikely to need these words in any case.'"[440] At the beginning of the novel the ice skater seems to be from a different world, unreachable for Nazneen. Still, the 'ice skater' becomes Nazneen's metaphor for individuality, freedom, agency. As such it helps Nazneen to reflect on her own situation, to search for opportunities, to consider her choices and to become innovative and resourceful in the course of the novel. In the beginning, it breaks her mind-numbing routine as a servant to her own family.[441]

> Life made its pattern around and beneath and through her. Nazneen cleaned and cooked and washed. […] And the days were tolerable, and the evenings were nothing to complain about. Sometimes she switched on the television and [watched ice skating]. While she sat, she was no longer a collection of the hopes, random thoughts, petty anxieties and selfish wants that made her, but was whole and pure. The old Nazneen was sublimated and the new Nazneen was filled with white light, glory.[442]

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[438] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 36.
[439] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 36, 37.
[440] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 37.
[441] Later in the story, one could say, the 'ice skater' also stands for discipline, resilience, self-responsibilisation, risk-taking, permanent self-optimisation, competition and a drive for success.
[442] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 40, 41.

The metaphor of the ice skater allows her an ideal vision of herself, complete and closer to what she perceives as her pure or true self. Ultimately, this metaphor of the ice skater powers Nazneen's transformation.

The 'ice skater' appears repeatedly in *Brick Lane*, for instance to undermine Nazneen's idea of the 'good', i.e. chaste housewife. In chapter 6, for example, Nazneen stands in front of her mirror and pulls up her underskirt in order to pose like an ice skater. She thinks "where's the harm?"[443] The shorter skirt allows her more freedom, more ability to move. This act of playful liberation symbolises Nazneen's questioning of the patriarchal order and beginning emancipation. The protagonist's process of transformation ends with the actual realisation of her dream to ice skate. Her last doubts that one cannot skate in a sari are dispelled by her friend Razia. "'This is England,' she said. 'You can do whatever you like.'"[444] And on this note the novel *Brick Lane* ends. By approximating her ideal version of herself, the 'ice skater', Nazneen turns into an emancipated, independent entrepreneurial woman. And by turning into an emancipated, independent entrepreneurial woman she approximates the 'ice skater'. On the final pages of the novel she becomes Razia's business partner in London's garment industry – and goes ice skating with her.

Balancing Inequality through Assimilation?

After its publication, Monica Ali's debut novel was generally well received. Nevertheless, *Brick Lane* was criticised for treating the social ills of the time too superficially and for the unconvincing representations of British Asians.[445] Michael Perfect, for example, problematises the stereotyping of the culturally Other in *Brick Lane*. He disagrees with literary scholars who assume that Monica Ali deliberately employed stereotypes in order to question them ironically. Instead of destabilising stereotypes Monica Ali's main interest is in the potential of individuals to assimilate, he claims. According to him, "Ali employs stereotypes as counterpoints in order to further emphasize her protagonist's final integration into contemporary British society […]."[446] And even Sara Upstone, who in her 2010 monograph praises *Brick Lane* as one of the first novels that engages with post-9/11 Britain specifically, admits: "even a novel, which, on one level is counter-discourse, may promote Orientalist stereotypes."[447] Although Monica Ali writes against the new Orientalisms after the events of 9/11, she contributes to

[443] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 141.
[444] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 492.
[445] For an overview of critical voices, see, for example, Maxey. "'Representative' of British Asian Fiction?" 217-236.
[446] Perfect. "The Multicultural Bildungsroman." 109.
[447] Upstone. *British Asian Fiction*. 39.

essentialisations and negative representations. Both Sara Upstone and Bruce King demand a more differentiated characterisation for Nazneen's husband Chanu and her sister Hasina.[448]

I argue that the danger of the text lies less in the stereotyping of the characters. As explained above the simplified characterisation of Chanu and Hasina helps to carve out the main character Nazneen. They serve as foil characters and emphasise Nazneen's growing self-determination. What I consider more problematic is the portrayed potential to assimilate, or rather, *how* Nazneen integrates into the fictional British mainstream society. In her transformation, Nazneen liberates herself of relationships of dependence, e.g. with her husband and her lover. This is a very conventional plot and still very popular in the literary field of the 21st century.[449] Apart from interpreting Nazneen's transformation as an "overly optimistic kind of humanism"[450], one should raise the question whether Nazneen's process of emancipation and finding a voice actually leads to a voice that matters. James Procter, too, is irritated by Nazneen's new role or the ending of her story: "[the ending] insists on a more complex, unguaranteed understanding of black representation and subjectivity. But while it rejects the consolatory narrative of political unity and correctness, it has little to offer in the way of political alternatives."[451] In *Brick Lane* Monica Ali assigns to her protagonist a relatively limited type of agency and little empowerment as citizen.

Neoliberal Citizenship Naturalised

For literary critic M. K. Chakrabarti, the first part of *Brick Lane* promises to "reveal the explosiveness of 21st-century British multiculturalism"[452] and to analyse political power dynamics through the character Chanu. Nonetheless, the second part of the novel drifts into well-established stories about adultery, Muslim radicals and the return 'home', the migrant's point of departure. In Chakrabarti's opinion, Monica Ali shies away from a

[448] King, Bruce. "Monica Ali. *Brick Lane*." *World Literature Today* (2004): 91.
[449] Poet, actor and playwright Yusra Warsama criticises the narrative of the oppressed Muslim woman who manages to break free. As a 'sexy story' it easily entertains the audience and dominates the few positive representations of Muslim women in British society. Adams, Tim. "'Art Gets Things Out in the Open' – Young British Muslim Artists Tell Their Stories." *The Guardian*. 12 April 2015. http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2015/apr/12/young-british-muslim-artists-mohammed-ali-aveas-mohammad-yusra-warsama-aisha-zia [21.04.2018].
[450] Tew, Philip. *The Contemporary British Novel*. London and New York: Continuum, 2007. 208.
[451] Procter. "New Ethnicities." 118.
[452] Chakrabarti, M. K. "Marketplace Multiculturalism." *The Boston Review*. December 2003. http://new.bostonreview.net/BR28.6/chakrabarti.html [21.04.2018].

confrontation with the "unfamiliar, distasteful, dark side of multiculturalism"[453]. I take this point further and claim that the novelist evades engaging with Britain's neoliberal past, a past which certainly contributed to the 'dark side of multiculturalism' in the present. Nazneen seems to assimilate well to her fictional society. Yet, she assimilates with the wrong assumption that the 'neoliberal economy' is synonymous with 'British society'. On her first, carful explorations of London, Nazneen quickly realises that she is not an active participant in the economic life of the city yet.

> Every person who brushed past her on the pavement, every back she saw, was on a private, urgent mission to execute a precise and demanding plan: to get a promotion today, to be exactly on time for an appointment, to buy a newspaper with the right coins so that the exchange was swift and seamless, to walk without wasting a second and to reach the roadside just as the lights turned red.[454]

Nazneen enters a public space in which all the persons are described with attributes of the entrepreneurial self. They are on a mission and have a plan, aim for financial success, optimise their timing, show efficiency in their smallest acts. Nazneen is impressed by their speed, precise calculations and egoistic goal orientation. These features contrast her characteristics as selfless housewife and mother. Nazneen feels left behind and insecure. "[H]obbling and halting, [she] began to be aware of herself. Without a coat, without a suit, without a white face, without a destination. A leafshake of fear – or was it excitement? – passed through her legs."[455] She starts to realise what she needs in order to become a member of this fictional world of business: a coat, a suit and a white face – markers of ambition and success. Nazneen is confused. This society is both frightening and attractive. In the same passage she understands that she cannot withdraw from the dynamics of capitalist economy.

> The woman looked up and saw Nazneen staring… No longer invisible, Nazneen walked faster and looked only at what she had to see to walk without falling or colliding. It occurred to her that she had, without meaning to, compared herself to God. This thought distressed her so much that tears came into her eyes and she banged into a man whose briefcase swung against her knee like a mallet.[456]

Nazneen is not an invisible bystander anymore. She is forced to adapt her rhythm. She is convinced that the outsider position is blasphemous and any critique arrogant. She is punished for her emotional outburst, for not

[453] Ibid.
[454] Ali. *Brick Lane*. 35.
[455] Ibid.
[456] Ibid.

functioning but disrupting the activities in her environment. At this point the symptoms of neoliberalism begin to normalise for Nazneen and to become the main characteristics of the fictional Britain to which she adapts. *Brick Lane* naturalises its version of neoliberal Britain as a "*neutral* space of an 'inclusive' multicultural Britain"[457]. Finally, Nazneen accommodates to this society – as a member of the neoliberal capitalist metropolis but not as a citizen of a state. Here, I agree with Garrett Ziegler's statement in his analysis of *Brick Lane*. "The global city […] becomes a site of liberation for 'Third World' migrant women only insofar as it exists as a site for financial exchange, for working and buying and selling, for the blood and breath of the capitalist economy."[458] In her process of subjectification, Nazneen exchanges the pressures which originated from her position as a migrant woman from Bangladesh for pressures of an enterprising self. In fact, it is "a nightmarishly problematic proposition, one that asks women and immigrants to seek liberation through the very system that constitutes their marginalization."[459] Nazneen's way to escape inequality and oppression is thus a dead end on the long run.

Whatever You Have to Like

Brick Lane is a novel of transformation in which the protagonist successfully liberates herself from restricting categories of gender, religion or ethnicity. The novel suggests to the reader that "although limited by circumstances, we make our fate"[460]. For making her fate, the central character has to gain agency. Literary scholar Birgit Neumann claims that Nazneen's story is not about finding a voice but about the 'small acts of agency': "[h]er travels through the city and eventual familiarity with London's topography; her work as a sewer; […] her discovery of her body as well as her small acts of rebellion against Chanu's authority all allow Nazneen to counter her double marginalization as a woman and a migrant."[461] This type of agency gives Nazneen autonomy but not *relational* autonomy. It results in a 'suffering agency' as her field of possible actions is structured by neoliberal discourses and practices. The main character has to choose between the exploitation by her husband and exploitation by the neoliberal market. And here I would like to revise Birgit Neumann's statement. *Brick Lane is* about finding a voice. But it is not a voice that matters as outlined in my chapter about 'Agency'. The transformation of the protagonist is a determined process of individualisation as *homo economicus*, an equalising mechanism.

[457] Ahmed. "*Brick Lane*." 25. [Emphasis added by J. F.]
[458] Ziegler. "East of the City." 145.
[459] Ibid.
[460] King. "Monica Ali. *Brick Lane*." 91.
[461] Neumann. "Fictions of Migration." 92.

Nazneen becomes equally exploitable as any other human resource in her fictional British society. Actually, the concluding sentence in the final ice-skating scene of *Brick Lane* needs correction. *You can do whatever you like: working, buying and selling*. Nazneen's transformation is a working on the self in the spirit of the enterprising self and ultimately reproduces existing power relations. Her free will is framed by hegemonic neoliberal discourses.

5 The Flâneur: Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's *Tourism* (2006)

In contrast to the novel *Brick Lane*[462], Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's *Tourism* is not a story of a successful entrepreneurial protagonist finding her place in a fictional British society shaped by neoliberalism. Rather, it is a sarcastic portrayal of neoliberal Britain sketched by the first-person narrator Bhupinder Singh Johal, nicknamed Puppy. 29-year old Puppy is what Mark Stein[463] would term an 'outsider within', the son of Sikh parents from India who migrated to London for a better life. He represents an entry point to an alternative account of an imagined England in the early 2000s: bleaker, non-PC and less naïve than *Brick Lane*, for example. At first sight, Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's novel might, therefore, seem like a refreshingly critical analysis of the political situation in Britain after 9/11. What I claim in my analysis of *Tourism* is that the narration manages to question 'identity' and 'multiculturalism' but that the protagonist is far from finding a 'voice that matters' or gaining agency which could be relevant politically.

Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal creates an anti-subject in his novel. Puppy does not believe in neoliberalism's promise of meritocracy. He lays open the power of money and the inequalities the current system generates – not along lines of gender or ethnicity but along the lines of class primarily. Instead of positioning himself against this inequality, he succumbs to a hedonistic lifestyle. Puppy's story could be considered subversive and I value its picaresque pitch. He embodies the figure of the flâneur who is able to travel all sections of society and still keep a distanced view on the situations – like a tourist.[464] However, doesn't Bhupinder's sarcasm and decadent lifestyle ultimately contribute to the confirmation of neoliberal discourses? Does the protagonist's transformation through various kinds of excess go beyond the realisation that traditional values such as the nuclear family and fatherhood need to be upheld, that they are, basically, the very few or only meaning-generating moments in life?

5.1 From Mocking Multiculturalism to Colliding with Class

Tourism is a novel of transformation. In numerous flashbacks by the autodiegetic narrator, it traces the formation of the main character. It also addresses the dynamics in a fictional London society. Furthermore, it can be read as a mock confessional account, a metafiction the narrator writes, or a

[462] Ali. *Brick Lane*.
[463] Stein. *Black British Literature*.
[464] 'Flâneur' and 'tourist' are not the same. In some cases, however, they are related. The leisure traveller, for instance, can be regarded as one type of flâneur. Koshar, Rudy. "Seeing, Traveling and Consuming: An Introduction." *Histories of Leisure*. Ed. Rudy Koshar. Berg: Oxford and New York, 2002. 8.

picaresque story. Most importantly, *Tourism* is a story of individualisation. And a story of the longing to belong at the same time. The novel is mainly set in London in spring and summer 2002. The framing chapters are set in Italy in September 2003 and in Egypt in October 2004. The first one introduces the travelling narrator and protagonist Bhupinder Singh Johal (Puppy) about to tell his story. This story, the main part of the novel, starts in medias res in Victoria, central London, and tracks a rough chronology interspersed with episodes from the past. The reader learns about Puppy's childhood in Southall, about his early adulthood in Hackney and his excursions to the world of London's metropolitan elite where he falls in love with Sarupa.

Family and School Life

Bhupinder portrays his family situation rather gloomily: his parents are Indian Sikhs who settled in Southall with their three children. After the alcoholic, adulterous father leaves the family, the mother projects all her hopes onto Puppy, her eldest son. She is characterised as both an uneducated but able corner-shop owner and a controlling, religious mother. With roots in rural Punjab, she never fully adopts a 'British lifestyle'. Rather, "England brought out the zealot in her"[465] and after her husband left her "spiritual fervour reached its peak."[466] Only later in life, Puppy starts to appreciate her strong will and the devotion to her family for which she provides on her own. As a young boy, he is ashamed of what he perceives as her backwardness. He recalls:

> BEHOLD!, THE ASIAN family: unit of tradition, moral strength and business acumen. Behold!, my mother: matriarch and fulcrum, proud bearer of sons, stately in her new sari, her one eyebrow draped across her forehead like a trophy pelt, her moustache downy like an adolescent boy's. […] For her disappointments, we suffered a mother who looked like an animal. […] Religion played its part. When Dad left she visited the temple most days and listened to the day-long service. […] She […] observed every tenet. The beard, the thick adjoining eyebrows, became bullish assertions of faith, admired, even coveted, by her peers.[467]

His mother's self-consciousness and resistance to assimilate has consequences for her children, too. They are forced to identify with a culture only their parents were familiar with, take up their mother's religious practices and shoulder her aspirations of a better future. As a boy, Puppy – although embarrassed by his appearance – fulfils his mother's demands and

[465] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 39.
[466] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 137.
[467] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 34.

performs his duties as a Sikh: he wraps his long hair in a joodha knot on top of the head, later in a turban "blighting [his] adolescence"[468], and he does not shave. He attends religious services, takes Punjabi lessons and eats the traditional cuisine of the Punjab region. All this makes him an outsider at school, a space with predominantly white pupils. He is sent to school in Greenford, not Southall, because his parents assume their son could profit from the 'white' British students' education.

> My parents […] sent me to school in Greenford; they thought white kids were smarter, and that this would help me. […] [Of the three other Asians in my class] I was the most conspicuous, my hair coiled behind my head like some prissy Frau. […] Mum tied it in a joodha, a bun wrapped in a handkerchief, like a little suet pudding.[469]

However, these students are exactly the cause of Puppy's xenophobic experience in his childhood years and the reason he starts to become racist in a way, too: "poor White people" and "Blacks" are the ones who bully him at school and marginalise his identity as a Sikh in British society even more.

> I hate poor White people. […] They made my life hell when I was a child. […] My last two years at primary school were impossible. […] I had no friends, apart from Asaf, and he wasn't a friend, just another 'stani' who'd been ostracized from the herd. We spent our break periods together, sharing our loneliness; for this we were labeled 'gaylords' by those who made pariahs of us in the first place. […] The Blacks were only too happy to join in; in fact, Black boys were among my worst tormentors.[470]

For Bhupinder school becomes torture. The "White" working-class environment turns out to be a pool of aggressive boys, often from difficult family backgrounds, who discriminate against Puppy by behaving in xenophobic and homophobic ways. His experience with the girls at this school is disappointing in other ways. Again, he is excluded from the majority, for instance when the girls choose their dance partner for the yearly country dance routine:

> The boys would line up in the practice hall; the golden boys were picked first, blond-haired tykes with ear studs and scabbed elbows. I watched the girls […]: with each decision I was destroyed. The boys were whittled down to the runts, but even the mad hyperactive black kid who stabbed us all with his pencil was chosen.[471]

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[468] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 39.
[469] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 44.
[470] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 115, 116.
[471] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 45.

Puppy starts to step away from his Sikh identity as a young adult. To the horror of his mother, he neglects his religious duties, cuts his hair, shaves, drinks alcohol and smokes. He is disillusioned by his mother's ascetic way of life which does not allow for any pleasure and only causes him trouble outside his own family. Also, he does not want to be burdened with the task of becoming an ambitious and successful son, and therefore making up for what his father failed to do and what his mother had to suffer.

> I cried for my desperate, backward and abandoned mother, and for my desperate no-good bastard father. Most of all, I cried for me, the desperate first-born son who'd now have to pick up the tab, but couldn't afford the bill. […] I knew then that religion was for suckers. There was no God. If there was, He was a shit and not to be trusted.[472]

Although he is offered a place at Durham University to study medicine, he deliberately fails his A levels because "he wanted to be a failure" and "didn't want anything to be expected of [him] anymore."[473] He even drops out of the course in business administration in Leicester which he had entered instead. The constellation of Bhupinder's family lays the foundation for his rebellion. His mother in particular serves as a foil character to the formation of Puppy's character. In contrast to the bleak life of the conservative, ascetic and devout mother who is filled with bitterness, Bhupinder's emerging thirst for sex, drugs, fun and indulgence appears even stronger.

Cynical Views on Society

After eighteen months of aimless hanging out at his mother's place, Bhupinder eventually decides to move on. He enrols for a four-month journalism course supported by the New Labour government to "help the unemployed and members of ethnic minorities to enter the news industry"[474], finds new friends there and moves to Hackney where he shares a flat with one of them, Michael. Puppy distances himself from his family, finds them exhausting and only visits them to beg for money. He takes on a job as an entertainment correspondent for *UK Asian* a "flimsy, stupid weekly paper aimed at 'second-generation British Asians'"[475] but leaves to become a freelance journalist who reviews CDs and writes for men's magazines. It is in the atmosphere of Blair's Britain which celebrates multiculturalism where Puppy's mock racisms resonate even more cynically than before. Observing the communities in Hackney, he distinguishes 'Blacks' from 'Whites',

[472] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 138.
[473] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 187.
[474] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 71.
[475] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 211.

comments on both with equally strong stereotypes and does not affiliate with any social or cultural group:

> [The group of young black men on the sidewalk] were couriers for crack dealers who operated inside, taking orders on mobile phones then despatching them via a flunky. One of these flunkies was bare-chested; he stood leaning on a railing at the edge of the road, caressing his six-pack. A young, very pretty Black girl walked by; he said something in lewd, inaudible patois, and the men laughed. Her face turned to the pavement, she walked a gauntlet of gold-capped sneers. […] '[Hackney is] making me a racist,' [Puppy said to Michael].[476]

The young men Puppy describes resemble his own, new persona: proud of their attractive bodies, outspoken, up for any sexual adventure, ready to make quick money, left with only few options in life. Still, Bhupinder distances himself from their behaviour. He is only more judgemental of the White youth in Hackney, whom he calls the 'white-trash'[477]. When he watches them kill a pigeon his opinion is confirmed: "The cruelty and imbecility of the working class is limitless"[478]. In his comparison between black and white people, he ultimately takes sides with the Blacks because they had been "fucked by slavery: plantations don't foster an ethos of erudition, commerce and deferred gratification." In contrast, he does not feel sorry for the underprivileged white people. For him, they are racist and stupid: "I've no concern for their class struggle – the bourgeoisie didn't shove turds through our letterbox. The decline of the working class […] only proves their stupidity. My mother barely spoke English, but was a competent, shop-owning microcapitalist: if she can prosper in Great Britain, then it's only the truly fucking dumb who can't."[479] Bhupinder's exaggerated essentialism is applied to anyone – positively or negatively – and extended to any social group throughout the novel. Even in the description of his friend Michael, Puppy resorts to outdated biologisms:

> He was well over six feet tall, and was an interesting Caribbean mix – tar-black skin, hazel, European eyes and sleek, almost Asiatic features, combined with a powerful West African frame, perfected by slavery, its harsh conditions of natural selection. It's great to know that in his grab for wealth, Whitey created the body his women want to fuck the most. [480]

Bhupinder again tries to show that the "Whiteys" are inferior to their former slaves, that in fact the former colonizer added to the superiority of the

[476] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 63, 64.
[477] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 116.
[478] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 115.
[479] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 116.
[480] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 62.

Blacks by tightening 'natural selection'. To bring Puppy's non-pc pigeonholing to an extreme, Michael chimes in on the absurd racist discourse and ridicules first Eastern Europeans, then Muslims. He picks up on a perceived mainstream xenophobia which lets "niggers look smart"[481] because other cultural, ethnic or religious groups are being discriminated against more strongly now:

> 'The best thing that's happened to black people in this country was letting these [Eastern European] idiots in. […] You already see it in the media. The papers don't make a big deal about Yardies anymore, they're obsessed with these Albanian gangs now.' […] 'These dummies are making life easy for black people. Same as Muslims are good for black people. 9/ 11 was a break for niggers. White people are cutting us some slack, now we're not top of their shit-list. […] 'Niggers might rob you and rape your girlfriend, but they won't land a fucking plane on you.'[482]

Bhupinder is quite clear that the causes for racism and discrimination are linked to social and economic inequalities, although his statements not always show it. The humorous, or rather, sarcastic use of stereotypes empower him. At least through language he is able to reverse the sense of marginalisation he experienced. He is now in the position to discriminate against any identity through his distanced cynicism and leaves the impression that he is not in the position of the victim anymore.

Reversing the Colonial Gaze?

According to literary scholar Ellen Dengel-Janic the novel's essentialisms are a satire and, therefore, a form of destabilising discourse: "Instead of representing unstable, shifting and hybrid identities, Dhaliwal seems to relapse into essentialism, cultural difference and racial stereotype. The reader is constantly confronted with disturbing clichés and generalisations, which, are, however, part of the novel's satirical mode." [483] In addition to the interpretation Dengel-Janic offers, one could define more precisely which type of subversion is at work in Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's novel. Sabine Nunius, for instance, interprets Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's use of differential categories as a clear reversal of former imperial discourses.[484] Although Nunius

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[481] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 67.
[482] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 67,68.
[483] Dengel-Janic, Ellen. "'East is East and West is West': A Reading of Nirpal Dhaliwal's *Tourism* (2006)." *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+. New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts*. Ed. Lars Eckstein, et al. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008. 341-354. Quotation 341.
[484] Nunius, Sabine. *Coping with Difference. New Approaches in the Contemporary British Novel (2000-2006)*. Berlin: LIT VERLAG, 2009. 114.

offers a very detailed analysis of the novel, she seems to overlook that her argument does not apply to Puppy's random discrimination of any kind of identity. Bhupinder does not simply flip old binary opposites such as East and West, Orientalism and Occidentalism. The novel is not a straightforward subversion of dichotomies established by a Western colonial discourse or an attempt to bring the marginalised to the centre by reversing the hierarchy of categories. Rather, I claim, it is a picaresque portrayal of multiculturalism. The narrator plays with stereotypes in order to expose them and in order to ridicule the 'political correctness' of middle-class liberals. For Anamik Saha, it is exactly through this attack on the politically-correct liberal white society that the second-generation Asian identity of Bhupinder is expressed.[485] Richard Bradford draws a parallel between Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) and Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's *Tourism*. He, too, highlights *Tourism*'s attack on white liberals: "Dhaliwal's Bhupinder Singh Johal is Karim reborn with extra portions of loathing both for white liberals – who wallow in the 'vague suicidal melancholy' of post-colonial guilt".[486] The postcolonial guilt is what sociologist Paul Gilroy defined as 'postimperial melancholia'[487]. It prevents a conviviality in Gilroy's sense and reinforces a categorisation of cultural differences in the name of 'diversity'. Bhupinder provokes this 'diversity' in the ironic stereotyping of any identity, including his own cultural, ethnic and class background. "This is definitely taking humorous depictions of immigrants à la Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith and Meera Syal a step further. […] Dhaliwal creates a post-modern flaneur who turns away from his own culture, and instead seeks access to upper class lifestyle with its promise of luxury and leisure."[488]

As part of his unflinching take on 'political correctness'[489] and in the detached manner of the decadent flâneur, Bhupinder repeatedly indulges in detailed narrations of his sexual encounters. He consumes white female bodies, either in the shape of prostitutes or in the shape of his rich girlfriend Sophie. London, for him, is a 'miscegenist heaven'. Most interethnic relationships mentioned in the novel, though, are "viewed from a cynical

[485] Saha, Anamik. "'Londonstani' by Gautam Malkani; 'Tourism' by Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal." *darkmatter*. 14.06.2007. http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2007/06/14/londonstani-by-gautam-malkani-tourism-by-nirpal-singh-dhaliwal/ [06.08.2017].
[486] Bradford, Richard. *The Novel Now. Contemporary British Fiction*. Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007. 112.
[487] Gilroy, Paul. *After Empire. Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* London and New York: Routledge, 2004.
[488] Dengel-Janic. "'East is East and West is West'." 347.
[489] The non-pc narration might be a reason why Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's novel is not canonised in the way the other analysed novels are.

distance as comical stereotypes of desire"[490]. Moreover, his explicit sex scenes lack any eroticism "as Puppy describes the various sexual acts in clinical detail and in so doing removes any illusion of emotional attachment or desire."[491] The pornographic narrations are often cut short by Bhupinder's laziness or boredom. Before he or his partner reach a climax, Puppy loses interest and is distracted as a scene with his girlfriend Sophie shows:

> My prick stiffened. I held her buttocks; I gripped one and she moaned […]. I fingered her arsehole; she liked it and pushed her hips back, easing it in further. […] I thought about fucking her again, but saw no reason to spoil her. I drew my face away and nodded to the bowls of coffee, the two slices of toast lying on the work top. 'I've made breakfast.'[492]

For Bhupinder, Sophie merely represents an entry point to London's upper class. He moves into her flat in Holland Park, lives on her money and exploits her sexually. He is spoiled with a hedonist lifestyle and enjoys his life as a kind of decadent dandy. He has no aim or belief system but indulges in nihilism and does not actively look for a meaningful existence. Just like some of his predecessors in stories of the decadent movement[493], however, the protagonist of *Tourism* soon grows tired of excess and reaches a moment of exhaustion. At this point he longs for some sort of 'healthy normality', which is, in Bhupinder's case a relationship, and ultimately a home and a family, with Sarupa, with whom he falls in love. Unfortunately, rich Sarupa is out of reach: Puppy's quest for the 'right partner' clashes with class barriers.

A Quest Story with Class Barriers

The 'quest story' (Hirsch) which I linked in the previous chapters to Stein's 'radical generational conflict' turns in the case of *Tourism* into a 'radical class conflict'. Once Bhupinder's quest for a decadent lifestyle in exchange for minimum effort transforms into a quest for Sarupa, i.e. the ideal partner, he is confronted with class barriers. The protagonist experiences a conflict: the strategies, including his non-PC sarcasm and flâneur-like behaviour, which had helped him so far to get involved with people from the upper classes are useless. Sarupa is engaged to the wealthy cousin of Sophie and stems from a very successful and influential family with Indian roots who

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[490] Ilott, Sarah. *New Postcolonial British Genres. Shifting the Boundaries*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. 130.
[491] Ilott. *New Postcolonial British Genres*. 131.
[492] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 49.
[493] For instance, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. 1890. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2001. Or Joris-Karl Huysmans' *À rebours*. Paris: G. Charpentier, 1884.

migrated from Uganda to London before she was born. Puppy instantly feels emotionally connected to her. Despite some shared cultural markers, Bhupinder and Sarupa do not have much in common. Most importantly, he lacks the key to her social group: financial capital. "Her dismissal of him in favour of her rich but uninteresting fiancé serves to highlight the novel's ideology: it is not romance that has the power to unite different social factions, but money."[494] Sarupa, nicknamed Super, is the adored daughter of the Sodhilal family. She is well-educated, hard-working and ambitious. Like her father, she embodies the entrepreneurial subject of neoliberalism. She works as a commercial lawyer for a firm which promotes free enterprise and is convinced she is contributing to positive change in the world:

> 'We promote free enterprise. We help governments break up state monopolies and introduce reforms, opening markets to foreign and private investment. We present them with a format, a legal framework for a competitive business environment. I [also] help manage a venture capital fund for my dad and his friends. We've created it to invest in young Asian entrepreneurs. It's called Indravest. We're hoping to fund some MBAs and bursaries.'[495]

Sarupa's aspiration, her belief in meritocracy and her motivation to initiate 'positive change' for others distinguish her from the other 'rich kids' Bhupinder knows. One of them is his friend Luca, for example. According to Puppy, Luca lives in complete ignorance of his privileges and – saturated by luxury – lacks direction in life:

> It was through knowing Luca that I saw how charmed and beautiful other people's lives can be. Luca had no idea how lucky he was, so pissed away his time as a twenty-first-century roué. He even had the twenty-first-century roué's career of choice: he was a DJ. […] Luca muddled along, cutting the odd record and playing at the occasional club. He didn't need fame, everything was already on his plate: money, friendship, sex.[496]

Although Bhupinder finds Luca's decadent lifestyle and habitus attractive in the beginning, the inequalities increasingly annoy him. "When a rich white kid tells you they're acting, modelling or making music, it means they're doing fuck all."[497] These kind of young people have the financial, cultural and social capital Puppy needs on his Sarupa quest but had done nothing to either earn it or fully appreciate it.

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[494] Ilott. *New Postcolonial British Genres.* 131.
[495] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 80.
[496] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 71.
[497] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 135.

Bhupinder had been aware of the power of money before, its ability to let "ethnic and cultural differences [retreat] into the background"[498] as he observes in Sophie's wealthy neighbourhood, for instance: "Money alchemises people, the mere suspicion of it changes everything. […] They were a beloved elect: Europeans, Arabs, Americans and Jews; each saw the other through a prism of money, and loved what they saw."[499] To a certain extent, Bhupinder even follows the logic of Sarupa's argument who is in favour of Thatcher's and Blair's ideologies. Sarupa claims: '[Thatcher] was Britain's first Indian Prime Minister.' […] Her life and values are totally consistent with ours ... She believed in hard work and ambition, and created an economic environment in which people with those values could flourish.'[500] In the course of their dialogue then, Sarupa's explanations leave him frustrated as they frame his life as failure: "'What are you thinking?' said Sarupa. 'You look glum.' 'I was thinking about how great it must feel to be successful. It must feel great to have money and no fears.'"[501] Their conversation cumulates in Puppy's dramatic outburst about the ultimate value of money:

> 'Money isn't everything.' [Sarupa] put her hand on my shoulder. 'It's more important to be happy.' 'No it isn't. And you know it isn't. […] Happiness is overrated. It's bullshit. […] It's contingent and transient. But money ...' I stared at her elegant fingers, at the diamond shining on her ring. 'Money is always money. It doesn't fuck you around. You know where you stand with money.'[502]

Meeting Sarupa leads Bhupinder to question his own life. At the same time, he knows that his social position is not merely the outcome of his shortcomings or only his responsibility. He experiences an unresolvable conflict between individual and society. Dengel-Janic reads *Tourism* as an "indirect critique of [New] Labour policies and leftist thinking [of the 1990s] which produces a feel-good multiculturalism, empty slogans of tolerance and political correctness as the ultimate means to an egalitarian multi-ethnic Britain."[503] Bhupinder's story shows that growing tensions in Britain at the turn of the century are not actually connected to ethnic or cultural differences but to economic inequality.

One scene vividly illustrates the difference Bhupinder senses. In a karaoke session with his wealthy friends, Bhupinder starts growing conscious of his voice: "[The] sound of [my voice] surprised me. […] I was taken aback by how particular I was, how rooted in time and place: everything about me

[498] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 128.
[499] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 52, 53.
[500] Ibid.
[501] Ibid.
[502] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 151, 152.
[503] Dengel-Janic. "'East is East and West is West'." 352.

came from the Punjabi suburb of West London. I felt embarrassed. I realised how outlandish my presence here was."[504] The difference of his voice shocks Bhupinder. He fully grasps now that he does not belong to his circle of elite friends: "Everyone else belonged to a milieu of metropolitan wealth, their differences in colour subsumed within a shared order of money. Their lives were firmly aligned. Mine was experiencing just a glancing encounter with theirs, before I ricocheted back into oblivion."[505] Ultimately, not belonging to the 'milieu of metropolitan wealth' means never reaching Sarupa's world. Bhupinder does manage to seduce Sarupa once and for a short moment it looks as if things start to change for Puppy. But then Sarupa stops communicating with him altogether; she excludes him from her circles for good. Bhupinder finally admits to himself: "[Imagining Sarupa] exhausted me. Nothing I've ever wanted has come true; I was tired of being let down. I was tired of my lingering, lifelong sense of incompletion. […] I hadn't wanted much from life: love, safety, a sense of belonging to somewhere or someone. Instead, I had nothing."[506] Out of despair, he steals money from a friend, leaves London and travels Europe. He seems to now be a tourist in the full sense of the word. However, the distanced, ethnographic gaze he had in his hometown is lost on his zigzagging from one city to the next. On his journey, he increasingly turns inward until he reaches Egypt where he starts practicing yoga and dreaming of a back-to-the-roots trip to India. Here the story ends. Only on the very last pages does the reader learn that Puppy is informed by Sarupa that he has fathered her daughter.

5.2 A Flâneur's Floating through Spaces of Class

Some narratological features are particularly relevant to the construction of the main character Bhupinder, his (trans)formation and fictional world: the representation of spaces, the metaphorical figure of the flâneur and distanced narration. As mentioned in the previous chapters, one characteristic of the novel of (trans)formation is the journey, which in more traditional models of the *Bildungsroman* often corresponds with the quest story. In *Tourism*, too, the formation of the protagonist Bhupinder parallels the socio-geographic spaces he crosses. The title of Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's novel already invites a reading of *Tourism* as a story about travelling different worlds with a narrator who is able to visit various social groups. As I argue further below, he never fully engages with any of these groups but keeps or has to keep the distanced view of the spectator. His ethnographic accounts

[504] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 189.
[505] Ibid.
[506] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 162.

of the various spaces, nevertheless, reveal socio-political issues which intertwine with his personal process of transformation.

Outside Britain

Bhupinder's story is framed by two different positions – geographically and biographically: the novel opens with a scene in Italy in September 2003. The first-person narrator is broke, lonely and hopeless. After fleeing London he had hopped from Amsterdam to Munich and Barcelona. He concludes in retrospect:

> What was the point of Amsterdam? Months of narcotic indolence, some lechery; nothing of interest nor value. Munich was worse; I was mad to go there in winter, alone and freezing. I thought that in isolation I'd focus myself and write. But every city has its easy pastimes, easier women. Barcelona was better, for its weather and for having suspended my plans: I'd write, so I told myself, when I'd finished scratching my itch. Nonetheless, this past year: bullshit! It's brought few rewards, little joy, no peace.[507]

Still, he intends to tell his story which only the distance to his life in London allows him to do and enters the main plot. Thereafter the novel closes with a short chapter set in Egypt in October 2004. Puppy has a small job in a New Age beach resort, practices yoga and seems to have recovered from his penniless and exhausting wanderings. Although the job situation comes to a close, he stays calm and starts thinking about a next step: India. He imagines India as a possibility, both to return to his family roots and loved relatives, and to explore his new interest in yoga and Buddhism. His quest seems to turn into a spiritual quest with India as home and idealised space of reconciliation. Only that at this turning point he is reminded of his original quest: he receives Sarupa's email about their child which leaves the end of the story open. So, Puppy's story is framed by two chapters set outside London which only contain information about his journeys outside Great Britain. As mentioned above, the depiction of his touristic trips through Europe functions as a contrast to his inward journey which opens a space for reflection and finding a voice to tell his story.

In and Around London

The actual story of Bhupinder's (trans)formation, that is, the story he tells the implied reader, is handled very differently: in the narrator's analepsis, the main plot travels in episodes through London and includes a brief excursion to the countryside. The development of the main character here parallels his journey through space. The formation of his character and

[507] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 7.

learning about the ways of the world is closely tied to the fictional spaces of Southall, Hackney, Hoxton, Holland Park, and the Cotswolds, for example. Simultaneously, these spaces represent the set-up and dynamics of Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's fictional British society, with a trajectory from the poorer parts of London to the upper-class Holland Park and upper-middle class Cotswolds. Bhupinder portrays, for example, Hoxton in 1996: after the district had been "an empty buffer between the City and the immigrant slums of East London"[508] it becomes the "Mecca of 'Cool Britannia'"[509]. Hoxton becomes the space which represents the beginnings of the above-mentioned multiculturalism.

> People from across Britain flocked there in the mid-nineties; for a few years the area had a vibrancy I'd never seen before. I'd never seen white people so self-confident and open. 1996 was the era of Britpop, and the final year of two decades of Tory government. The idea of what it was to be British was up for grabs; people's vision of things was loose, carefree. People came to London to recreate themselves. They wanted to experience all it had to offer, wogs and all.[510]

The white liberal middle classes, in particular creatives working in the arts, fashion or media, flood the space in their search for cultural and ethnic difference which they are eager to celebrate. Obviously, Bhupinder comments in his own, mock sexist and racist way on the development:

> Screwing those white chicks, I felt a sea change in the culture: they weren't fucking me just to get back at their parents. Those girls were inquisitive; they were experimenting with their lives, they wanted to experience different things with different people. And I, for the first time, didn't think white people had an innate distaste for me.[511]

In this passage Bhupinder almost enjoys the new opportunities for inter-ethnic relationships. His non-PC attitude soon brings back the focus on his cynical view of the 'multicultural' British society again, for instance, in his description of Portobello Road: "white women clung to well-wrought ethnic studs who pushed tricycle pushchairs laden with fat brown babies; demure young white men guided Asian girlfriends through stalls selling hookahs, avant-garde sneakers and sun-dried tomatoes. The café was crowded, full of people drinking Spanish beer and eating parmesan and rocket salads, enjoying the pluralist esprit de corps of Notting Hill."[512] The narrator employs similar stereotypes as mentioned above. Essentially,

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[508] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 174.
[509] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 173.
[510] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 174.
[511] Ibid.
[512] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 52.

multiculturalism is for him another reduction of identities to clear-cut cultural differences, a form of 'positive racism', which he attempts to carve out in his descriptions. In addition, multiculturalism, for Bhupinder, appears to be just a form of consumption – the consumption of lifestyles. For the people he watches on Portobello Road being 'multicultural' merely means to choose a partner from a different ethnic background or to buy goods and food from other cultures, or what they think could be from other cultures. Behind the façade of exoticisms Bhupinder sees a Portobello Road he despises:

> I hated the area: a vapid would-be bohemia, it was too fey for imagination and radicalism […]. It was home to the corporate rump of the creative media […] and a hub for the underbelly of the English bourgeoisie: antique-dealing heroin addicts, thespians-turned-coke-dealers, New Age charlatans selling Ayurveda […].[513]

For Bhupinder 'multiculturalism' is hoovered up by a type of economy which trades fake ethics, anxious political correctness and pretended conviviality. It is a type of multiculturalism which glosses over differences linked to economic and social inequality. The postimperial melancholy is impersonated by two young, fruit-smoothie drinking Guardian readers with whom Puppy has to share the table in a café. "One read a piece on GM crops; the other glanced through a feature on Iranian art-house films. Both wore short hair, Levi's, sandals and black rectangular spectacles; their faces bore the idealism, the vague suicidal melancholy of white English liberalism."[514] Instead of the empty idealism, imagined openness and enforced multiculturalism, Bhupinder 'prefers' the honest exclusivity of the rich represented in the upper-class district Holland Park: "There, everything was pristine; almost everyone was white. […] I lived in Hackney where people had nothing, or just enough to inspire resentment. Hackney's rich owned Land Rover Discoveries and Smeg fridge-freezers; Holland Park's owned *the world*."[515] The racism he had experienced in Southall and Greenford as a child and the 'reverse racism', the consumption of multiculturalism he observes in Hoxton or on Portobello Road do not really name the actual differences in London's society. His excursions to the worlds of the metropolitan elite, which include a weekend-visit of Sarupa's stately country house in the Cotswolds, i.e. away from the struggling lives in London, give him an impression of the spaces of class to which he will never get permanent access. His cynicism about the working classes in Southall and Hackney and about the middle classes in Hoxton combines with his distress of being excluded from the upper classes. His deliberate distancing from

[513] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 52.
[514] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 53.
[515] Ibid.

family and communities in Southall and Hackney as well as the rejection by Sarupa's circle leave Puppy lonely. He realises that in his process of individualisation London has become a space full of people but empty of relations: "I could see the red sun setting on the corner of the city. Several million people were out there, ploughing several million furrows. Barely a handful knew or cared anything about me."[516] Puppy feels disconnected. He does not belong to his city anymore. On his way out of London to travel Europe, he looks back with bitter sentimentalism: "London had been my home for almost thirty years; I'd known nowhere else. She was the gorgeous, faithless whore that bore me; she'd never shown me any love, but had shown me the world and its workings. For that much, I was grateful."[517] Bhupinder thus ends the story of his (trans)formation with a reference to the spaces which had influenced his development. His formation is shown against a backdrop of the transformation of British society in London in the decade before and in the first years after the events of 9/11. Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's representation of London spaces in *Tourism* questions the idea of multiculturalism promoted by the then Blair government.

The Figure of the Flâneur and Distanced Narration

Bhupinder's description of the spaces he crosses come close to ethnographic observations: detailed, analytical, critical. His mocking humour, which drifts into sarcasm and cynicism, distorts some of the depictions into non-PC essentialisms. These emphasise his distanced view on the scenes he visits on his journeys through London. Dengel-Janic convincingly draws a connection between *Tourism*'s protagonist Bhupinder, his role of the tourist as an ethnographic agent and his performance as a 'flâneur'.[518] I do not follow her interpretation that the protagonist Bhupinder is so detached that he is "above and beyond the need to be rooted, to belong or to settle down."[519] As I showed above there are moments in Puppy's account when he expressly desires a home and belonging, or in which he becomes – although uncomfortably – aware of his rootedness. This longing to belong is symptomatic for the later phase of his development. I do agree, nevertheless, that Bhupinder's early episodes as a free-floating observer certainly do leave the impression that he is beyond the need to belong. It is only through the crisis caused by Sarupa that he wishes for a 'home'. Until then Bhupinder cruises the city, as I showed above and as Dengel-Janic also

[516] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 168.
[517] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 240.
[518] Dengel-Janic. "'East is East and West is West'." 345.
[519] Ibid.

records[520], with pretended disinterest and a plethora of provocative remarks. This evokes the figure of the flâneur.

The figure of the flâneur allows for a panoramic portrayal of London's fictional geography and of the various social groups inhabiting this imagined space. Similar to modernist texts with a flâneur, Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's novel employs the figure as an observer who describes a city's inhabitants in all their variety, criss-crossing multiple categories of identity. Reading Bhupinder as a flâneur makes coherent the seemingly opposing character traits and desires of the protagonist. Puppy first distances himself from his direct social environment, then alienates himself from any cultural community and unflinchingly dissects the workings of Western liberalism while trying to find his way out of the economic struggle and into a luxurious upper-class life. This process of formation is very much assisted by his habitus of the urban flâneur. He picks and chooses the situations and people he observes. He is both free and essentially alone on his tours. As a flâneur, he is not subject to power structures or affected by the social hierarchies. He hovers outside the daily treadmill of the city's inhabitants. He is independent or enjoys an independence funded by someone else. As a flâneur, Puppy is able to reverse or, at least, divert the colonial gaze as explained above. In his role as a flâneur, Bhupinder sardonically employs old differential categories in order to position himself against others.

In the light of this humorous Othering and mock racism, Dengel-Janic wonders: "But how can the reader ascertain if the text's and not the narrator's position is racist? It might be only the narrator's racist ideology, which the text exposes but does not endorse. Questions of reliability arise, of subjective point of view, of distance between narrator and implied author."[521] Dengel-Janic assumes that "an illusion of objectivity" is established through the narrator's distance "to whatever he chooses to portray and render in his monologues on race, sex and class", an illusion which "obscures the position from which he speaks."[522] I claim that not the obscuring of the position is relevant to a reading of *Tourism*. (As argued above Bhupinder's essentialisms can easily be interpreted as mock racisms.) Rather, it is the distance between the narrator, i.e. Bhupinder in 2003, and the main character, i.e. Bhupinder in 2002, which is key to an understanding of *Tourism*'s protagonist and his process of formation or subjectification. This narrative point of view is supported by the choice of tense for the frame (in present tense) and the metafiction, i.e. the actual story of Bhupinder's formation (in past tense). Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal thus creates two voices for

[520] Dengel-Janic. "'East is East and West is West'." 346.
[521] Dengel-Janic. "'East is East and West is West'." 344, 345.
[522] Dengel-Janic. "'East is East and West is West'." 345.

his first-person narrator Bhupinder: the voice of the reflecting storyteller about to 'confess' and the voice of the picaresque flâneur who comments on London's society. It is this difference between the two voices which is essential, because it points to the development which Bhupinder undergoes and because it invites the reader to question his reliability and, crucially, to come to her or his own conclusions. What remains to be answered now is whether these two voices are voices that matter.

5.3 Picaresque Self-optimisation against Political Impotence

Finding a Voice? Finding a Voice which Matters?

As explained in the previous chapters Mark Stein postulates that finding a voice is the core characteristic of the novel of transformation, that it is the main distinction from conventional types of the *Bildungsroman*. According to Stein's definition of the novel of transformation or Black British *Bildungsroman*, the personal formation is at the same time political. The novel *Tourism* tells the story of Bhupinder's formation which I outlined above. What he most struggles with are the class barriers which prevent him from being with the woman with whom he falls in love. As a result, he distances himself from his life in Britain and travels Europe which leaves him broke, alone and desperate. Finally, in Egypt, he finds some sort of reconciliation in practising yoga and in envisioning a back-to-the-roots trip to India. So, the formation of Bhupinder can be read as a personal formation which is at the same time political. What is specific, though, is the question of the protagonist's social position and of his portrayal of a fictional Britain. Unlike a conventional *Bildungsroman*, the story has an open end: the reader learns that Bhupinder is the father of Sarupa's child but it is left unresolved whether the protagonist returns to Britain and whether he 'successfully' integrates into society. Moreover, the main part of the text centres on Bhupinder as a "cynical protagonist [whose voice] dismantles any attempt to represent London's celebration of ethnic diversity and hybridity"[523] instead of constructing a new subject position in his multicultural society as Mark Stein's 'novel of transformation' would have it.

Dengel-Janic and Nunius categorise Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's narrative as 'confessional'[524] with reference to the introductory pages of the novel on which Bhupinder explains:

> I'd always thought there was a novel in me. I thought my change in fortune, my windfall, would let me write it. Except I can't. I've

[523] Dengel-Janic. "'East is East and West is West'." 341.
[524] Dengel-Janic. "'East is East and West is West'." 384. Nunius. *Coping with Difference.* 106.

> scribbled thousands of banal sentences during these months, and can't find it. It's not there. If it is, it's behind this thing, this colossus that's blocked my sight for twelve months. I look into the sky and I see it; I stare at the wall, the floor, the mirror, my fingernails, and I see it. So I've jotted down my memories, preparing for my project, my opus – my confession.[525]

Although Bhupinder uses the term 'confession', I do not define *Tourism* as a confessional novel. I claim that *Tourism* is a *mock* confessional account. It is still a novel of transformation in which the protagonist finds his voice, albeit a cynical one. And it is a novel of transformation with an interest in political questions on a meta-level: "[B]y provoking liberal and leftist sentiment, Dhaliwal's novel, in a disturbing way, forces one to confront the continuous power of a politics of difference in a Western, supposedly liberal, democracy."[526] So, Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's text does correspond to Stein's concept of the Black British *Bildungsroman*. However, I question whether Bhupinder's voice is relevant at all. To Mark Stein, finding a voice is also key to the performative function of the novel of transformation. This entails a construction of alternative subject positions. In the following section I discuss in which way the narrator of *Tourism* voices his identity and what kind of subject positions Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's narrative offers. I show that his voice is ambivalent. Bhupinder is critical of hegemonic discourses but his voice does not necessarily matter. In his attitude of passive protest[527] I trace both the neoliberal self and its anti-subject.

Bhupinder's Entrepreneurial Self

Bhupinder, the protagonist of Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's novel *Tourism*, is in some ways depicted as a character who resembles a neoliberal subtype, the figure of the entrepreneur, as defined in the previous chapters. While he grows up, Bhupinder becomes increasingly detached from his family. What is generally considered a 'normal' aspect of growing up becomes extreme in his case: he not only turns away from his family but he also exploits them financially. The only times Puppy returns to visit his mother and brother is when he needs money. Not being able to identify with any social group in his surrounding communities leads to excessive individualisation. He epitomises an autonomous subject: he is as independent as possible, he follows only his own interests and hunts the widest variety of choices. As explained in detail earlier, he is a detached observer who does not commit to anything

[525] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 8.
[526] Dengel-Janic. "'East is East and West is West'." 353.
[527] Both Andreas Reckwitz and Ulrich Bröckling show how protest can well be a facet of the entrepreneurial self, for instance in the figure of the artist. Bröckling. *The Entrepreneurial Self*. Reckwitz. *Die Erfindung der Kreativität*.

or engage wholeheartedly with his social context. By the end of the novel the protagonist has even distanced himself from his only close friends Michael and Luca. Although London is full of people, Puppy is essentially isolated. His affairs are not real relationships. His thoughts are dismissive when he approaches a girl in a club: "[The blonde] was sexy, but wasn't the prettiest girl around; her face was wide, her teeth a little crooked. I didn't mind; I wouldn't have to put in too much work."[528] His loveless flings are either possibilities to consume white female bodies and/or instrumentalised for other purposes. His girlfriend Sophie, for instance, provides him with a flat, food and privileged lifestyle. Most importantly, she serves as a ticket to Sarupa, in whom Bhupinder is actually interested. In order to impress her, he comes up with a business plan. Although not particularly successful career-wise, he is resourceful.

> I wrote music reviews for some men's magazines, short pieces […]. Every month dozens of preview CDs arrived at my flat in official music company envelopes; I'd choose ten or twelve to review, then rewrite their accompanying press releases in a less adulatory tone. These were my music reviews. Each review earned me about forty pounds. I then took the CDs – all unheard, still sealed in plastic – […] and sold them. My rent was paid with an afternoon's work each month.[529]

With the lowest input of working hours possible, the protagonist achieves enough profit to sustain his lifestyle for a while. For his work, he shows no idealism or passion whatsoever. To him it is a dull routine which should be minimised to the bare essentials regardless of professionalism, legal or moral standards. The music he is meant to review is "unheard" and "still sealed in plastic", i.e. distant to him. He merely plagiarises existing texts about the songs and resells the unopened CDs. What appears as a small and seemingly irrelevant example of Bhupinder's practices stands for a more general attitude he and Michael developed. Although or because they are excluded from the financial elites they create and sell products "white people want"[530]. In his attempt to "mak[e] it in this country"[531], Michael, for example, produces art which sounds ridiculous but which caters for the taste of white, liberal consumers. He receives generous funding for "a multi-screen video installation: called *Niggers*, it involved images of everyday white people – plumbers, bank clerks, taxi drivers – dancing the running-man to Vanilla Ice's 1990 hit single, 'Ice Ice Baby'."[532] Michael

[528] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 221.
[529] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 93.
[530] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 159.
[531] Ibid.
[532] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 158.

employs the vocabulary of a contemporary Western art world in order to sell his piece of art as a conceptual work. Neither he nor Bhupinder attempt to understand any of its logic. For them it is a convenient business strategy as Michael reveals: "'I wrote about how this idea deals with the white paradigm, and its appropriation of the black subject.' 'What does it mean?' 'Fuck knows. Evie told me to write it. But they fell for it. Can you fucking believe that?'"[533] Michael and Puppy play the game of neoliberalism and trade social, financial and cultural capital in a cunning way. Their individual freedom of choice is their most urgent concern. For Bhupinder this plays out best in the freedom of choice on the sexual market as Sarah Ilott points out.[534] The narrator states: "I was grateful I wasn't ugly; I didn't have to strive for wealth to avoid a life of substandard sexual partners."[535] In most situations, sex, for him is a means to consume, e.g. the female body without emotional or romantic attachment, or to invest, e.g. in a more luxurious lifestyle granted by Sophie. In the main character of *Tourism* Ilott sees, therefore, a "representative of the ruthless detachment of market forces".[536] He takes the meaning of 'human resource' to an extreme and considers his own body as capital. While looking in the mirror, he narcissistically lists the grandiose heritage in his genetic makeup.

> The Punjab overlaps India's border with Pakistan, and was the historic gateway for migration in and out of the subcontinent: Greeks, Persians, Afghans, Moguls and Aryans have all entered the region through the Punjab. It was also a staging post on the silk route, a link in the tenuous communication chain between China and Europe. I looked at myself in the mirror, tracing the ethnicities in my face: thick Eurasian eyebrows; a round Tatar face; fine black oriental hair; a Mediterranean nose; full Indic lips and wide Asiatic eyes.[537]

Bhupinder is aware of his attractiveness and strategically employs his looks. He considers himself a combination of the best of all great civilisations. As the most valuable resource he owns, his body, therefore, plays an important role in his marketing of his self. Stripped to the minimum, to his bare existence, his body, the protagonist of *Tourism* shows his features as an entrepreneurial self most clearly.

Bhupinder as an Anti-Subject?

Bhupinder, the protagonist of Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's *Tourism*, is in some ways also depicted as a character who undermines or contradicts the figure

[533] Ibid.
[534] Ilott. *New Postcolonial British Genres*. 133.
[535] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 138, 139.
[536] Ilott. *New Postcolonial British Genres*. 133.
[537] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 139.

of the entrepreneur. This becomes obvious in the manner he responds to foil characters in the novel. Representatives of neoliberalism are commented on or portrayed by the narrator in a funny, strange or negative way. Even to Sarupa, whom he falls for, or rather to her neoliberal philosophy he keeps a critical distance. He ridicules her new-age spirituality and her belief in an ethically sound corporate world. Sarupa's entrepreneurial spirit appears in numerous situations. Sarupa and Sophie's philosophy of a fulfilled life represent the essence of contemporary discourses about happiness, for instance. Sophie categorically tells Bhupinder: "You have to choose to be happy. Happiness is basically a choice."[538] And, as briefly mentioned above, Sarupa tries to comfort him: "Money isn't everything. […] It's more important to be happy."[539] In the context of gaining agency, of psychopolitics, governmentality and the reproduction of power relations scholar Sam Binkley investigated new discourses on happiness. He indicates that happiness is not defined as a state of being or a relation with others anymore. Rather, it is increasingly seen as a resource, goal and instrument which can be employed strategically by the "sovereign, enterprising, self-interested actor".[540] It is thus up to the entrepreneurial self to use happiness as a currency in order to reach full potential and attract the best opportunities on the market of life. "Happiness […] as a technology but also as an enterprise of self-development, represents one of the chief instruments of neoliberal government, the very leitmotif of neoliberal life itself […]."[541] To upper-class Sophie Bhupinder answers ironically: "[Happiness] is not a choice. […] For people like you, sweetheart, it's an obligation."[542] And he strongly disagrees with Sarupa's credo that happiness is more important than money: "Happiness is overrated. It's bullshit."[543] Bhupinder is not convinced by this leitmotif of neoliberalism. Sarupa's yoga practice is another example. She takes classes in one of the fitness clubs on which Puppy dismissively remarks:

> The club […] had a vital role in the lives of the haute bourgeoisie. It was at once a purgative for their bodies, and an idyll where they could indulge in feng shui and crystal therapy, a world away from the intense rationality of their working lives. Clubs like this revitalise capitalists, so they can manage capitalism more effectively; billions are made worldwide from such ventures.[544]

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[538] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 208.
[539] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 151.
[540] Binkley. *Happiness as an Enterprise.* 1.
[541] Binkley. *Happiness as an Enterprise*. 4.
[542] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 209.
[543] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 151.
[544] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 77.

A formerly spiritual practise like yoga is now employed as a technique for self-optimisation in an enterprise culture. Scholar Nandini Gooptu published an in-depth study about this and similar trends in contemporary India. She and her colleagues document "new religious practices that seek to provide the tools of resubjectification of the individual in an enterprising mode" and find that "[s]piritualism and ideas of enterprise inflect each other and offer hopes of self-transformation and worldly success".[545] Puppy practices yoga himself at the end of the novel. For him, however, it is a way to reconnect to traditional practices of his own family history. The new forms of yoga sold in the West do not carry the same meaning for him. He shows a similar dismissiveness to the phony ethics in current business models of which Sarupa is so proud. Bhupinder belittles Sarupa's wholeheartedness when she talks about the importance of being a morally invested entrepreneur and in particular when she explains 'corporate social responsibility' to him:

> 'Corporate Social Responsibility. Businesses don't operate in a moral vacuum. […] They're intrinsic to the world we live in. They have a vested interest in the well-being of society … Society, after all, is an amalgam of labour and customers. Businesses have to be moral stakeholders, if only to secure their own interests.' Her sincerity amused me.[546]

Not only in Sarupa's elitist circles but generally Puppy often portrays the daily world of business comically. One example is the scene he sketches in an exclusive fitness club to which he got access through a well-connected friend:

> When I arrived, at six o'clock, the changing rooms thronged with businessmen undressing for their midweek workouts: a tundra of cold white bodies. They had taut pinched expressions, thin physiques and hairy nipples. […] These men were executives, administrators of modern capitalism; they needed to stay lean, hungry and alert. The air stank of sweat and bourgeois angst. They moved to the hard rhythm of techno music […]. There were plenty of women among them, hard-bodied corporate divas. […] One or two made eye contact with me, giving me harsh, greedy stares.[547]

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[545] Gooptu, Nandini. "Introduction." *Enterprise Culture in Neoliberal India. Studies in Youth, Class, Work and Media*. Ed. Nandini Gooptu. London and New York: Routledge, 2013. 1-24. Quotation 16. Not only academic texts but also fictional narratives pick up on these contemporary variations of ancient teachings. Aravind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger* (2008), for example, is a dark account about the (mis)use of traditional spiritual practices in the context of neoliberal India.

[546] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 84.

[547] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 76, 77.

The bodies of the peoples Puppy observes are incarnations of the entrepreneurial self. The intense aspirations of these business women and men, their permanent but fear-driven activity, their bodies drilled by self-discipline with a denial of *otio* or of irrational indulgence, and the cold, machine-like atmosphere of the space they share stand in strong contrast to Bhupinder. As described further above, he is depicted as sensual persona who likes to enjoy the pleasures of life in every way.

So, on the one hand Bhupinder shows features of the entrepreneurial self but on the other hand he does not fully fit the figure of the entrepreneur. He does not totally conform to "market principles of discipline, efficiency, and competitiveness"[548], he is not completely a *homo economicus*, an "entrepreneur of himself, being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings."[549] He is not just human capital. He does not economise all aspects of his life and index all his decisions according to the highest rationality under the condition of scarce resources. Bhupinder's type of entrepreneurialism is not instrumentalised for glossing over structural problems and social inequalities. He does not always take responsibility for 'failing'. He is not involved in a never-ending process of optimisation and self-optimisation. What then is the protagonist of *Tourism*? Is he the anti-subject to the entrepreneurial self? I claim that his characterisation *questions* Foucault's totalising construct of the entrepreneurial self. Bhupinder's irony is a rupture in the narratives of neoliberalism. His sarcastic humour, his detached observations and his resistance to fully embrace an entrepreneurial mind-set mark a kind of counterpart to the neoliberal self. Sociologist Ulrich Bröckling states three examples of how the imperative of neoliberal discourses is potentially evaded or subverted: "Depression, irony and passive resistance are […] causes of friction in the regime of entrepreneurial subjectification."[550] With irony and passive resistance, Puppy surely questions hegemonic discourses of neoliberalism. But is this enough to make him an anti-subject? And does this allow for agency or a voice that matters in the sense Mark Stein envisions it for the protagonists of novels of transformation?

A Picaresque Version of the Entrepreneurial Self

I claim that the protagonist of Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's novel *Tourism* is a picaresque version of the entrepreneurial self. The narrative can be read as a form of implicit critique of neoliberalism but does not offer new subject positions in which the protagonist gains agency. As explained earlier,

[548] Ong. *Neoliberalism as Exception*. 4.
[549] Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*. 226.
[550] Bröckling. *The Entrepreneurial Self.* 200.

Hirsch distinguishes between the *Bildungsheld*, the picaresque hero and the protagonist of the confessional novel. Whereas the confessor is a "spiritual outsider" and the *Bildungsheld* a "representative member of society", the picaro is a "social outcast"[551]. In the picaresque novel episodes are loosely connected. The picaro is turned outward toward society which is also expressed in the novel's focus on material aspects and on adventures. All this applies although *Tourism* can still be read as a novel of transformation as elaborated in detail above. Thus, Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal constructs a main character and narrator in his text who roughly follows the formation of characters in the Black British *Bildungsroman*. He does, however, narrate the story of Bhupinder with a twist: the characterisation of his protagonist involves picaresque elements. He considers himself a social outcast who refuses the ethos and business mindedness of 'the' Asian family. In his monologue about the sons of an old neighbour and friend of the family, this becomes quite clear:

> My shapeless meandering existence was strange and exotic to them; they were amazed and unsettled by my lackadaisy. […] I'd talk about my life – what I wrote, what I'd read, the places I'd been and the girls I was seeing – and their eyes would glaze. Any suggestion at a world beyond their jobs, their families and their old man's precepts discomforted them. My life was a dangerous example; it contravened the logic behind their achievements. Bland and assiduous Indians were now the backbone of this country; the NHS, the legal system, the technocracies of commerce and the state were diligently upheld by men like [them].[552]

This tongue-in-cheek self-characterisation contrasts his pleasure-seeking lifestyle with the dull, everyday existence of diligent members of the fictional British society. Bhupinder ridicules their belief in meritocracy and career goals. He is sure they secretly long for a life which breaks free from the expectations of their community, a life which they are afraid of at the same time. Puppy considers himself daring and dangerous. He is ambivalent in many ways. In a dialogue with Sarupa, for example, he seems to take on a political position which backs Sarupa's neoliberal worldview. Simultaneously he makes fun of it.

> [Bhupinder said,] '[i]t's the best socio-economic system mankind's ever had. No other system is as congruent with human nature as this one.' […] Sarupa looked at [him] with approval. 'It expresses human dynamism, creativity and resourcefulness on a grand scale. […]' 'It does express humanity on a grand scale, but those weren't the qualities I had in mind.' 'What did you have in mind?' 'Mediocrity and

[551] Hirsch. "The Novel of Formation as Genre." 299.
[552] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 180.

> paranoia,' [he] said. 'They're the basic principles of the human condition, and the base principles of consumerism. That's why I like capitalism ... There's an integrity to the whole thing.'[553]

Entrepreneurial Sarupa considers his statements strange and further questions him to clarify what he means: 'If that's how you feel about it, I don't see how you're a fan. You don't think capitalism is actually good for people.' 'I don't think people are good for people.'[554] Bhupinder, however, plays the misanthrope who is not interested in politics. When asked for his concrete opinion he resorts to his detached point of view as a flâneur. 'So you're not a socialist, or an anarchist or anti-globalist, even though you think capitalism is mediocre and paranoid?' 'No.' 'What are you, then?' […] 'I'm a tourist,' I said. 'I'm just a fucking tourist ... I just look at the view.'[555] This clear reference to the title, *Tourism*, ties in with my discussion of Bhupinder as a flâneur and the implications for his development throughout the novel. Puppy is essentially a homage to the work of Houellebecq as Albertazzi stresses: "[His] views on sex and race as well as his critique of Western consumerism and narcissism are clearly modelled on those of the French novelist."[556] With an idol like Houellebecq, obviously, the question of agency becomes superfluous. The nihilist "ordinarily spits on money, the freedom of the individual, human rights, representative democracy and non-smoking areas" and claims that "Marxists, anarchists, existentialists and leftists of all kinds" are useless.[557] Bhupinder as a nihilist endorses individualism – in combination with hedonism. He behaves irresponsibly and mostly ignorant towards his social context. He does not aim at improving his fictional British society by fighting against discrimination or for equal rights. He does not fall for the promises of meritocracy but also fails to speak out against social injustice. He merely embodies a passive critique of neoliberalism and a luke-warm resistance to conform to mainstream values. This outlook is most probably not part of the performative power of novels of transformation as defined by Mark Stein.

I highlighted that the protagonist of *Tourism* both resembles a neoliberal self and contradicts the figure of the entrepreneur. I showed that with

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[553] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 84,85.
[554] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. 85.
[555] Ibid.
[556] Albertazzi, Silvia. "Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's *Tourism*: How to Exploit Diaspora and Live Happily Ever After." *Diasporic Subjectivity and Cultural Brokering in Contemporary Post-Colonial Literature*s. Ed. Igor Maver. Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2009. 165-178. Quotation 168.
[557] The translated quotes are taken from a review of Houellebecq's work by Andrew Riemer. Riemer, Andrew. "A Nihilist's Hope against Hope." *The Sydney Morning Herald*. 28.06.2003. http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/06/27/1056683892274.html [24.09.2017].

Bhupinder Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal offers us a picaresque version of the entrepreneurial self who is in the position to voice critique but who does not gain agency or a voice that matters. My reading finds the cracks or ambiguities in a totalising view of neoliberalism. The main character of the novel reaches some of the 'desirable' or normative aims of a neoliberal subject not through a full identification with a neoliberal ideology but through his position as picaresque anti-subject or "deficient Other"[558]. The fissures and cracks in his make-up become visible and audible in the different voices Bhupinder uses. This parodies the success stories of neoliberalism as the entrepreneurial self almost never reaches a final goal but is kept in the treadmill of self-optimisation and continuous production or consumption. *Tourism* thus questions whether the agency defined by neoliberalism is desirable or possible at all. Yet, *Tourism* does not propose an alternative form of agency. It is not the author's duty to construct new subject positions in his fictional narrative. In my opinion, fiction, by definition, is allowed to be messier than providing us with neat solutions to political dilemmas. My point is rather that the concept of the novel of transformation might need to be readjusted in order to allow for some of the complexities of fiction. The autodiegetic narrator Puppy in *Tourism* does find his voice in Mark Stein's sense. However, he does *not* gain political agency or a voice that matters in Nick Couldry's sense.[559] Maybe Sukhi, the protagonist of Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal's next novel will – if Dhaliwal manages to successfully pitch the draft of *Economy* on the crowdfunding platform 'Unbound. Liberating Ideas'[560].

[558] Reckwitz. *Subjekt*. 133.

[559] For explanations of their concepts, see the chapters about 'novels of transformation' and 'agency'.

[560] Unbound. Liberating Ideas. "Economy by Nirpal Dhaliwal." https://unbound.com/books/economy/ [15.02.2018].

6 The Reformed Rudeboy: Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* (2006)

Aspiring *Financial Times* journalist Gautam Malkani seemed to have landed a fantastic deal with his first work of fiction. Around five publishing houses fought over it with Fourth Estate finally offering a six-figure advance to get the rights.[561] *Londonstani*[562] was one of the "most highly anticipated British debut novels of the twenty-first century."[563] Like *Tourism*[564], *Londonstani* appeared in 2006. "Fate or some agency with a taste for the sardonic has prompted the publication of two novels within months of each other which unwittingly constitute a dialogue,"[565] as literary scholar Richard Bradford introduced the two titles in his snapshot of contemporary British Fiction published in 2007. It is therefore not surprising that numerous subsequent overviews of recent British (Asian) writing[566] mention them both. In contrast to the novels *Brick Lane*[567] and *Tourism*, Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* is neither a story of female (financial) emancipation nor a sarcastic portrayal of a fictional neoliberal Britain. It is a game with identity markers that feeds on the codes of young British Asian Londoners, thereby undermining fixed categories of belonging. The main character and narrator, nineteen-year old Jas, is a member of a local rudeboy gang, regardless of his ethnic or religious background. His identity affiliations appear in and are perpetuated through subcultural codes, for example, of bling culture.

Gautam Malkani masterfully confronts the readers by the end of the narration with their own reflexes of stereotyping. This looks like a promising tale against discourses of xenophobia and Islamophobia after the events of 9/11 in particular. Despite some criticism regarding the question of authenticity, the novel seems to create a more flexible idea of what it means to grow up in suburban spaces in 21st-century Britain. At the same time, *Londonstani* has not much to offer when it comes to counter-hegemonic discourses to neoliberalism. *Londonstani* is another story of (trans)formation that celebrates the hybridity, fluidity or fragility of identity categories and which pays little attention to the protagonist's subjectification in the fictional economy.

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[561] Perfect. *Contemporary Fictions of Multiculturalism*. 138.
[562] Malkani. *Londonstani*.
[563] Perfect. *Contemporary Fictions*. 138.
[564] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*.
[565] Bradford. *The Novel Now*.
[566] For example, Eckstein, Lars et al. eds. *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+. New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts*. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008. Ilott. *New Postcolonial British Genres*. Upstone, Sara. *British Asian Fiction*.
[567] Ali. *Brick Lane*.

6.1 Wannabe Rudeboy Turns Good Man

Londonstani is a story of transformation told by the main character Jas. The autodiegetic narrator switches between a first-person and a second-person point of view and between past tense and present tense to portray his internal and external development. Generally, the narration follows a linear chronology with direct speech and flashbacks criss-crossing the main plot and the internal monologues that Jas shares with the reader. Events in the beginning of the novel are set in the past, events towards the end of the novel increasingly in the present. This emphasises the core of the story: the formation of the main character in a dynamic fictional London society at the beginning of the twenty-first century[568]. This formation includes Jas's desire and temporary achievement to belong to a gang of British Asian rudeboys as well as the process of individualisation that ultimately leads to his withdrawal from the group. The novel is split into three parts: Paki (pages 3-133), Sher (pages 137-270) and Desi (pages 271-342). This sequence stands for "a broader shift in British Asian identity from the experience of prejudice and victimhood (Paki), through aggressive selfsegregation (Sher), to active participation in the re-constitution of Britishness (Desi – meaning 'countryman')."[569] For this re-definition of Britishness, Gautam Malkani employs the figure of the desi rudeboy as a possibility to articulate specific aspects of one's identity, which accord with one's own choice rather than confirming other, assigned categories of belonging such as ethnicity. "Malkani's extreme constructivism […] is tied to his faith in the possibility of new cultural forms that can be both multicultural and cohesive."[570] For the author desi subculture allows transcending categories of ethnicity and for new "integrative modes of communal experience"[571] to emerge. Thus, the novel fits well into the canon of novels of transformation as defined in the theoretical part of this study.

[568] Sandra van Lente locates the story somewhere between the years 2002 and 2005 based on the references to pop culture, politics and technology in the novel. van Lente, Sandra. *Cultural Exchange in Selected Contemporary British Novels*. Dissertation. Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2015. https://edoc.hu-berlin.de/handle/18452/17785 [29.03.2018]. 163.

[569] Graham, James. "'This In't Good Will Hunting': *Londonstani* and the Market for London's Multicultural Fictions." *Literary London: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Representation of London* 6.2 (2008). http://www.literarylondon.org/london-journal/september2008/graham.html [01.03.2018].

[570] Gunning. *Race and Antiracism*. 123.

[571] Gunning. *Race and Antiracism*. 124.

Jas and the Desi Gang

The story starts in medias res in the religiously mixed district of Hounslow. The Sikh leader of the rudeboy gang, Hardjit, beats up a boy who may or may have not called him and his friends 'Pakis'. The other rudeboys, the two Hindus Amit and Ravi as well as Jas cheer "[their] man"[572] Hardjit. Within one year, Jas has become one of them. Daniel, the boy they beat up, says to Jas, "[n]obody would ever be so stupid as to mess with you lot any more. […] You've become like one of those gangsta types you used to hate."[573] The "gangsta types" he used to hate are a group of British Asian teenagers who define themselves through a particular habitus and who control the streets of Hounslow with their rudeboy behaviour. For formerly shy misfit Jas, Hardjit personifies the ideal he seeks to become.

> I in't shamed to admit I'm envious a Hardjit. Most bredren round Hounslow were jealous a his designer desiness, whith his perfectly built body, his perfectly shaped facial hair and his perfectly groomed garms that made it look like he went shopping with P Didy. Me, I was jealous a his front – […] his debating dexterity or someshit. Hardjit always knew exactly how to tell others that it just weren't right to describe all desi boiys as Pakis. Regarding it as some kind a civic duty to educate others in this basic social etiquette, he continued kickin the white kid in the face […].[574]

A muscle-bound body, selected designer clothes, the right hairstyle, his street-slang eloquence as well as a readiness to fight for his beliefs is what makes Hardjit the kind of desi rudeboy to whom Jas looks up. 'Desi' designates a second-generation of migrants who "have chosen to pick and mix elements of identity like fashion accessories to fashion their own subjective and performative identities."[575] 'Rudeboy' is only one label assigned to them. "First we was rudeboys, then we be Indian niggas, then rajamuffins, then raggastanis, Britasians, fuckin Indobrits. These days we try an use our own word for homeboy an so we just call ourselves desis but I still remember when we were happy with the word rudeboy,"[576] explains Jas and that he prefers using the older version 'rudeboy'. The term 'rudeboy' "originating in the Kingston ghettos, was copied from Caribbean youngsters too tough to be molested by white racists and respected for their 'cool'

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[572] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 3.
[573] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 13.
[574] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 3, 4.
[575] Mitchell, Michael. "Escaping the Matrix: Illusions and Disillusions of Identity in Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* (2006)." *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+. New Perspectives in Literature, Film and the Arts*. Ed. Lars Eckstein, et al. Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2008. 329-340. Quotation 330.
[576] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 5.

behaviour and dangerous aura."[577] In the case of Hounslow's rudeboys, the "cool behaviour and dangerous aura" is complemented by an interesting set of further features: they drive expensive cars – owned by their parents. They watch MTV Base and Juggy D videos to "attain the right level of rudeboy authenticity"[578]. The retake their A-levels instead of studying like others of the same age. This ties in with their resistance to institutional education because they try to avoid appearing like a 'coconut' at all costs. For the rudeboys, a 'coconut' is a person who is white inside his brown skin, who believes in the liberal values of an educated white British middle class, who, for instance, reads novels and the newspaper, listens to Coldplay, REM or Radiohead, and who uses RP. Jas and his friends also define themselves as rudeboys in contrast to other identities: "Amit felt as passionate bout healin coconuts as Hardjit felt bout healin rednecks who used the word Paki an Ravi felt bout healin lesbians."[579] Some of the rules they set up for rudeboys further emphasise how important it is for them to appear hypermasculine. Rules #6 and #7 state what not to wear, for instance, the skintight jeans of Bollywood actors, and when to be a hero, especially "when a lady's got your hormones bubbling like two different types a toilet cleaner mixed together in a jacuzzi."[580] Also, they want to appear to be *business*men. They unlock and reconfigure mobile phones so their middleman Davinder can resell them. Jas clarifies, "we in't wannabe badass gangstas or someshit. We din't jack no fones or sell no jacked fones or nothin. We just provided a service. We're businessmen, innit."[581] In the beginning of the novel, the rudeboys are characterised through their bling culture, a combination of hypermaterialism and hypermasculinity. They define themselves not so much through markers of ethnicity or religion but through markers of rudeboy ethics including a sense for what is right and wrong with regard to lifestyles, gender constructs and business conduct.

Family, School and Society

Through his identification with the world of rudeboys, Jas alienates himself from his family and from a larger society as represented by his teacher Mr Ashwood. The first three rudeboy rules and Jas's comments on them are quite telling in this respect. "Rudeboy Rule #1: My dad always said that you shouldn't ever lie cos you'll have to tell another ten lies to back it up. However, Hardjit'd taught me that if the back-up lies are good enough, then so fuckin what?"[582] Despite his father's warning that lying results in

[577] Mitchell. "Escaping the Matrix." 330.
[578] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 6.
[579] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 22.
[580] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 61.
[581] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 41.
[582] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 39.

more lying, Jas now adopts Hardjit's mindlessness. This comes in particularly handy when the rudeboys have to deal with parental control: they lie to their parents in order to go to parties, for instance. In addition, they use their mobile phones to pretend they stay in touch with them when, in fact, all they try is to get away from them. "Rudeboy Rule #2: [Bling mobile] fones were invented for rudeboys. They free you from your mum an dad while still allowing your parents to keep tabs on you."[583] On top of the lies and evasion, the rudeboys downplay getting into trouble. "Rudeboy Rule #3: My dad always told me to stay outta trouble. However, Hardjit'd told me to stay outta trouble with the police. After all, while the law is for goras, so is Feltham Young Offenders Institute."[584] Hardjit believes his gang is too clever to be caught by the police and, therefore, sticking to the law is useless. In the course of alienating himself from the values with which his family had raised him, Jas starts to disrespect his father. While his father hopes to have Jas in the family business, his son increasingly distances himself from this option and even makes fun of his father.

> The old man was so happy his son was takin an interest in his shit, thinkin maybe I might even work with him one day. He probly even messed up the bed sheets dreamin bout havin some big family business. Wake the fuck up, I felt like sayin. It might've been like that in your generation, but why'd anyone want to work for their dad nowdays? I mean, what the fuck were you s'posed to do with your own plans?

As in any *Bildungsroman*, this process of alienation from the family, their values and traditions, is an essential part in the formation of the main character. In Jas's case, the same applies to his relationship to his former teacher Thomas Ashwood who still wants to help the rudeboys assimilate to their mainstream society. He would like them to open up to diversity – as defined by a Blairite multiculturalism[585] – and reminds them of their parents' efforts to integrate. He criticises the rudeboys for "[their] idea of diversity seems to be limited to recruiting Jas"[586] and asks them if "[they] have any idea how hard [their] parents worked and how hard they fought to be accepted by mainstream society?"[587] Mr Ashwood represents exactly the type of liberal attitude of the predominantly white establishment the rudeboys detest. Hardjit and his gang "[equate] education with abandoning roots and

[583] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 41.
[584] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 42.
[585] As mentioned earlier, in the kind of multiculturalism promoted by Blair's Cool Britannia 'diversity' is often defined as a marketable lifestyle diversity.
[586] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 125.
[587] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 126.

selling out to white society"[588] although Mr Ashwood is trying to stress the importance of learning and curiosity. When Hardjit, for instance, tells him that he gives "a shit" about politics, Thomas Ashwood counters that "[it's] not irrelevant."[589] He asks them, "[h]ave you watched the news? Are you familiar with the debate around multiculturalism? Asylum policy? US foreign policy?" in order to make them aware of the urgency of political participation. Finally, he warns them, "[d]o you realise that there's a Mother Nature-raping right-wing psychopath in the White House just looking for excuses to fight wars?"[590] Mr Ashwood wishes the rudeboys stayed informed about politics and culture in order to gain agency as fully integrated citizens in a British society. The problem is that the rudeboys resist Ashwood's ultimate aim behind his attempts to educate them. He would like the members of the gang to conform to what he calls the "mainstream, multicultural society" and to feel positive about school or marriage, for example. He even calls one of his former students, Sanjay, for help. Sanjay, who studied at Cambridge and made a career in finance, Mr Ashwood is sure, could transform the rudeboys into "assets to society"[591].

What he does not know is that Sanjay has changed completely and that this former star pupil turns out to be the worst mentor Ashwood could imagine for the four rudeboys. Instead of making them assets to society, Sanjay makes them assets to himself. He leads them in exactly the opposite direction Mr Ashwood hoped them to take. Although Sanjay is thankful for the banking career he had through the support of his former teacher, he moved on and is quite outspoken about Ashwood's idealism. "[L]et's face it, investment banking isn't exactly a profession advocated by do-gooding, aspirationally challenged Marxist public sector workers like him."[592] Sanjay entered profitable but illegal business deals as a "one-man private equity outfit"[593] and lures the four rudeboys further and further into his universe – as their new mentor and through a business proposal they cannot resist. For the story of Jas's formation, Sanjay serves an important role. Sanjay is the foil character, a kind of antagonist, to Jas's father and Thomas Ashwood. He stands for the subversion of the values with which Jas was raised. Beyond that, he impresses the rudeboys with his entrepreneurial spirit which guarantees him riches without efforts. Sanjay tricks Jas into making

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[588] Ranasinha, Ruvani. "Changes in the Canon: After Windrush." *The Post-War British Literature Handbook*. Ed. Katharine Cockin and Jago Morrison. London and New York: Continuum, 2010. 177-193. Quotation 192.
[589] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 130.
[590] Ibid.
[591] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 160.
[592] Ibid.
[593] 161.

decisions which have a major impact on his life and finally lead to a crisis, as the next subchapter shows.

Crisis and Resolution, Reformation and Accommodation

Jas's increasing alienation from his parents, from his teacher and from what Mr Ashwood considers the 'mainstream society' culminates in a crisis for the main character and leads to a resolution. Through Sanjay, his mentoring and their business deal, Jas becomes more self-confident. He can financially afford a more serious rudeboy image, speaks his mind more often and decides to ask out the girl on whom he has a crush, Samira Ahmed. At the same time, however, he distances himself further from his parents. For example, when he prepares to go out with his friends in the evening instead of staying home with his parents and having dinner with them, their expectations clash. Jas might say to his mother "I'm sorry, Mum. I don't know what's wrong. It's just that we're going out an I'm gettin stressed."[594] What he actually thinks is: "*I don't wanna fight with you, Mum, cos I don't wanna chat to you. Matter a fact I don't even wanna see you. Get the fuck away from me.*"[595] The only reason Jas does not openly want to fight with his mother is that he does not even want to talk to her or to be close to her. The same goes for Jas and his father. "[How] is it that I hate the way he sulks an how he can't hold a conversation, but at the same time I don't really want to be around him anyway an so it actually helps me when he goes off an sulks?"[596] Jas disconnects from their life although he still lives in their home. He disrespects his father and is not able to identify with his father's way of life. Despite his own materialistic outlook, Jas accuses his father of being always "at the fucking office"[597] or – if home early – of checking the National Lottery on TV because "all he cares bout is bucks"[598]. As I show below, it is not the circumstance that his father earns money that irritates Jas but the way he earns it: Jas's father works hard in his own business in order to support his family. It is a life that is in stark contrast to Sanjay's. Instead of 'honest work', Sanjay prefers dodgy deals. He invests in illegal business in order to make easy money and to afford a life of luxury. At this point of the novel, the latter option seems to be more attractive to Jas. The main character is increasingly drawn to the illegal or forbidden.

Another example is his dangerous liaison with Samira, a girl from his school. Her natural beauty has fascinated Jas for years. "Just look at Samira Ahmed. She was the reason guys round Hounslow'd bothered learnin how

[594] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 201.
[595] Ibid.
[596] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 203.
[597] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 33.
[598] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 203.

to spell the word Beautiful stead a just writin the word Fit inside their valentine cards."[599] At the same time, he knows that she is taboo for him. His friend Amit warns Jas: "Samira outta bounds for all a us bredrens an you know it. She Muslim, innit. We best all stick to our own kinds, boy, don't b playin wid fire."[600] This, though, makes Samira irresistible for Jas. He does not believe in the resurging divisions between religious communities. The other rudeboys, his Sikh friend Hardjit or his Hindu friends Amit and Ravi, pick and choose elements of their parents' religion for lifestyle reasons and in order to construct an identity which contrasts with the identity of other gangs in Hounslow, such as Tariq's, a Muslim gang leader. No matter with which religion they identify, all of the gang members appear to be stricter than their parent generation[601] – but only if the identification serves to create a bond between like-minded rudeboys or to deepen a divide between rivalling gangs. So, not the actual philosophical system behind their religion including certain traditions, guidelines and rituals but rather an encoded Othering is the reason why the gangs employ religious markers in the fabrication of their identities. This is why Jas is not afraid of finally dating Samira. For him, only men, that is gang members, are 'religious' enough to become dangerous. "[H]ow strict can she be? I mean, she's a she. Most Muslim fundamentalists are blokes."[602] Amit reminds Jas that even if Samira herself might not be strict, her brothers are and thus pose a threat to Jas if he starts seeing her.

That traditional rules only apply for the rudeboys when convenient becomes clear when Jas consults Amit's brother Arun. Arun is torn between the expectations of his parents who want him to marry someone who follows the caste system, who pays (more) respect to them, and the devotion to his future wife who does not fulfil those expectations. Jas urges Arun to differentiate traditions and to get rid of those that are not useful for him. He does this not only to help Arun but also to impress Samira whom he started to date and wants to see more often. In front of her he explains to Arun that "doing something cos it's tradition, cos it's the way things are done, is the shittest reason ever to do something. It in't even a reason, it's a lame excuse for not havin a proper reason."[603] Thereby, he hopes Samira feels supported in her decision to meet Jas, who is non-Muslim, and that she might become his girlfriend. He even goes as far as advising Arun to

[599] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 48.
[600] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 49.
[601] For example, none of the fathers of the rudeboys "stick to their own kind". They do business regardless of any religion or as Jas observes, "[b]usiness is business." Malkani. *Londonstani*. 277.
[602] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 49.
[603] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 237.

eliminate all categories and free his parents of their illusions by comparing their caste system to the tools to maintain power in the film The Matrix[604]. "[C]astes don't exist. It's […] all part a some illusion created by people who want power over others. […] The world's full a categories a people that were just, like, invented randomly."[605] The formation through Sanjay's mentoring and business deal as well as his success in asking Samira out pushes Jas's self-esteem to a level where he cannot control the consequences of his behaviour anymore. Following Sanjay's advice, going against the rules of his rudeboy gang by dating Samira and advising Arun to turn against his own parents ends dramatically for Jas.

First, Arun, in a serious attempt to "free his parents' mind", as Jas would phrase it, ends up in a fight with them that threaten Arun's wedding plans. Out of despair, Arun kills himself. The rudeboys indirectly accuse Jas of having provoked Arun's suicide. Secondly, they exclude him from the gang because Jas violated their law. Dating Samira, that is an interreligious partnership, goes against the ethics of his own group. In addition, it hurts the 'honour' of Samira's brothers and, in extension, the honour of their Muslim supporters, for instance, Tariq. As a result, Jas's actions produce too much tension between the different gangs in Hounslow, he is threatened from various sides and ends up fighting with Samira who starts to be more interested in other (male) friends. Thirdly, Jas's trust in Sanjay is abused when his mentor uses information about Jas, and in particular his secret meetings with Samira, against him in order to blackmail Jas. Not only out of necessity but also out of mere sadism, Sanjay forces Jas to break into his father's warehouse in order to steal mobile phones for Sanjay's illegal activities. Sanjay's aim is twofold here. He wants to humiliate Jas and, ultimately, he wants to destroy the mobile-phone business of Jas's father, who is one of the few independent mobile-phone warehouses left and thus a competitor to Sanjay. Jas, despite his sudden concern for his father, gives in and robs his father's warehouse. This becomes the major turning point in the formation of the protagonist. In the warehouse, three men beat up Jas. It is unclear whether Sanjay sent them, whether they are his former friends or whether they are Samira's brothers. In any case, the situation gets out of hand. Jas, in an attempt to destroy all evidence, sets fire to the warehouse and ends up in hospital. In hospital, Jas literally recovers from his wrongdoings and finds a way back to his parents – the representatives of what Mr Ashwood calls a mainstream British society. On these final pages of the novel, the main character comes to a realisation. He regrets his actions and reunites with his father and mother. Together, they conjure up a plan how

[604] Michael Mitchell's provides a detailed analysis of the reference to the film in the novel *Londonstani*. Mitchell. "Escaping the Matrix."
[605] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 239.

they might save Jas from a criminal record – ironically, with the help of Mr Ashwood. Also, they talk about the family dynamics, their relationship and communication for the first time. His father shares with Jas the concerns he had over his son's life: "[r]emember how at one stage your mother and I even thought you were doing drugs because at least then your behaviour would make some sense." Jas had isolated himself so much from his parents' 'normality' that they thought drugs were the cause of his 'strange' attitude. They could not make sense of Jas's behaviour. His father blames the other rudeboys, too, for their influence on Jas and reminds Jas of who he actually is: "You are not like them."[606] The father even takes his son's medical chart – as if it was proof for his statement – and reads Jas's 'true identity' out to him. "Look […] [i]t says your name here on your medical chart: Jason Bartholomew-Cliveden, aged nineteen, white, male."[607] As established above, this development via generational and cultural conflict toward a 'happy ending' or final accommodation to society is a common feature of the *Bildungsroman*. In the case of *Londonstani*, a 'happy ending' means that Jas returns to his given or natural(ised) identity while staying open to the idea of a multicultural society.[608] 'Happy ending' means in this case also that a chosen, a performed identity, an identity beyond the dichotomy of British/Other is acceptable as long as it stays within the framework of neoliberal discourses and practises. 'Happy ending' means 'cruel optimism'[609] in the context of this novel. For Jas, it means, "[n]o more bad influences. No life of crime."[610]

6.2 A Rudeboy's Identity Playgrounds

The story of Jas's (trans)formation and fictional world is supported through a number of narratological features. As explained in the previous chapters, I focus on aspects which are most relevant to my definition of the novel of transformation: the representation of spaces, the metaphorical figure of the (reformed) rudeboy and distanced narration. As already stated, a journey or quest story of the main character is a key characteristic of the *Bildungsroman*. Like in the other novels, the formation of the protagonist is entangled with socio-geographic spaces through which he moves. *Londonstani*, the title of the novel, stands for "Londoner" and suggests a reading of Jas's formation as a story about highly diverse social settings. Although the protagonist engages with various social groups, he keeps a critical distance to them. Through the choice of an autodiegetic narrator who

[606] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 340.
[607] Ibid.
[608] This is hinted at on the last pages when Jas starts flirting with the nurse who is of Indian descent.
[609] Berlant. *Cruel Optimism*. 1-3.
[610] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 337.

switches from a first- to second-person point of view, Gautam Malkani has created a main character who is able to reflect his experience and to share his thoughts with the reader. This allows *Londonstani* to shed a critical light on contemporary social and political questions while providing a personal account of transformation.

Toying with Identity Markers in Post-ethnic London Locations

The narrator Jas reveals very late in the novel that he is "Jason Bartholomew-Cliveden, aged nineteen, white, male"[611]. Throughout most of the narration, the reader is led to believe that Jas is British Asian like his fellow rudeboys. This is highlighted by a combination of subcultural discourses and practices in which a conventional understanding of authenticity is deconstructed.[612] Literary scholar Sara Upstone sees in *Londonstani* the "most extreme embodiment of David Hollinger's[613] vision of a world in which ethnicity is not abandoned, […] but is chosen rather than ascribed."[614] Jas is well aware of this choice. "I made a choice when I started kickin bout with Hardjit"[615]. He contrasts his choice with the 'wrong' choice of a 'coconut' who adopted what Jas considers a white, liberal middle-class lifestyle. "[T]he coconut's choice was the wrong choice. In't no desi needin to kiss the white man's butt these days an you definitely don't need to actually act like a gora [white person]."[616] In the beginning of the novel, when Jas still identifies with the rudeboys, he cannot understand how someone – regardless of their skin colour – could ever choose to assimilate to a British mainstream society à la Ashwood.

In her comparison of *Tourism* and *Londonstani*, literary scholar Ellen Dengel-Janic states that *Londonstani* represents "unstable, shifting and hybrid identities"[617] whereas *Tourism* employs "essentialism, cultural difference and racial stereotype"[618]. I strongly disagree with this position. *Londonstani* shows both unstable, shifting and hybrid identities *as well as* cultural difference. The above quote, in which Jas creates new categories of identification, new cultures, is an apt example for this. Gautam Malkani's novel defines cultural difference along the lines of subcultural codes which contain elements of popular and youth culture, of a consumerist bling culture and

[611] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 340.
[612] Upstone. *British Asian Fiction*. 211.
[613] David Hollinger is the author of *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.
[614] Upstone. *British Asian Fiction*. 211.
[615] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 23.
[616] Ibid.
[617] Dengel-Janic. "'East is East and West is West'." 341.
[618] Ibid.

a specific language, which also entails "disturbing clichés and generalisations". The play with identity markers in *Londonstani* and the perceived choice does not exclude other forms of difference or Othering. For example, rudeboy Amit boasts, "[w]e's b havin a nice car, nice tunes, nuff nice designer gear, nuff bling mobile."[619] Thereby, he outlines the difference between his gang culture and the culture with which the 'coconut' character identifies. The core categories 'cars', 'right music', 'designer clothes' and 'latest technological gadgets' hint at the rudeboys' "consumer rhetoric and lifestyle that is part of the process of self-definition each character must go through in order to assume the acceptability of their peers."[620] The depiction of spaces helps to characterise in more detail the rudeboy identity demarcated through these categories. It also emphasises the trajectory of Jas's approximation to the rudeboy ideal and his separation from it toward the end of *Londonstani*.

"Welcome to the London Borough a Hounslow, car park capital a the world."[621] *Londonstani* is set in fictional Hounslow, a reference to a London suburb on the way to Heathrow Airport. As a transit district, it is depicted as a diverse and stimulating surrounding for Jas in terms of cultures, religions, and ethnicities. In Gautam Malkani's Hounslow, public as well as private spaces form the backdrop to the plot. At school, on playgrounds, on BMX tracks the rudeboys appear tough and control 'their territory'. At their homes, mostly comfortable middle-class spaces, the rudeboys' sometimes silent conflicts with their parents' generation become visible. Here, their public image as rudeboys and their personal relation to the family as sons clashes. Therefore, their parents' homes in most cases just serve as places where Jas and his friends eat and sleep. In order to get away from the oppressive family life, the gang take rides through Hounslow in their "Beemers". They cruise the streets, look out for either trouble or girls. Ironically, the flash cars that they drive belong to their parents. By meeting Sanjay, the rudeboys increasingly spend their time in posher parts of London. Instead of visiting the Cranford Fitness Centre to shape their rudeboy bodies, they decide to get an upgrade: a "Gold Star Premier membership package"[622] at "one of the premier health clubs in west London"[623]. Through their dubious business deal with Sanjay the gang are introduced to and can afford expensive clubs and restaurants in Central London, for example,

[619] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 22.
[620] Colebrook, Martyn. "Literary History of the Decade: Fictions from the Borderlands." *The 2000s. A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction*. Ed. Nick Bentley, Nick Hubble and Leigh Wilson. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. 27-51. Quotation 49.
[621] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 89.
[622] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 186.
[623] Ibid.

around Leicester Square and Piccadilly Circus.[624] For Jas, this is also an opportunity to impress Samira. He takes her out to the places he had previously visited with his mentor and boasts with his insider knowledge about these places and the people there. Sanjay's home itself is part and parcel of the life that the rudeboys aspire to have one day. It is located in wealthy Knightsbridge, equipped with designer furniture and various references to a successful life. Besides, it is his kingdom, the headquarter of Sanjay's shady business activities. Toward the end of the novel, in a final meeting between Sanjay and the main character, in which Sanjay blackmails Jas, the setting appears darker, more claustrophobic and threatening than before. In contrast to this are the open spaces of Hounslow, in particular the playgrounds and parks. Here, all actions are transparent. For Jas, this becomes problematic once Samira takes him to Lampton Park, for example, and thereby threatens to expose their secret friendship. It is a sign that Samira is not interested in hiding their liaison anymore, or rather, that Samira is not interested in *him* anymore. The final showdown and turning point in Jas's story of (trans)formation takes place in dark warehouses at night where Jas tries to steal his father's mobile phones and is knocked out by the three anonymous attackers. This is in strong contrast to the last scenes which are set in the hospital. Here, Jas recovers from his long quest, from his adventurous journey through the various social settings of a fictional London that shaped his process of subjectification. Here, he is being taken care of by a nice nurse, a potential future partner, and finds his way into the safe haven of society, as represented by his family, both common features of the *Bildungsroman*. In her analysis of *Londonstani*, sociologist Rupa Huq believes that the setting of Hounslow represents a kind of multiculturalism in which subjects gain agency. "[T]he suburb exemplifies successful multiculturalism where counter-hegemonic expressive culture is self-made by minorities who refuse to be denied agency."[625] Just like Ellen Dengel-Janic who praises *Londonstani* for its hybrid identities, Rupa Hug, too, all too quickly jumps to conclusions. Both scholars ignore the fact that despite hybridity, multiculturalism and the articulation of minorities, certain forms of discrimination are still prevalent or newly established and do not all allow for agency on a political level. In the last subchapter, I discuss if Jas gains agency and what type of agency he gains. At this point, I would like to stress only that an "expressive culture of self-made minorities", the rudeboy subculture, is not necessarily "counter-hegemonic". Whether Hounslow is a symbol for "successful multiculturalism" is therefore questionable, too.

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[624] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 177.

[625] Huq, Rupa. "Darkness on the Edge of Town." *Wasafiri* 27.4 (2012): 3-14. Quotation 10.

Rudeboy: Slang, Hypermaterialism and Hypermasculinity

The fabrication of a rudeboy identity involves a unique language. Regarding this particular slang, Gautam Malkani "was very conscious to get across the idea that there's nothing authentic about it. […] It might as well be completely fabricated."[626] As the quotes from the novel have shown so far, the language Malkani employs for the rudeboys is composed of a vocabulary from hip hop and American popular culture, of Panjabi and London street slang, and sometimes transcribed in the form of mobile-phone text messages. The author weaves this cut-and-mix of languages into the construction of the 'rudeboy'. "You can trace the lineage of various slang words […] but, at the end of the day, it's a fabrication. The whole identity is a performance, a creation, an invention."[627] In *Londonstani*, language plays a vital role in the game with references. Some literary scholars, however, are not amused about Gautam Malkani's choice of language. Richard Bradford, for instance, problematises the distanced relationship between the Cambridge-educated author and the "unsophisticated" subjects of the novel. "Semiarticulate yobbishness is now, it seems, a condition and indeed a discourse which unites the once-colonized with the one-time colonist."[628] He puts forward that Gautam Malkani achieves the "inscrutably superior distance from [his] subjects [by] handing over the narration to the unendearing Jas […]."[629] In my opinion, Bradford's argument has two flaws. First of all, Jas is not an unendearing narrator. The first-person perspective and his characterisation invite the reader to sympathise with him. Secondly, the rudeboys' "semiarticulate yobbishness" is based on Gautam Malkani's ethnographic study and thus combines the two spheres which Bradford sees apart – the rudeboy slang and the academic knowledge which went into its fabrication. Gautam Malkani studied Social and Political Sciences at the University of Cambridge. As part of his research for his undergraduate thesis, he investigated desi subculture and language. He failed to publish his results as a work of social science but used his primary sources, and in particular the interviews with his informants, to write the novel *Londonstani*.[630] Bradford does not acknowledge the complex function of the rudeboy slang in Malkani's debut.

Apart from the elements of the language which Gautam Malkani analysed, another aspect of desi culture was of major interest to him: masculinity. He employs markers of masculinity, including stereotypes, in his

[626] Brandes, Blake. "Our Lives Are Constructed with Symbols. An Interview with Gautam Malkani." *Wasafiri* 27.4 (2012): 17-18. Quotation 17.
[627] Brandes. "Our Lives Are Constructed with Symbols." 18.
[628] Bradford. *The Novel Now.* 214.
[629] Ibid.
[630] Perfect. *Contemporary Fictions*. 144.

characterisation of the rudeboys. "Consumed by the need to be 'real men' Hardjit and his friends […] aggressively form themselves not in reaction to white racism, which might have a certain tragic justification, but rather simply to ensure their control of the Hounslow streets."[631] Sara Upstone acknowledges the attempt of the novel to reverse mimicry. Nevertheless, the attempt, which can be seen in Jas's desire to be 'Asian', does not fulfil Upstone's hopes for an empire that is writing back. Jas is ashamed of his family name, for example.[632] And he is, I might add, overburdened by the ideal of masculinity that the rudeboys propagate. So again, the 'new' identity Gautam Malkani constructs through the figure of the rudeboy in *Londonstani*, is not unproblematic. Instead of encouraging the articulation of heterogeneous voices, a set of rudeboy rules actually regulates how and when to speak. Rudeboy Rule #4 is an apt example: "[a]ccording to Hardjit, it don't matter if the proper word for something sounds fuckin ridiculous. If it's the proper word then it's the proper word."[633] Obviously, it is Hardjit, the leader of the gang, who has the authority over deciding what the 'proper' word is. Besides, these regulations are often highly gendered as exemplified above or in Rudeboy Rule #5: "Hardjit taught me that you couldn't learn to chat proply if you also din't know when to stop chattin.—U gots 2 know when 2 shut yo mouth, he'd said.—It da same when u stickin yo tongue down a lady's throat, u can't jus go on an on an on, she'll get bored or fuckin choke, innit."[634] Hardjit compares speaking to kissing. For him it is manly to know when to stop and too much talking would drive a woman away, he thinks.

The self-fashioned rudeboy falls back on some old-fashioned stereotypes and / or forms new categories of difference. Three literary scholars criticise this in their analyses of *Londonstani*: Sarah Ilott, Birgit Neumann and Sara Upstone. All three of them neglect a major aspect in their evaluation – the (trans)formation of Jas. Sarah Ilott says that Gautam Malkani "both celebrates a subcultural world in which all identities are performative and critiques problems of misogyny and greed […]."[635]Sara Upstone concludes that in *Londonstani* "[p]ost-ethnicity has not eroded the exclusionary politics of urban life. […] That [rudeboy identities] are hybrid, does not prevent them from being hegemonic in the refusal to make space for alternative social formations."[636] Finally, Birgit Neumann states:

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[631] Upstone. *British Asian Fiction*. 213.
[632] Ibid.
[633] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 45.
[634] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 54.
[635] Ilott. *New Postcolonial British Genres*. 129.
[636] Upstone. *British Asian Fiction*. 214.

> While the emphasis on the performativity of identity seems to offer a way of escaping essentialist notions of race, the novel makes it clear that acts of self-fashioning may result in equally narrow stereotypes. This is all the more the case since the [rudeboys] embrace highly stereotypical notions of masculinity, which also materialize in their notorious sexist attitudes and misogynist language.[637]

The way Gautam Malkani uses hypermaterialism and hypermasculinity to create the figure of the rudeboy neither contributes to diversity nor provides promising visions of conviviality.[638] What all three scholars miss in their critique of the rudeboy is that this figure serves a very specific purpose: as a kind of foil character, the rudeboy represents a lifestyle from which Jas ultimately turns away. The novel, thus, includes a critique of the figure of the rudeboy. This can easily be detected if one follows the story of Jas's (trans)formation to the very end – and if one pays attention to the way Jas, as a narrator, is employed to reflect critically on the practices and discourses that constitute a rudeboy.

Naturalised Formation through Distanced and 'Reliable' Narration

Distanced narration is yet another characteristic of the novel of (trans)formation. In the case of *Londonstani*, the distanced narration appears on two levels: in the passages in which Jas recalls past events, in particular turning points in his process of formation, and in the passages in which he, the autodiegetic narrator, switches from a first-person to a second-person point of view. The effect is a level of reflection that allows the reader to trace Jas's internal development. The reader follows the external events from his perspective *and* Jas's thoughts about them and himself. Hence, the main character's internal monologues about the gang of rudeboys foreshadows the physical segregation from them. From the second-person point of view, Jas addresses himself and thereby adds another facet to the mode in which he presents his formation. This causes a "break in the tone"[639] in the beginning of the second part of the novel, Sher. Until then he addresses the reader with "you". Now "you" also refers to himself. "[He] generalises his own situation, assumes the audience's similar experiences, and creates a conversational relationship."[640] In the simultaneous conversation with himself and with the reader, he shares his innermost thoughts, doubts, fears, and hopes. In the beginning of the novel, he is insecure and even hates himself for not living up to the rudeboy ideal.

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[637] Neumann. "Fictions of Migration." 99.
[638] Ibid.
[639] Nunius. *Coping with Difference*. 70.
[640] Ilott. *New Postcolonial British* Genres. 128.

> I was a ponce, I acted an sounded like a batty, I was a skinny wimp, I was embarrassin to have around if ladies came by, I wore crap clothes, I used to have braces on both my upper an lower teeth, I'd read too many books, I walked like a fool, I had this annoyin habit a sniffin all the time, I couldn't usually talk proply an even when I did I couldn't ever say the right thing.[641]

The switch to a second-person point of view contributes to the depiction of Jas's change: "In the end you ignored everyone. The whole fuckin lot."[642] In the course of his (trans)formation, he becomes more confident. He is rather conflicted about the rudeboys in the first part of the novel. He feels uncomfortable about their sexism and homophobia, for example in chapter one. He cannot follow Hardjit's incoherent behaviour and his switches from one extreme position to another when it comes to women, for example. "[O]ne minute he's talkin bout how he's gonna get inside some desi girl's lace kachhian an the next minute he's actin as if a girl's gotta be a virgin if she wants to be a proper desi. Fuck knows why sometimes he'll act one way an other times he'll act the other way."[643] Jas inwardly criticises the immature attitude that a woman should either be a whore or a virgin. Despite his initial admiration for him, Jas also starts making fun about Hardjit: "gym geeks like Hardjit were full a clever but basically boring shit. The guy'd talk for hours bout the correct way to grip weights, calculate different types a body mass ratios an measure the relative performance a your thyroid an hypothalamus glands."[644] In his reflections, Jas questions the superficiality of the rudeboys and their hypermasculine or hypermaterialist perspective. In various cases, Jas thinks differently from the rest of the gang, for example in his comment about the fight for 'honour' between Tariq and Hardjit: "I don't approve a all this violence, a course. I think all fights should be settled in a more Gandhi-fied way."[645] In the process of his critical reflections and on the way to his mature, adult self, he also starts to move away from the rudeboy gang.

Literary scholars Robbie B. H. Goh[646] and Dave Gunning[647] claim that Jas is an unreliable narrator. I disagree. Just because Jas reveals to the reader

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[641] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 26.
[642] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 145.
[643] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 53.
[644] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 192.
[645] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 108.
[646] Goh, Robbie B. H. "Narrating 'Dark' India in *Londonstani* and *The White Tiger*: Sustaining Identity in the Diaspora." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 46 (2011): 327-344. Quotation 340.
[647] Gunning, Dave. "Ethnicity Politics in Contemporary Black British and British Asian Literature." *Racism, Slavery, and Literature*. Ed. Wolfgang Zach und Ulrich Pallua. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010. 47-59. Quotation 54.

thoughts that can sometimes appear to be contradictory does not necessarily mean he misleads the reader on purpose. One might say he shows a degree of unreliability or, as literary scholar Michael Perfect phrases it, "[Jas] is certainly juvenile and insecure, and we are also aware that he can be deceptive; however, while he often lies to friends, family and others, he is seemingly completely open with the reader […]."[648] Obviously, some references in the novel are ambiguous and the narration might have been smoothed in order to give an impression that Jas is British Asian but, overall, Jas is a reliable narrator in my opinion. This is important for the general message of *Londonstani*: if Jas is reliable, we can trust his learning process, his final conviction to turn away from the ideal of the rudeboy and from the role model Sanjay offers him. This brings me back to the claim I made in the previous section. The problem with *Londonstani* is not the hypermasculinity, the hypermaterialism or other categories of discrimination. At the end of the day, Jas critically reflects on and dissociates himself from what he considers 'negative' aspects of the rudeboy role and keeps 'positive' ones, such as an openness to multiculturalism. The actual problem with *Londonstani* is the process of subjectification during his reformation. The development of the main character from "wannabe rudeboy" to "reformed rudeboy" involves a development of the entrepreneurial self that feeds into hegemonic discourses of neoliberalism. That Jas is a trustworthy narrator naturalises the 'happy ending', his final accommodation to society as a neoliberal subject.

6.3 From Unethical to Ethical Enterprising Self

The following three subsections discuss whether Jas's final accommodation to society give him agency or rather a voice that matters. The first part investigates the figure of the rudeboy as an entrepreneurial subject with a particular consideration of his subcultural capital. The second part looks at the role of businessman Sanjay in Jas's formation, how he functions on the one hand as a catalyst for financial success, more confidence and agency, and on the other hand as a foil character to a desired version of the entrepreneurial self as exemplified by the father of the main character. I argue that Jas's crisis and the recovery from the role as a rudeboy serves as a critique of a consumerist culture and of a morally corrupt entrepreneurial self. I also argue that a legally and ethically approved version of the entrepreneurial self is still the aim of his (trans)formation. Hence, *Londonstani* adds to the hegemonic discourses about subjectification in a neoliberal society. The third part then discusses whether the protagonist's voice matters and

[648] Perfect. *Contemporary Fictions*. 150.

takes the concept of the 'voice' to a different level by proposing that Gautam Malkani's novel is a trick of the creative industries.

The Entrepreneurial Rudeboy

In the beginning of *Londonstani* Jas panics that he might not fulfil the role of the rudeboy. He is trying to improve his language and style. He is afraid he might not be part of a subculture that pretends to rebel against a fictional British mainstream society and, therefore, keeps disciplining himself in order to approximate the ideal of the rudeboy image in the first part of the novel. Later on, he increasingly questions the rudeboy lifestyle and starts voicing his own opinion about the rules. At first, however, he chooses to be a rudeboy. The performance of this identity involves a construction through symbols just like Malkani explained in an interview: "[T]he novel's job is just to draw […] out [that all our lives are constructed with symbols] and make people realise it."[649] Interestingly, the symbolic construction of a rudeboy life often rests on consumer products such as cars and mobile phones. Jas, in his attempt to become a rudeboy is an example of a continuous transformation of the self as required by neoliberal discourses. "[B]y constantly conjuring the magic of self-transformation through purchases, one must understand one's projects as subverting all external attempts by the powers that be to impose conformity to external manufactured identities."[650] Through buying into the style of the rudeboys, it appears to Jas that he might be as subversive as they are. With Philip Mirowski, I say that Jas "believe[s] that [he] can 'see through' and comprehend all the brands, the con artistry, the flimflam, the propaganda, the logos, and marketing culture, all the while easing [his] acquiescence into that very same culture."[651] The permanent references to consumer products is both a grand overview of contemporary bling culture and evidence of Jas's submission to it. Jas is a 'murketer'[652] who "replace[s] lived experience with prefabricated 'lifestyles,' always seeking to move beyond the intrinsic contradiction between 'belonging' and assertion of individuality. What murketing always promises to provide is the experience of thrilling rebellion from conformity, but safely nested within a popular shared script."[653] The protagonist of *Londonstani* wants to rebel against the perceived mainstream but ends up

[649] Brandes. "Our Lives Are Constructed with Symbols." 18.
[650] Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste*. 141.
[651] Ibid.
[652] Philip Mirowski defines 'murketing' on page 140 of the same publication: "The modern hidden persuaders have gladly nurtured the conviction of the average person that he is more clever than those who seek to manipulate him in order to render him all the more open to that manipulation; the set of techniques predicated on this inversion has been dubbed 'murketing'."
[653] Ibid.

to be as mainstream as the other rudeboys in their hunt for consumer products. This weakens their potential, as a subculture, to be counter-hegemonic. In this context, Philip Mirowski warns, "[a]postasy takes on a cozy air; insurrection is hardly distinguished from playtime. It takes what could potentially become the spark of political activity and turns it into another occasion for shopping. Murketing is therefore one of the prime defenses against actual political mobilization in the modern polity."[654] Hence, the figure of the rudeboy is a version of the entrepreneurial self that deals with a subcultural capital which consists of consumer products and which prevents political changes.[655] Gautam Malkani's new concept of identity seems interesting at first as it transcends boundaries of nation, race or ethnicity. The metaphor of the rudeboy turns out to be rather ineffective when it comes to questioning a Blairite multiculturalism that serves to perpetuate neoliberal ideologies through the glorification of 'diversity' as in 'diversity of consumer identities'. Literary scholar Nick Bentley's observations complement my claim. "This reduction in the radical potential of subcultural membership is also manifest in the novel's focus on the importance of business for the group, appropriating, but not challenging, dominant capitalist practices into the subcultural context."[656] For example, the rudeboys set up their mobile phone business with Davinder who supplies the stolen phones that the gang then reprograms. "I don't even want to know where Davinder'd got all his merchandise from, but it kept us in business an you can't be a businessman if you in't in business, innit."[657] A rudeboy's aim is to be "in business" in order to be "a businessman". Sanjay helps the gang to take this aim to the next level by offering them a business deal which is more illegal, that is riskier, but more lucrative and therefore encourages the entrepreneurial spirit of the rudeboys.

The Impossibility of Escaping the Matrix – no, Market

For some months, Sanjay, the successful businessperson and mentor of the rudeboys, becomes a role model for Jas. Through him, Jas gains more self-confidence and agency; for instance, when he eventually asks Samira out on

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[654] Ibid.

[655] Jas distances himself from the rudeboy model in the end. Nevertheless, I would like to highlight the starting point for his development as a neoliberal subject. Jas might turn away from Malkani's construction of the rudeboy but he does not turn away from the construction of the entrepreneurial self which is both part of the figure of the rudeboy and Jas's new identity.

[656] Bentley, Nick. "Subcultural Fictions: Youth Subcultures in Twenty-first-century British Fiction." *The 2000s. A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction*. Ed. Nick Bentley, Nick Hubble and Leigh Wilson. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. 53-81. Quotation 63.

[657] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 40.

a date and dares to overstep the rudeboy rules by suggesting that Samira could become his girlfriend. It is especially the financial success, which was generated by an illegal business deal with Sanjay, that boosts Jas's ego and that makes him more popular among his peers. It encourages him to disagree openly with his gang, to liberate himself from Hardjit's authority. Nevertheless, it is made quite clear in the novel that Jas's agency continues to stay within the framework of a neoliberal discourse. Sanjay tells Jas,

> you don't really have any options […]. Believe me, I've thought a lot about this, I used to be Mr Ashwood's favourite dork, remember. But there's no Marxist alternative any more. The fall of communism, the rise of bling. If this urban scene or society you belong to judged you by the number of books you'd read then maybe you could join a library, big yourselves up for free and give Mr Ashwood an orgasm of his own while you're at it. But it doesn't.[658]

In his monologue, Sanjay marks the ideological territory in which Jas's agency could develop. He excludes a Marxist alternative as an option and advertises his own, 'bling', late capitalist version. By doing so, he contrasts a poor lifestyle that prioritises education and culture over money with an affluent life that centres on material wealth. According to Sanjay, society does not award their educational efforts or critical minds but only merits successful competition in a free market. A neoliberal outlook on life becomes the premise for Jas's development – no matter which choice he makes. To a certain extent Jas is aware of this dilemma: adults are "[a]lways tellin us what we should do an tellin us we'd be killed by aliens or someshit if we did something else, before adding, But of course it is your choice. Your decision. I am not telling you what to do."[659] His freedom is fake. Despite this insight, he is not able to step away from the choice offered to him. For Philip Mirowski this is a common phenomenon in a neoliberal society.

> When agents are endlessly desperate to refashion themselves into some imaginary entity they anticipate that others want them to be, the supposed consumer sovereignty the market so assiduously pampers has begun to deliquesce. It is a mug's game to trumpet the virtues of a market that gives people what they want, if people are portrayed as desperate to transform themselves into the type of person who wants what the market provides.[660]

A neoliberal system creates the subjects that then (re)create a neoliberal system as explained in the first part of my study. In other words, self-

[658] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 168.
[659] Malkani. *Londonstani*. 119.
[660] Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste*. 115.

responsibilised Jas is not able to see beyond the options offered to him by his fictional British society but has the impression that what is offered to him should already include desirable options. Gautam Malkani "might restore the necessary sense of agency to Asian Britons,"[661] literary scholar Dave Gunning admits while pointing out that this agency is never independent of its circumstances. In Jas's case, the circumstances are shaped by the discourses and practices of neoliberalism. Jas gains agency through his individualisation and final liberation from the other rudeboys and even from Sanjay. Yet, he submits to the ideal of the neoliberal self in a different way and thereby limits his agency to the spectrum provided by his enterprising self. The choice he has is one between unethical and ethical neoliberal self, not between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic options. The ending of *Londonstani* implies that Jas will transfer his entrepreneurial self from the illegal business of Sanjay to an established and legally accepted free market in order to become a full member of his fictional society, to become an adult. Sanjay's variation of the 'entrepreneur' is finally discarded as a viable alternative but plays an important role for the choices available to the main character. Nandini Gooptu makes a similar observation in the case of Indian fiction: representations of entrepreneurs and enterprises implicitly criticise unethical, amoral and unrestrained business practices or undeserved wealth. At the same time, these representations celebrate the responsible, self-disciplining and ethical enterprising self.[662] The versions of the 'entrepreneur' these fictions criticise "are those who undermine the free operations of the market by resorting to corruption and crime. […] The ethic of the market and the ideal enterprising self seem to emerge unscathed, indeed vindicated, from the fictional critiques of economic entrepreneurialism as unethical conduct."[663] The antagonist Sanjay thus helps to create an ideal enterprising self in the form of Jas's father. Whereas Sanjay stands for unethical, amoral and unrestrained business practices, Jas's father is depicted as responsible, self-disciplining and ethical enterprising self. As the paternal authority who saves Jas from 'bad influences' and a 'life of crime' he turns into a desirable subject of *Londonstani*'s fictional society. In the end, Jas might become part of his father's "family business". Whether this type of subjectification guarantees Jas a voice that matters remains questionable.

A Voice that Matters?

To a degree, the main character Jas gains agency. However, I claim that it is a form of suffering agency as his options are limited to the restricted

[661] Gunning. *Race and Antiracism*. 125.
[662] Gooptu. "Introduction." 23.
[663] Ibid.

choices of neoliberal discourses and practices. The figure of the rudeboy promises the possibility of creating new, hybrid identities in the multicultural society of *Londonstani*. While Jas does not assume the role of the rudeboy completely, he is open to diversity. He liberates himself from the unwanted and restricting expectations of his gang and of the destructive influence of Sanjay. He has the courage to date Samira, to take down religious divisions. But his agency doesn't go far. His attempt to be a rudeboy, and therefore 'subversive', has no political effect. His fight for intercultural relationships is limited to his 'fling' with Samira. Breaking free from the rules of the rudeboys, taking his own decisions and freeing Arun from the 'illusions of the Matrix' result in a catastrophe. Finally, returning to the safe haven of his white middle-class nuclear family and literally flirting with the 'exotic' other, the nurse in hospital, merely entails the prospect of joining his father's business and of winning a future partner that ticks the checklist of well-meaning liberalism. All this does not make Jas a protagonist whose voice matters. He is transformed into a subject who manages to articulate his individuality. Yet, he does so only as a neoliberal subject of his fictional British society, not as a unique existent[664] with a politically relevant form of agency.

'Voice' plays a more important role on a meta-level. The novel *Londonstani* can be seen as a voice of the creative class. This complicates the reading of Gautam Malkani's literary debut but leads to a similar conclusion about *Londonstani* as part of a wider hegemonic discourse of neoliberalism. Sara Ilott diagnosed that the publication was misunderstood and did not receive the attention it deserves because it "presents a vision of multicultural Britain that has a problematic relationship with money and hypermasculinity, making it unpalatable to the market at which it was initially directed."[665] Gautam Malkani was expected to be the next Zadie Smith or Monica Ali[666] but failed to meet the expectations of readers who bought *Londonstani* for that reason and were disappointed because of the 'inauthentic' depiction of British Asian youth or the (also) dark portrayal of multicultural London.[667]

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[664] As defined in the chapter about 'agency'.

[665] Ilott. *New Postcolonial British Genres.* 129.

[666] Perfect. *Contemporary Fictions*. 7.

[667] The case of *Londonstani* even coined the term 'Londonstani effect'. "'Things escalate and very quickly get out of control,' admits Canongate MD Jamie Byng. Some of the crueller wits in the industry describe it as the Londonstani effect, after Fourth Estate paid around £380,000 for Gautam Malkani's novel following a heated auction and much excitement at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 2005. In *Londonstani*'s case, the hype didn't play to its advantage, with sales of 15,000 copies failing to live up to the size of the advance." Flood, Alison. "The Bookseller." *The Guardian*. 12.04.2008. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2008/apr/12/featuresreviews.guardianreview9 [22.08.2016].

"What is perhaps odd about this situation is that Malkani's novel was never actually marketed as being 'the next' *White Teeth* or *Brick Lane*; indeed, it is so markedly different from those novels that to have done so would have been highly misleading, if not simply bizarre."[668] Gautam Malkani and some of his critics emphasise the fact that the novel should have been marketed as a coming-of-age story. With more recent editions this was done. "Harper Perennial's 2007 paperback edition of the novel attempted to target a different audience by thoroughly rebranding it, remarketing it as a hip, urban 'youth' novel."[669] The novel was celebrated, for instance by Sarah Ilott, for highlighting the intersection between masculinity and consumerism. Ilott suggests that the novel is an indirect critique of commercialism. However, the novel contributed to neoliberal discourses. Literary scholar Sara Brouillette, at least, outlines the connection between Gautam Malkani's publication and the decibel program, an Arts Council initiative (2003-08) to support diversity in the arts scene. Research has shown that the marketisation of multiculturalism and diversity is a process which produces subjects for capitalism.[670] With the example of the decibel program, Sara Brouillette tracks this process in the UK: "arts funding and corporate branding conspire to isolate clear affiliation with specific under-represented communities as the thing that licenses writers' and artists' access to and distinction within existing or emerging markets."[671] These communities are attractive for producers, such as authors, distributors or agents, who would like to turn them into new consumers. Sara Brouillette sees that the creative industries need to incorporate these new consumers in order to maintain power.[672] She accuses Gautam Malkani's debut novel of adding to these dynamics.

> Depicting the rudeboys' struggles with masculinity and ethnicity is only the novel's pretext. What it actually gives voice to is an emerging creative class, a class to which writers belong and for which they are, in some sense, vanguard figures, long accustomed to hazy boundaries between work and life, to semi-professionalism, to

[668] Perfect. *Contemporary Fictions*. 140.
[669] Perfect. *Contemporary Fictions*. 139. Michael Perfect but also Sarah Ilott and James Graham provide more details on readerly expectations, the marketing strategies for *Londonstani* and sales numbers at certain stages. [669] Graham. "'This In't Good Will Hunting'". Ilott. *New Postcolonial British Genres.* Perfect. *Contemporary Fictions*.
[670] See Joseph, Miranda. *Against the Romance of Community*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
[671] Brouillette, Sara. "The Creative Class and Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani*." *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 51.1 (2010): 1-17. Quotation 6.
[672] Ibid.

> irregular working arrangements and remuneration, and to self-reflexivity, introspection, and individualization.[673]

Ironically, the only voice that interests in the case of *Londonstani* is the voice of its author's enterprising self. The agency of the protagonist Jas is limited. His voice does not matter.

[673] Brouillette. "The Creative Class and Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani*." 16.

7 The Springsteen Fan: Sarfraz Manzoor's *Greetings from Bury Park. Race, Religion and Rock 'n' Roll* (2007)

"In the case of contemporary narratives of Britishness, the most important thing to 'write against' is an increasing level of Islamophobia manifesting itself in policing, racist attacks, and selectively distorting media coverage," as Sarah Ilott demands.[674] And that is what Sarfraz Manzoor does. The British journalist, broadcaster and documentary film maker writes against Islamophobia and advocates diversity. In 2007, he published *Greetings from Bury Park. Race, Religion and Rock 'n' Roll*[675]. The book is about "many things – the impact of multi-culturalism, a coming-of-age story and a Nick Hornby-style documentation of musical obsession," as *The Independent* opines in a blurb on the cover. First and foremost, however, it is about Sarfraz Manzoor's life. His debut is an autobiography, or more broadly life writing, so not exactly a *novel* of transformation but a *narrative* of transformation. I include it in the list of selected debuts nevertheless. One the one hand, any autobiography is "inevitably constructive, or imaginative, in nature and as a form of textual 'self-fashioning' ultimately resists a clear distinction from its fictional relatives."[676] On the other hand, an autobiography "renders a story of personality formation, a *Bildungsgeschichte*"[677]. *Greetings from Bury Park* also has an autodiegetic narrator. Sarfraz Manzoor is simultaneously the author, narrator and the main character.

Sarfraz Manzoor's publication is divided into eight chapters, each devoted to one aspect of his life: his patriarchal father, his mother and three siblings, his friend Amolak who introduces him to the music of Bruce Springsteen, the USA, work, love relationships, religion, Great Britain. Each of these chapters carries the title of a different song by Bruce Springsteen and they all start with a quote from one of his lyrics. This allows for a thematic rather than chronological depiction of the (trans)formation of the protagonist. At

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[674] Ilott. *New Postcolonial British Genres*. 9.

[675] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*.

[676] Schwalm, Helga. "Autobiography." *The Living Handbook of Narratology*. Ed. Peter Hühn et al. 11.04.2014. http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/autobiography [31.03.2017]. "Autobiography (narrative recounting the life of the author) supposes that there is *identity of name* between the author (such as he figures, by his name, on the cover), the narrator of the story and the character who is being talked about." Lejeune, Philippe. *On Autobiography*. Ed. Paul John Eakin. Trans. Katherine Leary. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. 12. Also, "in making the text the autobiographer constructs a self that would not otherwise exist." Eakin, Paul John. "Foreword." *On Autobiography*. Philippe Lejeune. Ed. Paul John Eakin. Trans. Katherine Leary. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. vii-xxviii. Quotation xxiii. These definitions tie in with my section about the discursive constitution of the subject and are discussed in more detail below.

[677] Schwalm. "Autobiography."

the same time, specific dates in the flashbacks of the narrator reference moments in British history and embed the private formation of Sarfraz in the political formation of contemporary Britain.[678] Similar to Gautam Malkani's novel *Londonstani*, *Greetings from Bury Park* accentuates a subcultural identity – 'desi' in Gautam Malkani's and 'rock 'n' roll' in Sarfraz Manzoor's case – in order to transcend divides between ethnicities and religions. In other words, *Greetings from Bury Park* reconciles a "British" with a "Muslim identity" through the music of Bruce Springsteen. However, the community spirit that the author seeks is expensive. He has to buy the exclusive status of being a fan. Although the protagonist rebels against his ambitious father, he takes on similar values in the end: for him, life is "a relentless quest to achieve and know and gain and become,"[679] hard work, and paying respect to one's family through professional ambitions and achievements. On the brink of the financial crisis of 2007-2008, Sarfraz Manzoor creates an entrepreneurial self on his optimistic search for happiness and professional success and with complete trust in individualisation, autonomy and meritocracy. He writes against Islamophobia by reminding the reader of their shared normativised beliefs in many things: music (mainstream), multiculturalism (Blairite), and maturity (through neoliberal subject formation).

7.1 The Formation of a Fan

In contrast to Gautam Malkani's "extreme constructivism", Sarfraz Manzoor narrates his formation with clear reference to his country of origin and to the culture of his Pakistani family. But like the author of *Londonstani*, he shows that some aspects of a 'given' identity can be emphasised whereas others can be adjusted or transformed. Sarfraz Manzoor's story of (trans)formation is closely intertwined with the biography of his father and with a homage to Bruce Springsteen, the most influential figures in his life. As a devoted fan of the rock star, he follows the established teleological development of the protagonist in the novel of transformation. He questions and alienates himself from his family, experiences personal and social crises, and finally finds accommodation in society as a transformed subject.

[678] Although *Greetings from Bury Park. Race, Religion and Rock 'n' Roll* focuses on British Asian identities and/or British Muslim identities it clearly intersects with class issues and the fundamental changes for factory workers in the second half of the twentieth century as exemplified in the case of Sarfraz' father. See Offer, Avner. "British Manual Workers: From Producers to Consumers, c. 1950-2000." *Contemporary British History* 22.4 (2008): 537-571.

[679] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 47.

Father and Family

The protagonist Sarfraz Manzoor is the third child of a migrant family with roots in India and Pakistan. His father, Mohammed, comes to England in 1963 in order to work in factories and support his family back home. After eleven years and only three visits, his wife and three children finally come to live with him in Luton in 1974. They are in a similar situation as other Pakistani families in the 1960s and 1970s. Also, the position of the parents in the family, and in particular of the father, is similar to the family position of other first-generation Asian immigrants. Their concern is "how to try and protect the children from temptations and reinforce their Pakistani identity."[680] Sarfraz, with hindsight, realises, that "[t]hey must have felt they were trying to turn back the tide of progress before it rose to destroy and tear apart their families. But it was this tide of progress that had carried my father from Pakistan to England."[681] A conflict with the second generation is thus almost unavoidable. What distinguishes his father from his Pakistani friends, though, is Mohammed's persistent drive to improve his and his family's situation. "My father was a man perpetually on the move, driven by a relentless desire towards something and somewhere better. His friends frustrated him because they reminded him of who he was, and not what he wanted to be."[682] His drive for improvement also shows in his urge for self-improvement. His son, Sarfraz, is deeply impressed today "how someone who came to this country in the early sixties, who was never able to fulfil his own potential, and who met with racism on a daily basis, was able to inject into his children […] a sense that the entire world was available to them if we studied hard and worked harder."[683] His father's ambition and resilience as well as loyalty to his family involves high expectations of his children, which echoes Berlant's concept of 'cruel optimism'[684]. His father's vision of a good life in turn involves one constant mantra for Sarfraz: "do not let me down."[685] As a child, Sarfraz experiences his father's hopes as a burden. Pride, shame and sacrifice are three important aspects in his education. Mohammed does not get tired of reminding his children of the hardship he had and has to endure. He hopes for a better future for them and expects them to make him proud, not to bring shame on him. Although Mohammed is not proud of working in a factory, he keeps up his work ethic even after he is made redundant from a car factory in 1986. As a teenager, Sarfraz was not able to understand that for his father "the

[680] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 25.
[681] Ibid.
[682] Ibid.
[683] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 26, 27.
[684] Berlant. *Cruel Optimism*. 1-3.
[685] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 35.

concept of being unemployed was deeply shameful. He was someone who believed with almost messianic passion in the very idea of work; it was not something he was willing to sacrifice merely because he did not have a job."[686] Mohammed's "messianic passion" stretches so much that it becomes almost comical: although he is not the main breadwinner for the family anymore, the whole family pretends nothing has changed in order to preserve his authority. Sarfraz' mother and sister earn the family's income but the father still decides how to spend the money. Mohammed's patriarchal attitude does not seem to jar with his belief in meritocracy.

The economic pressures on the family are enormous. Because Mohammed is not able to support his family (on his own), his wife and children have to help as much as possible. Sarfraz' mother works at home and their oldest daughter Navela supports her after school sewing clothes. Their sons Sohail and Sarfraz as well as the youngest child, Uzma, have to help in the household and take on jobs at the weekend. All their income helps to sustain a simple lifestyle, to maintain the house and to still the demands of relatives. Sarfraz recalls, "[t]hose early years in Bury Park were hard times"[687] and remembers "the urgent pressure we all felt to earn and save money"[688] which defined the atmosphere in the family. Their efforts are never appreciated. Instead, their father demands more discipline, fewer mistakes, in short – perfection. Sarfraz Manzoor's childhood is shaped by the hardship of the low-income, high-effort conditions. Compared to other children of his age his options are severely restricted. "As a small boy the consequences of poverty were few toys and no holidays; birthdays were family only affairs […]."[689] Mohammed nonetheless tries to secure his children the best education available. For this reason, the family leaves their Pakistani migrant community and moves to Marsh Farm in 1979. "The local schools in Bury Park were overwhelmingly Asian but Lealands was almost entirely white. My father was convinced that this made the school better."[690] The 'reverse racism' of Mohammed translates into absurd classifications. Although he wants his sons and daughters to be educated with white children, he does not want his family to become friends with them. "[Being educated with white children] was not the same as being friends with whites, which he believed to be both unlikely and possibly dangerous." [691] Sarfraz finds a couple of friends in his new school. They only make him more aware of the precarious life he leads. The discrepancy between his working-class,

[686] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 36.
[687] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 56.
[688] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 157.
[689] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 21, 22.
[690] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 24.
[691] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 58.

immigrant background and the relatively comfortable situation of other pupils at this school becomes more drastic. Not only is Sarfraz' situation highly regulated in terms of cultural upbringing but it is also severely limited in terms of economic possibilities. While other teenagers have parties and partners, Sarfraz has to work and wait for an arranged marriage. In his childhood, his family takes care of him. At the same time, his father exerts inescapable control over him. Sarfraz' family life and feeling of safety literally come at a high cost.

Roops and Bruce

During his teenage years, the situation becomes unbearable for Sarfraz. He observes that the family pride and outward appearance to 'the community' "took an absurdly high significance"[692] and remembers, "we had to act as if our entire lives were being recorded for the critical approval of this community. I found this obsession with keeping up appearances infuriating."[693] Sarfraz starts to think more critically. The priorities of his parents are outdated for him, they even make him angry but he does not dare to speak up yet. Against his father's unstoppable entrepreneurial activism, which involved tedious tasks such as cleaning carpets from tiny threads, the main character develops a dream of passivity. "When I remember my teenage years the one thing I wanted to do most was just that: nothing."[694] Sarfraz defines himself in contrast to his father. Whereas Mohammed – despite his thirst for improvement – clings on to a long-gone past, Sarfraz hopes for a better future outside the limitations of his Luton life. He recaps his adolescence in the sober statement, "[b]y seventeen my desperation to leave Luton for somewhere else was only marginally more intense than my resentment at my father for having held me back. My teenage life had been nothing more than a failed checklist."[695] Sarfraz is caught between the guilt he feels toward his parents and the anger about his "failed youth". He does not rebel but keeps his frustrations to himself. The conflict in Sarfraz' search for possibilities of identification echoes Birgit Neumann's general observation about fictions of migration. In her recent article, she explains that these narratives "dramatize the struggle to establish a sense of identification and belonging under often severe forms of marginalization and stigmatization."[696] Sarfraz experiences multiple facets of marginalisation: in terms of ethnicity and in terms of class. In this struggle to identify and belong, his father is a further obstacle rather than an inspiration for the

[692] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 27.
[693] Ibid.
[694] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 32.
[695] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 40.
[696] Neumann. "Fictions of Migration." 89.

adolescent Sarfraz. In college, therefore, the main character begins to identify more strongly with people and positions outside his own family.

"I did not know it then, in that first week at sixth-form college […], that my life would be changed for ever by the boy [Amolak]"[697] Amolak, who is also called Roops, goes to college with Sarfraz and becomes his best friend and mentor. They are an unlikely couple but Sarfraz is able to open up to and trust Amolak more than anyone else. Amolak is a Sikh who enjoys drinking, joking with the other boys and flirting with the girls. Sarfraz is Muslim, does not drink alcohol and is extremely shy. Still, he knows that there is "no one with whom [he] could speak with such honesty as [he] could with Amolak; with white friends [he] always had to explain things […] but with Amolak no explanations were necessary. He understood."[698] Like Sarfraz, Amolak is from a working-class migrant family. Most importantly, Amolak helps the sixteen-year-old boy to become a 'man'. He gives Sarfraz a cassette tape with Bruce Springsteen songs and promises him, "'[y]ou woke up a boy and tonight you will go to sleep a man.'"[699] For Sarfraz the tape triggers a life-long passion for the work of Bruce Springsteen. The first night he listens to the songs mark a chief moment of change in his formation. Springsteen's lyrics are a revelation to him: "[e]verything significant that I did or achieved in my life in the years that followed had its roots in the emotions I experienced that evening. That night Bruce Springsteen changed my life."[700] Bruce Springsteen, who also has a working-class background and a difficult relationship with his father, represents for Sarfraz a possible exit from the conflicted constellation with his own father. In the song 'Independence Day', Sarfraz identifies with the son who liberates himself from the rules of his father. Although Sarfraz never confronts his father in the same way the son in the song does, the philosophical universe of Bruce Springsteen stabilises Sarfraz and gives him the comfort of knowing that his situation is not exceptional: other father-son relationships encounter similar problems. Sarfraz acknowledges his father's efforts but looks for his own way into British society. Through his new friend Amolak, and later when studying in Manchester and earning his own money, Sarfraz is able to see beyond the tight boundaries set by his family. He starts to question his father's values and increasingly distances himself from his family.

[697] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 88.
[698] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 96.
[699] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 91.
[700] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 93.

Physically leaving Luton adds to the initial alienation from his family. Sarfraz moves to Manchester to study economics and politics in 1989. After graduating he decides to stay there because in "Manchester [he] was free."[701] He extends his student life in which he makes up for the failed checklist of his teenage years including clubbing and girls. After six years in Manchester, the generational and cultural conflict with his parents climaxes. Sarfraz, now "an unemployed British-Pakistani with shoulder-length dreadlocks, a silver nose ring and a strange fascination with Bruce Springsteen"[702] has nothing in common with his father anymore. In fact, Sarfraz remembers how he defined himself in strong opposition to Mohammed. "When he said he was Pakistani, I declared I was British; he was Muslim, I was confused; he believed in family, I championed the individual; he worshipped money, I claimed it meant nothing."[703] His father is hurt and hardly talks to his son anymore. His mother tries to mediate between the two of them but fails when her efforts end in accusations directed against Sarfraz. Sarfraz not only distances himself from his parents' moral coordinates 'family, responsibility and pride' that were an essential part of his upbringing. He even ridicules them and condemns his father's strictness. The tension between them cumulates until this father suffers a heart attack from which he dies in 1995. This comes as a shock to Sarfraz. In retrospect, he comprehends, "[t]he hidden world which his departure illuminated was the realisation that I was more like him than I had ever conceded."[704] He understands that he had misinterpreted his father. The hidden world of his father with which he can now identify had been covered by Sarfraz' anger toward him. With his father's death, Sarfraz is robbed of a safety net, loses what he calls his 'naivety' of believing that things would fall into place after university and awakens to a different reality. "I was shaken out of my complacency. […] It was startling to realise that if you did nothing about it then nothing happened […]."[705] Sarfraz begins to see his father's entrepreneurial spirit in a different light. As much as the first encounter with the songs of Bruce Springsteen was a turning point in Sarfraz formation, the loss of his father is just as much. Bruce Springsteen's music prompted an alienation from the values of his parents. Mohammed's death triggers in Sarfraz a process of reintegration into this moral framework. Only a few months later Sarfraz starts a master's course in documentary making which then leads him into journalism – an obsession that he had always shared

[701] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 2.
[702] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 1.
[703] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 6.
[704] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 53.
[705] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 170.

with his father. He takes on a desired position in the newsroom of ITN and keeps working on his career. After another shock, when his mother suffers a stroke in 2004, Sarfraz reaches a preliminary peak of his professional achievements. He produces a documentary about his own hometown called 'Luton Actually' which turns out to be a success not only for Sarfraz but for his whole family. "[I]t transformed my relationship with my family,"[706] Sarfraz recalls. Through the success of his film, Sarfraz achieves three aims: he shows that he is able to secure an income and work hard. He restores the respect for his family and the community. Finally, he is at peace with his father's worldview and deeply regrets that Mohammed cannot see the fruits of his efforts. His older brother Sohail, who takes on his father's position in the family, however, reaches out to Sarfraz and thereby symbolically invites the 'lost son' home: "'The whole town saw [your work], I think. Hey, maybe we should set up business together and make documentaries!'"[707] The (trans)formation of Sarfraz results in a 'happy ending' or a final accommodation to society. Once his career thrives, Sarfraz feels accepted. Sohail now confirms, "there isn't a thing wrong with you!"[708] Despite long-held reservations about Sarfraz' lifestyle and love for Bruce Springsteen's music, his brother finally appreciates Sarfraz for what he is – as long as this conforms to the hegemonic framework of neoliberalism. The publication of *Greetings from Bury Park* in 2007 can thus be read in a similar vein as the broadcasting of 'Luton Actually': as a further step on the path of the entrepreneurial self that transcends limits set by ethnicity or religion.

7.2 Memories between Bury Park and Asbury Park

A review in *The Guardian* states that "Sarfraz Manzoor's first book brings together three common, though not obviously interlocking motifs of recent literature."[709] *Greetings from Bury Park* deals not only with questions of growing up in Britain as Pakistani or Muslim and of dealing with the loss of one's father; it also looks into the impact of pop music on one's life, in this case "an almost religious devotion to Bruce Springsteen […]."[710] Bruce Springsteen's first album "Greetings from Asbury Park, N.J." (1973) inspired the title of *Greetings from Bury Park*, some of his lyrics inspired the structure of Sarfraz Manzoor's story. The following sections investigate some of the narratological aspects in relation to the protagonist's

[706] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 84.
[707] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 85.
[708] Ibid.
[709] Kelly, Danny. "There's just one Boss in the Family." *The Guardian*. 27.05.2007. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/may/27/biography.features [31.03.2018].
[710] Ibid.

transformation more closely: spaces, intertextual references to the lyrics of Bruce Springsteen, and distanced narration.

A Circular Quest

Sarfraz Manzoor's quest or journey takes him away from Luton to Manchester, London, the USA – and back to Luton. Defining spaces in his childhood are Pakistan and, once he moves with his mother and siblings to live with their father, also Luton. Here, they live in poverty although, or rather because, Mohammed had bought a house for his family. "We did not know that Luton had such a dire reputation,"[711] remembers Sarfraz. Luton, close to London and best known for its airport, is convenient for his father who works at the largest employer in the region, the Vauxhall car factory. Mohammed is able to afford a home in Bury Park by borrowing money from his friends. Because they only gave him enough for the deposit, the father cannot get any furniture. The family's first home in England is thus a symbol for their precarious position: they have a roof over their heads but the space itself is empty; the living conditions meet the bare minimum. Besides, the father is hardly ever home. "The pressure to pay the mortgage and pay off his loans meant [Mohammed] worked all the overtime that was available […]."[712] After five years, once the mother and the sister had started working, too, they manage to save enough money in order to leave Bury Park and move to the desired home in a different part of the town, Marsh Farm. As mentioned above, it is a strategic choice by the father who wants his children to visit a school with a majority of white pupils. He assumes educational standards are higher there and that this would guarantee his sons and daughters better prospects.

As shortly hinted at, Sarfraz does not truly connect to any of his fellow pupils. He has some friends but their comfortable lives only make Sarfraz more aware of the grim conditions in which he lives. It is only when he starts going to college at the age of sixteen that he finds a way to, at least internally, escape his Luton life shaped by strict rules at home and his marginalised position in society. Together with Amolak, his best friend, he dreams of the USA. "In my new friend I had found someone else who loved America and hated Luton with the same passion as I did."[713] The songs of Bruce Springsteen feed their imagination of the land of opportunities and help them to cope with their (family) situation at home. Sarfraz Manzoor dedicates a whole chapter to the 'promised land'. He and Amolak fly to the USA together in order to spend the summer there, working and travelling.

[711] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.* 17.
[712] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park.*18.
[713] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 99.

Although Mohammed is strictly against this idea, Sarfraz convinces him. It is the first time the protagonist speaks up against him. The trip itself is obviously less glamorous than the popular films produced in Hollywood promise. However, it is an important experience in the formation of Sarfraz. After Amolak leaves early because he is too homesick, Sarfraz explores the country on his own. Although he has to work hard, he feels independent. A few months earlier, he had moved to Manchester to study at university. There, too, he feels "free". Manchester and the USA are spaces in which Sarfraz further distances himself from his family. After the difficult years in college when he was still caught in his family context, the alienation from his childhood surroundings becomes visible. Every time he visits his parents and siblings, he even feels unwell. "As the train trundle[s] closer to its destination [he begins] the familiar process of mentally acclimatising to coming back home. Luton [gives him] a headache."[714] Only years later, after his father's death and when he starts to work in London, he is more at ease coming 'back home'. Moreover, he pays tribute to and produces a documentary about his childhood setting: 'Luton Actually'. Sarfraz' formation that I sketched above parallels the relationship he has to the space around him. The circular movement Luton – Manchester/USA/London – Luton goes hand in hand with the distancing from and final approximation to his father's worldview. Hence, the representation of spaces is essential to Sarfraz Manzoor's (re)construction of his own development from childhood to adulthood. Furthermore, with his final accommodation to society, Great Britain in general has become Sarfraz' "land of hopes and dreams"[715]. Between Pakistan and the USA, 'Cool Britannia' is the space with which the protagonist at the end identifies most.

The moments in which he escapes Great Britain to follow the gigs of Bruce Springsteen are important interludes. The concert tour takes him to Paris, Bologna, Barcelona and New Jersey, for example. The concert venues turn into a space where conventional forms of Othering dissolve. The best example is the first concert that Sarfraz visits in the USA after the events of 9/11. "I might not look like these people, I might speak in a different accent and follow another religion but in my heart I felt more connected to the fans I found waiting for Springsteen in the New Jersey night than I did with the Asians at the Bollywood party a week earlier,"[716] Sarfraz claims. In a post-9/11 phase when discrimination against (British) Asians was on the rise, Bruce Springsteen's concert creates a space in which people of all backgrounds peacefully come together not as Americans, Pakistani, British,

[714] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 5.
[715] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 269.
[716] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 120.

Christians, Muslims, men or women, old or young people etc. but as fans. Their shared fascination for the rock star unites them.

The Songs of Bruce Springsteen

Sarfraz detects the coordinates for his life in the work of Bruce Springsteen. Although the lyrics are infused by the musician's Christian belief, Sarfraz finds universal meaning in them which he integrates into various key situations as a teenager and young adult. Consequently, Sarfraz Manzoor, the author, structures his debut according to themes that can be traced in Springsteen's art. This helps him to lay out the (trans)formation of Sarfraz, the protagonist. The titles of chapters in *Greetings from Bury Park* are titles of songs by Bruce Springsteen. Each of these chapters start with an epigraph, a quote from one of these songs or from another Springsteen song. The juxtaposition of the titles/lyrics and Sarfraz Manzoor's text invite an interpretation of his story in the light of the lyrics while often they are independent of the whole song's actual content. Generally speaking, the chapter 'My Father's House' highlights Sarfraz' relationship to his father; 'The Ties That Bind' deal with the overall family situation and with his siblings in particular; 'Blood Brothers' is about his best friend Amolak; 'The Promised Land' collects Sarfraz' memories about the USA; 'Factory' puts work centre stage; 'Better Days' looks into his romantic feelings for and ideas about relationships with women; 'Reason to Believe' explains the role of religion for him; the final chapter 'Land of Hope and Dreams' reveals what Great Britain means to Sarfraz. Bruce Springsteen's philosophy is the thread that connects all of these chapters. It serves as the most important guideline for Sarfraz: "[i]f religion was about answering the profound questions of how to live, I found that Bruce Springsteen gave me more persuasive answers than Islam. At college Amolak and I went around referring to ourselves as disciples of Bruce, arguing to anyone who would listen that the man was nothing less than a prophet."[717] Bruce Springsteen becomes Sarfraz' metaphorical prophet, Sarfraz his metaphorical devotee. Literary scholar Rehana Ahmed applauded the author of *Greetings from Bury Park* for complicating stereotypes about British Muslims in this way. Yet, she criticised him for implicitly downgrading more "assertive Islamic identities".

> [Sarfraz Manzoor's] conformity to a model of the 'good', secular British Muslim, who has, to an extent, broken free from the prescriptions of his or her cultural background, makes [this memoir] susceptible to co-option into discourses which valorize secular

[717] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 226.

> modes of being Muslim while stigmatizing other, more assertive Islamic identities.[718]

In Rehana Ahmed's opinion, the writer runs the risk of undermining 'positive' examples of Muslims in the UK. Sarfraz Manzoor's text underrepresents varieties of Islam that are synchronised with hegemonic discourses and practices. His attempt to construct an identity that transgresses the dichotomy of British-Other excludes Islam, according to Rehana Ahmed. From my point of view, she misreads the concept of 'Islam' in *Greetings from Bury Park*. Sarfraz states, "it was not Islam I was reacting against, it was the cultural values of my parents' generation."[719] It is true that the author does not actively promote Islam as a religion but what he actually despises and of what he tries to distance himself is Islam as a tradition. This makes a huge difference. His general attitude toward Islam is positive. It is, as any other religion, a part of Britain's diversity that he appreciates. Furthermore, he does position himself after the events of 9/11 and warns against a discrimination of British Asians along the lines of religion. "[T]he disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham had been described as 'race riots' between Asian or Pakistani youths and the police. After 9/11 it was no longer about Pakistanis, Indians and Bengalis but Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. And there was no doubting who was public enemy number one."[720] Sarfraz Manzoor criticises a vilification of Islam. Also, he honours the cultural heritage of Islam, as in the case of the Muslim musician Rahat Ali Khan. In a response to the events of 9/11, Bruce Springsteen invited the Pakistani artist to work with him. For Sarfraz, who went to their concert, "[t]o hear a Pakistani Muslim musician performing with Springsteen was an intensely emotional experience; for so long [Sarfraz] had heard [his] parents condemn [his] music tastes […] and here was the evidence that both worlds could exist together in one song."[721] Bruce Springsteen's music becomes a possibility for Sarfraz to reconcile the father-son relationship and British-Muslim identities after the events of 9/11. The date represents a turning point in his life, or to use David Holloway's terminology, a 'crisis'. Holloway details the various forms of a post-9/11 crisis:

> Another defining sensibility of the post-9/11 period was the feeling that history meant the living of trauma and crisis. 9/11 and the war on terror were described as a national security crisis, an imperial crisis, a crisis in capitalist democracy and governance, a crisis in the

[718] Ahmed, Rehana, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin. "Introduction." *Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing*. Ed. Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin. New York and London: Routledge, 2012. 1-17. Quotation 12.
[719] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 227.
[720] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 236.
[721] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 237.

> relationship between the US and Europe, multiple crises in the frameworks and institutions of international law and order (notably the UN and NATO), as well as a series of military and humanitarian crises, and *a crisis of Islam*.[722]

Even in this moment of crisis, Sarfraz "kept believing in an Islam which was more tolerant, which did not take itself so seriously that it burnt the books of those it did not approve of."[723] To this, Sarfraz adds, "I wanted to be a Muslim like […] Bruce Springsteen was Catholic." Again, the idol Bruce Springsteen provides him with an answer. This comes across as helpful inspiration to stay open-minded and to appreciate a multicultural diversity. However, it also benumbs the possibility for Sarfraz Manzoor to become more active politically. From this perspective, the religion 'Bruce Springsteen' turns into a drug. Already after the first concert, Sarfraz realises, "I should have felt exhilarated and yet I felt desolate. I had not imagined I would feel so low."[724] Amolak explains to him, "'[Bruce Springsteen's] a fucking drug, ain't he, […] and you know what the cure is, don't ya?' 'What's that?' [Sarfraz asks him]. 'We gotta see him again!'"[725] The drug 'Bruce Springsteen' does not induce a critical reflection and political agency after 9/11 and 7/7. Instead, the drug seduces Sarfraz to consume more of it.

Sarfraz Manzoor's Autobiography as *Bildungsgeschichte*

For the tales of (trans)formation distanced narration is an important ingredient. It means that the narrative point of view is characterised by a retrospective distance between the narrator and the main character. In the case of *Greetings from Bury Park* this narrator is not only the main character but also the author. The fact that *Greetings from Bury Park* can be classified as 'autobiography' or, more broadly, as 'life writing' adds yet another layer to the discussion of distanced narration.[726] Generally, Linda Anderson underpins my understanding of the history of autobiography and of theories about autobiography.[727] Further, sociologist Tina Spies provides me with a concise overview of theories about biographies. I relate to her definition of

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[722] Holloway, David. *9/11 and the War on Terror*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008. 6. [Emphasis added by J. F.]
[723] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 239.
[724] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 108.
[725] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 109.
[726] Clearly, definitions of 'autobiographies' or 'life-writing' abound and a genre debate deserves a monograph in itself. For the purpose of this study, however, I anchor my argument in the existing work of established literary scholars. Drawing on their definitions is sufficient for my point about distanced narration, life writing and narratives of (trans)formation.
[727] Anderson, Linda. *Autobiography*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.

biographies as social constructs that problematises the relationship between experience, memory and narration.[728] For the specific discussion of *Greetings from Bury Park*, I use definitions by literary scholar Helga Schwalm, for example, to define Sarfraz Manzoor's story as *Bildungsgeschichte* with a particular narrator, or rather, with a distanced narration.

As indicated at the very beginning of this chapter, Helga Schwalm considers autobiography a construct and thus hard to distinguish from fictional narratives. Autobiography "proposes to tell the story of a 'real' person, it is inevitably constructive, or imaginative, in nature and as a form of textual 'self-fashioning' ultimately resists a clear distinction from its fictional relatives (autofiction, autobiographical novel), leaving the generic borderlines blurred."[729] Hence, Helga Schwalm's definition connects to the broader theoretical underpinning of my study. Literary scholar Martin Löschnigg conceptualises autobiography as an "experiential site"[730]. His definition of the construction of the subject links in with my idea of the discursive constitution of the subject. Both definitions allow me to compare Sarfraz Manzoor's autobiography with the novels of transformation by Monica Ali, Nirpal Singh Dhaliwal and Gautam Malkani.[731] Furthermore, Helga Schwalm's conceptualisation of autobiography as *Bildungsgeschichte* is of major importance for my research.

> Comprehensive and continuous retrospection [by the autodiegetic narrator], based on memory, makes up [autobiography's] governing structural and semantic principle. Oscillating between the struggle for truthfulness and creativity, between oblivion, concealment, hypocrisy, self-deception and self-conscious fictionalizing, autobiography renders a story of personality formation, a *Bildungsgeschichte*.[732]

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[728] Spies, Tina. *Migration und Männlichkeit. Biographien junger Straffälliger im Diskurs*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2010. Similar to my argument in this study, Tina Spies suggests a discourse analysis of biographies that is informed by Michel Foucault and Stuart Hall in order to investigate more closely the connections between 'discourse', 'subject' and 'agency'. Her primary sources are qualitative interviews whereas I analyse fictional narratives. We both regard biographies as discursive constructs.

[729] Schwalm. "Autobiography."

[730] Löschnigg, Martin. "Postclassical Narratology and the Theory of Autobiography." *Postclassical Narratology. Approaches and Analyses*. Ed. Jan Alber and Monika Fludernik. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011. 255-74. Quotation 259.

[731] Ali. *Brick Lane*. Dhaliwal. *Tourism*. Malkani. *Londonstani*. Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*.

[732] Schwalm. "Autobiography."

The idea of autobiography as fictionalised is well known in the field of literary studies.[733] What interests me more in this specific quote by Helga Schwalm is the type of narrator and their perspective in the *Bildungsgeschichte*. Sarfraz Manzoor tells his story of formation in retrospect. He is the author of *Greetings of Bury Park*, but also its narrator and main character. Despite this 'personal union', the author and narrator may create a distance to the protagonist. This allows for a re-evaluation of the experienced events and a reinterpretation of characters' words and actions. This comment function smoothens incoherence and supports the story of a rational development of the main character. It creates the illusion of a line of cause and effects that leads to his transformation. Sarfraz Manzoor, the adult, is thus able to take a step back from his adolescent self, to redefine his relationship with his father, to explain to himself and to the reader why the seeming detours in his life were all necessary to finally reach his place in society. He is also able to tailor his *Bildungsgeschichte*, his story of (trans)formation, into an *Erfolgsgeschichte*, a story of success.

7.3 Rebel Without a Voice

I almost agree with the review in *The Guardian* that notes, "*Greetings from Bury Park* takes time to address the economic issues that dominate the lives of immigrants, but it is the father's obliviousness to the complexity of his son's emotional life that gives this affectionate memoir its substance."[734] I certainly disagree, though, that "[t]he bizarre but compelling idea that Manzoor, feeling neither British nor Pakistani, and lacking Pakistani role models, finds some sort of solace in the American, working-class, sociopolitical lyrics of the Boss provides an intriguing backdrop to his life."[735] The glorification of the socio-political potential of Bruce Springsteen's lyrics overlooks the problem of its marketisation. Without entering into a full debate about scholarly approaches to the consumption of subcultures[736], I would like to draw attention to Sarfraz' status not only as a disciple of Bruce Springsteen but also as an addict to his commercialised work. In

[733] Max Saunders points out that "the fictionalization of autobiography was something writers became aware of a century before Deconstruction." Saunders, Max. *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografiction, and the Forms of Modern Literature*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. 509.
[734] Duggal, Diamond. "Bruce Springsteen Saved my Life." *The Guardian*. 09.06.2007. https://www.theguardian.com/books/2007/jun/09/society [31.03.2018].
[735] Ibid.
[736] For example, Bentley. "Subcultural Fictions." 54-57. And Subcultures Network, ed. *Subcultures, Popular Music and Social Change*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.

order to be a part of the fan community, Sarfraz has to buy the fan-cultural products, for example, the desired bootleg tapes he orders.

> Receiving the tapes was about more than just hearing new Bruce music; each time I got a new package in the mail it felt like I was part of a secret community defined not by geography, race or religion, but by passion. I had no idea who the people sending me those bootleg tapes were but I believed that they, like me, were citizens of an imagined community of like-minded people.[737]

Sarfraz Manzoor stylises the consumers of "Bruce music" as members of an imagined community. This might be a reference to Benedict Anderson's concept of the 'imagined community'[738] and is undoubtedly an attractive label for collective identities that transcend the categories of belonging in hegemonic discourses, such as ethnicity or religion. I argue, however, that the so-called citizenship in Sarfraz Manzoor's case is a miniatured version of community participation. On top of the problem of life-style communities' role in the consumer logic of capitalism[739], I see a not so compelling form of agency at play in *Greetings from Bury Park*.

Liberation? Subjectification in 'Cool Britannia'!

In the process of his (trans)formation, Sarfraz liberates himself from the discipline of his parents and develops into a self-disciplining subject of Blair's Britain. His final autonomy is not relational and, therefore, ineffective. For example, after graduating from university, Sarfraz works for almost three years in Manchester. The low-paid jobs are tedious but at least Sarfraz is not dependent on his parents anymore. He claims to have never been happier: "[w]hen I had money it was mine to spend as I wished; I spent it on attending concerts and buying records. In the evenings I was out clubbing every other night and my dreadlocks ensured I was more desirable to girls than I had ever been before."[740] As soon as he is out of his parents' reach, he more openly lives his identity as Bruce Springsteen fan. Literary scholar Sara Upstone laments that "[o]n the whole, whilst literary fiction may aim to complicate and contextualize post-9/11 stereotypes of

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[737] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 103, 104. He adds on page 119: "Later, as we became successful in our careers Amolak and I ploughed more money and time into seeing Bruce Springsteen concerts." Sarfraz Manzoor describes the fan culture as a kind of investment.

[738] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1983.

[739] The philosopher Slavoj Žižek, for instance, addresses the issue in Žižek, Slavoj. "Multiculturalism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism." *New Left Review* 1. 225 (1997): 28-51.

[740] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 169, 170.

the British Muslim, its overall representation must be seen as a depressingly static reflection of, rather than challenge to, these stereotypes."[741] In my opinion, this does not apply to *Greetings from Bury Park*. The text refutes Sara Upstone's simplification that "British Muslims are more complex than British popular literary fiction on the whole suggests […]."[742] I say that the coming-of-age story by Sarfraz Manzoor complicates the stereotypes of 'British Muslim'. However, and maybe more importantly, it does not complicate the subject positions its complex British Muslim characters take on. *This* could be called the common problem in contemporary British popular fiction, in particular in the context of 'Cool Britannia' and its marketisation of diversity. *Greetings from Bury* Park directly alludes to it, albeit positively:

> When Labour came to power the Observer newspaper had a front-page headline which read 'Goodbye Xenophobia', and that was how it felt. The people in power resembled human beings; Tony Blair had chosen a Bruce Springsteen song as one of his Desert Island Discs and he had even invited Noel Gallagher to Downing Street. The 'Cool Britannia' New Labour ushered in was a far more welcoming concept than the land of hope and glory of the Conservatives that had left me feeling alienated.[743]

During his own, personal formation, Sarfraz Manzoor experiences a transformation of British society. Both the private formation and the political transformation involve an opening up to and celebration of diversity. At this point Sarfraz Manzoor does not foresee the long-term consequences of Blair's political programme and the coldness of a 'Cool Britannia'. It might welcome Sarfraz as a Bruce Springsteen fan but would not allow him to exist outside its neoliberal framework. Sarfraz' independence has limits and his perceived autonomy is relative. Sociologist Imogen Tyler observes, "for many national minorities the lived realities of these neoliberal regimes of citizenship stand in stark contradistinction to contemporary governmental accounts of citizenship, which stress community cohesion, political participation, social responsibility, rights and pride in shared national belonging."[744] This explains why Sarfraz Manzoor repeatedly comes into conflict with the expectations of his family. For example, after their mother suffers a stroke, his brother Sohail accuses him of being egocentric.

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[741] Upstone, Sara. "9/11, British Muslims, and Popular Literary Fiction." *Reframing 9/11. Film, Popular Culture and the "War on Terror"*. Ed. Jeff Birkenstein, Anna Froula and Karen Randell. New York and London: Continuum, 2010. 35-44. Quotation 42.
[742] Upstone. "9/11, British Muslims, and Popular Literary Fiction." 43.
[743] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 257.
[744] Tyler, Imogen. *Revolting Subjects. Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain*. London: Zed Books, 2013. 74.

> 'It's easy for you, isn't it, coming home and saying the right words and then leaving […]. It's me who has to be here all the time. […] What would happen if I said now it's your turn to look after Mum. Why don't you [g]ive the rest of us a break? You don't think like that, do you, because you're selfish. You just say what you need to to get everyone off your back and then off you go back to London to live your life.'[745]

Sarfraz' understanding of how to behave like a responsible adult clashes with the demands of his family. He lives the ideal of the autonomous individual at the expense of his closest community. He admits, "the rest of my family had paid the price for my freedom."[746] He also sees the irony in the fact that his work as a journalist demands communication skills that he is not able to transfer to his family situation. During this phase of life, he has major difficulties to communicate with his mother and siblings, as he understands in hindsight. "I was writing articles about the impact of my father's life on my identity as a British Muslim and my own mother was hardly speaking to me. To the outside world I might have been a success but as a son and a brother I was an abject failure: selfish, uncommunicative and a disappointment."[747] Sarfraz' liberation from the traditions and the history of his parents is, in the widest sense, an attempt to liberate himself from the imperial history of Great Britain. In his autobiography, Sarfraz Manzoor does not consider the (neo-) imperialism of the West and its long-term consequences such as post-WWII migration to the UK or the events of 9/11 and 7/7. He does try to explain the impact of the events of 9/11 and 7/7 on his life. He undeniably participates in what literary scholar Lucienne Loh calls a struggle over representation of a minority group that felt the repercussions of 9/11[748]. That is why his *Bildungsgeschichte* follows well-established neoliberal discourses. Sarfraz does not gain a voice which matters.

A Voice for Meritocracy

Sarfraz Manzoor's decision to become a journalist after the death of his father could be a first step to gaining a voice that matters. "It had always

[745] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 80, 81.
[746] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 81.
[747] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 83.
[748] Loh, Lucienne. "Postcolonial and Diasporic Voices. Contemporary British Fiction in an Age of Transnational Terror." *The 2000s. A Decade of Contemporary British Fiction*. Ed. Nick Bentley, Nick Hubble and Leigh Wilson. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. 115-144. Quotation 120. On page 117, Lucienne Loh also encourages a reading of post-9/11 British literature that speaks about Islamist terror "in a postcolonial light since this more recent form of terror reflects long standing colonial legacies and their attendant discourses."

been my dream to have a job that was creative,"[749] the author/protagonist claims. On his search for a direction during his teenage years, he does not come across British Asian role models with whom he can identify. Sarfraz is not aware of his options at this stage. "I didn't know if the things I wanted for my life were possible for someone like me."[750] Hence, studying documentary making and starting on a career path to become a journalist looks like an emancipatory move for a young British Asian from a working-class family. Nevertheless, the decision is largely dependent on the hopes of his father. With his choice, Sarfraz follows not only his father's obsession for journalism but also his family's obsession with (financial) success. It is quite telling that Sarfraz' biggest regret is that his father never lived to see his son's career. "He died in the same week that my very first article was published; any success I have had came when he was not around to savour it. […] Where once it was resentment which inspired me, now it is the hope that in my own life I can do his memory proud."[751] Becoming a journalist then is not necessarily about gaining a voice. Rather, it belongs to the process of subjectification expected of Sarfraz – and which he gladly accepts in the end: "[t]hese days I am a willing prisoner of my father's house." [752] Sarfraz takes on his father's belief in meritocracy. He even takes on his voice in the face of the events of 7/7 when four British Muslims became Britain's first domestic suicide bombers.

> They take it all for granted,' my father would have said, 'they don't know how hard it was for us – us men, we know because we lived it, didn't we? And if we had known when we worked those double shifts in the factories … trying to make something in this world … and for whom? For our children. And if we had known that they would spit in the face of our labour and our dreams, bring shame to the community, blacken the name of Pakistan … and all for what? And they say they're Muslims, and they say it's about politics.'[753]

The ventriloquism of his father denounces the Islamic radicals, their version of Islam and politics. He contrasts them with "us men", first-generation migrants who tried to achieve something and worked hard for it. There is no understanding for a next generation who, in his opinion, take their parents' efforts for granted. For Mohammed and Sarfraz, these radicals bring shame to their community because they disrespect the work and the visions of their parent generation. Sarfraz Manzoor fails to see here, or fails to carve out, possible contexts of Islamic radicalism. As mentioned above,

[749] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 171.
[750] Ibid.
[751] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 53, 54.
[752] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 54.
[753] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 268.

he silences the legacy of British imperialism, its connections to a global capitalism or neo-imperial projects. Obviously, these are complex topics but silencing them assists the definition of an 'inclusive' and 'diverse' form of Britishness as framed by neoliberal discourses. Literary scholar Stephen Morton in his article about post-9/11 novels and their response to the 'war on terror' includes a short paragraph by political theorist Julian Reid. He draws attention to Reid's provocative claim that

> [t]error is the name of the form of life that is resistant to biopolitical regimes of control because it refuses the demands of a logistical life [that is, be efficient, use time economically, be flexible etc.]. In this way, [Reid] seems to attribute a radical political agency to terrorism, which resides in its resistance to biopolitical control.[754]

Morton applies this argument inspired by Foucault to his primary sources to trace constructions of the 'good British Muslim'. I am not entirely convinced by Julian Reid's argument that terrorism is a resistance to biopolitical control (only). However, I see that Stephen Morton's reading of the 'good British Muslim' as subject to biopolitical control certainly holds true for *Greetings from Bury Park*. Sarfraz Manzoor's story of (trans)formation constructs a British Muslim protagonist that ticks the checklist of the ideal neoliberal subject.

Equal Exploitation of Happy Human Capital

Early on the American Dream, "the suggestion that everyone had an equal chance to make something of their lives and to be considered equally American"[755], intrigues Sarfraz. This resonates with the concept of 'cruel optimism', i.e. the vision of a good life to which people in neoliberal capitalism hold on. As mentioned earlier, 'equality' is an ambivalent concept in this context. It does not necessarily mean that all subjects are equally empowered. It can also mean that all subjects, as human resource, are equally exploitable. Hence, the dream of equality is not automatically a guarantee for agency. Nonetheless, Bruce Springsteen becomes the personification of the American dream for the adolescent Sarfraz. The rock star is "someone who had been born to a working-class immigrant family and who had, through his talent and tenacity, reached the very peak of his profession."[756] Sarfraz believes that talent and tenacity are enough to work one's way out of a

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[754] Morton, Stephen. "Writing Muslims and the Gobal State of Exception." *Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing*. Ed. Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin. New York and London: Routledge, 2012. 18-33. Quotation 22, 23. Reid, Julian. *The Biopolitics of the War on Terror: Life Struggles, Liberal Modernity and the Defence of Logistical Societies*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.
[755] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 268.
[756] Ibid.

working-class context and to achieve professional success; he believes in the myth of meritocracy. On the one hand, the songs of Bruce Springsteen catalyse Sarfraz' distancing from his father's worldview. On the other hand, the philosophical gist of the lyrics brings him straight back to his father's "house" of which his adult self is a "willing prisoner" now. "Bruce Springsteen changed my life because in his music I saw the promise of hope and escape and self-improvement […]"[757]. At the end of his story of (trans)formation, Sarfraz Manzoor has managed to translate the American Dream into his own context: Britain is now his "land of hope and dreams"[758] and Sarfraz has become the embodiment of it. He takes on the role of the "prophet" even. When invited to open his former primary school in Bury Park, which had been modernised, he advises the children in his speech: "'You can do anything you want in this world,' [he urges them]. 'You just need to work hard and dare to want more from life.'"[759] His family is impressed by Sarfraz' sudden fame after the broadcast of his documentary. Instead of manipulating him into an arranged marriage, his brother and mother find Sarfraz' career more relevant now. Through his professional achievements, Sarfraz frees himself of family obligations he finds outdated. Simultaneously, he fulfils his family's expectations of a 'good British Muslim'. "[My brother] no longer considered me a failure."[760] They do not find him arrogant anymore when he doubts that the right partner for him comes from a village in Pakistan. Instead, they respect his way of life. Sarfraz is convinced, "my family would no longer stand in the way of my happiness."[761] In Sarfraz Manzoor's case, the process of subjectification involves a dream of independence or freedom, of equality, of meritocracy or a reward for one's efforts in life. It also involves the idea of happiness as the optimum condition and ultimate aim in life. As mentioned earlier, sociologist Sam Binkley convincingly argues that happiness is the very leitmotif of neoliberal life. According to him, it is key to the "production of free, enterprising subjects, a technology and a rationality that sets individuals free, but also teaches them to govern themselves as enterprising actors."[762] Happiness is the "most radical extension [of neoliberal government] into the realm of private existence."[763] The liberation from his family's expectations is therefore a way to Sarfraz' happiness or rather to suffering agency, not to a voice that matters. Rehana Ahmed concludes her article about *Greetings from Bury Park* with a disappointment. "The tensions that characterize

[757] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 269.
[758] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 269.
[759] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 176.
[760] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. 210.
[761] Ibid.
[762] Binkley. *Happiness as an Enterprise.* 4.
[763] Ibid. This connects with Berlant's 'cruel optimism'.

these memoirs can be traced to the contradictions of a liberal approach to multiculturalism that professes an equality of citizenship but cannot accommodate assertive communitarian Muslim identities in the public sphere."[764] I say the fallacies that characterise these memoirs can be traced to the contradictions of a neoliberal approach to multiculturalism that professes an equality of subject positions but cannot accommodate counter-hegemonic voices that matter politically. This is how the UK publishing industry often packages narrations about migrant lives. Tony Parson's marketing blurb on the cover of *Greetings from Bury Park* so fittingly enthuses: "Beautiful and moving […] a book to make you believe that we are all more alike than we know."[765]

[764] Ahmed, Rehana. "Reason to Believe? Two 'British Muslim' Memoirs." *Culture, Diaspora, and Modernity in Muslim Writing*. Ed. Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin. New York and London: Routledge, 2012. 52-67. Quotation 65.
[765] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*. Front cover.

8 Conclusion

In becoming a full member of their fictional British societies all protagonists of the four primary sources approximate the preferred subject of neoliberalism. The ice skater in *Brick Lane*[766], the flâneur in *Tourism*[767], the reformed rudeboy in *Londonstani*[768], and the Springsteen fan in *Greetings from Bury Park. Race, Religion and Rock 'n' Roll*[769] are variations of the 'entrepreneurial self'. Nazneen, the female protagonist who suffers multiple forms of oppression, follows a classic tale of empowerment and owns a small business at the end of the novel. Unlike her, Bhupinder, a hedonist picaro with a non-pc attitude, aims for a maximisation of pleasure in his pursuit of luxuries and sexual adventures. In contrast, the hypermasculinist rudeboy Jas finally turns from unethical to ethical entrepreneurship whereas Sarfraz develops into a model citizen as flexible creative in the culture industry. Each central character in their specific process of subjectification transforms their identity. This modus of "'becoming' rather than 'being'"[770] involves an individualisation that makes the literary characters autonomous. At the same time their emancipation leaves them politically powerless. Rather than emphasising their dependencies and vulnerability to others and to social structures[771], the novels stress their protagonists' self-sufficiency. Not all but most of their constitutive relations are framed as a restrictive network of relations from which they need to free themselves. Thus, their autonomy is not a 'relational autonomy'[772] that could enable agency. Nazneen, Bhupinder, Jas and Sarfraz all find a voice but it is not a voice that matters. Their 'cruel optimism'[773] leads to a form of agency that I consider 'suffering agency'[774]. The result of my investigation of the four novels of transformation echoes the conflicting model of agency which literary scholar Jana Gohrisch identifies in Andrea Levy's novel *The Long Song*[775]. Here the function of agency is "individual rather than part of a coordinated social struggle, the protagonist strives to improve her own conditions but not that of her fellow enslaved subjects […]."[776] Gohrisch

[766] Ali. *Brick Lane*.
[767] Dhaliwal. *Tourism*.
[768] Malkani. *Londonstani*.
[769] Manzoor. *Greetings from Bury Park*.
[770] Bröckling. "Enthusiasten, Ironiker, Melancholiker." 80-86.
[771] As, for instance, Adriana Cavarero would do. Cavarero. *Relating Narratives*.
[772] Christman. "Relational Autonomy." 143.
[773] Berlant. *Cruel Optimism*.
[774] Elliott. "Suffering Agency."
[775] Gohrisch, Jana. "Conflicting Models of Agency in Andrea Levy's *The Long Song* (2010)." *Post-Empire Imaginaries? Anglophone Literature, History, and the Demise of Empires*. Ed. Barbara Buchenau and Virginia Richter. Leiden and Boston: Brill Rodopi, 2015. 413-434.
[776] Gohrisch. "Conflicting Models of Agency." 429.

compares this message of the novel to the "middle-class, self-help ideology of so many nineteenth-century publications (later revived by Margaret Thatcher's neoliberal championing of Victorian values): individual social advancement."[777] Although in very different ways but similar to Andrea Levy's novel the fictional narratives I analysed ultimately all contribute to a neoliberal consensus. As shown in my study, neoliberal discourses create real fictions of individuals as entrepreneurial selves which allow only for a limited range of interpretations of what it means to be a human being. Narratives of subjectification in neoliberalism "only ever actualize excerpts of possible human action, expanding them out to universals".[778] Reading the novels not only through the lens of canonical postcolonial studies' concepts but also against neoliberal discourses can, therefore, highlight the inherent entanglement of colonial and neo-imperial enterprises, refresh the theories and methods of established academic disciplines, and bring into dialogue current politics and literary visions of a society.

Twenty years ago, Terry Eagleton complained that "'[p]ostcolonialism', has been on the whole rather stronger on identity than on the International Monetary Fund, more fascinated by marginality than by markets."[779] He criticised that "the acknowledgement of difference, hybridity, multiplicity, is a drastically impoverished kind of political ethic in contrast to the affirmation of human solidarity and reciprocity, even if the former is of course a *sine qua non* of the latter."[780] Today, scholars such as Melissa Kennedy confidently answer back. She has observed a re-evaluation of postcolonial studies in the 2010s. In her opinion focussing on economic inequality more than on identity politics helped postcolonial studies to "comprehensively account for and condemn the fact that […] the impoverished today are the same groups as those marginalised under colonial rule: […] ethnic minorities, the elderly, women, and children."[781] With my cultural studies research I intend to contribute to this re-evaluation of postcolonial studies. Because the imperial history of Britain is woven into the neo-imperial projects of

[777] Gohrisch. "Conflicting Models of Agency." 430.
[778] Bröckling. *The Entrepreneurial Self*. 12.
[779] Eagleton, Terry. "Postcolonialism and 'Postcolonialism'." *interventions* (1998): 24-26. 26.
[780] Ibid.
[781] Kennedy, Melissa. *Narratives of Inequality. Postcolonial Literary Economics*. Cham: Springer International Publishing. Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 27. On page 217 Kennedy also points to a shared history that, in my opinion, Eagleton neglected in his article about postcolonialism. "Both postcolonial studies and critiques of global neoliberalism [expose] underpinnings of hegemonic state apparatuses encoded in sociocultural norms. Both anti-establishment positions are indebted to Marx's early formulations of capitalism and its local and specific formations of political economy, and both engage to varying degrees with the political, revolutionary, and utopian ideals of Marxism."

neoliberalism and because fictional narratives often lie close to the heart of hegemonic discourses about neoliberal selfhood, a combined approach like this is urgently needed. My study is sensitive to the "often submerged ways in which this [imperial] legacy informs conceptions of individual and collective identity and agency, and may continue to set the terms for mapping the social landscape and imagining its future possibilities."[782] Therefore, the aim of this study is also to inspire a critical reading of fiction published *after* the novels examined here, i.e. after the peak of the financial crisis in 2008.

In 2004, Paul Gilroy defined Europe's situation as a "war against asylum seekers, refugees, and economic migrants."[783] In this Europe he saw "the notion of public good and the practice of politics […] in irreversible decline – undone by a combination of consumer culture, privatization, and the neoliberal ideology."[784] The financial crisis four years later intensified the situation. Not banks but citizens had to pay for the consequences of the collapse. The austerity measures introduced after 2008 contributed further to the crumbling of the welfare state.[785] The result of the Brexit referendum and the accompanying political climate indicates for Kennedy a growing conservative populism that "mask[s] systemic unevenness in the economic world-system with recourse to nationalist and racist cultural arguments that still fail to engage with increasing inequality between rich and poor."[786] Governments instrumentalised the financial crisis in order to actively support neoliberal doctrines. Through a strengthening of neoliberal programmes marginalised groups were further weakened.[787] Obviously, the effects of the financial crisis did not leave the production of literary narratives untouched: "the bank, debt and financial crises of global capitalism […] have had such serious social repercussions […] that the emergence of a new genre like "crunch lit" […] does not come as a big surprise."[788] Whether they fall into the category of 'crunch lit' or not, numerous novels published after 2008 paint a gloomier atmosphere of Britain. As examples of novels of transformation that appeared after 2008, Sunjeev Sahota's *The Year of the*

[782] MacPhee, Graham. *Postwar British Literature and Postcolonial Studies*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011. 3.
[783] Gilroy. *After Empire. Melancholia or Convivial Culture?* 155.
[784] Ibid.
[785] Guderjan, Marius, Hugh Mackay and Gesa Stedman, eds. *Contested Britain: Brexit, Austerity and Agency*. Bristol: Bristol University Press, (forthcoming).
[786] Kennedy, Melissa. *Narratives of Inequality.* 216.
[787] For a detailed overview of the situation after 2008 see Hall, Massey and Rustin. "After Neoliberalism." 9-23.
[788] Nünning, Vera and Ansgar Nünning. "Cultural Concerns, Literary Developments, Critical Debates: Contextualizing the Dynamics of Generic Change and Trajectories of the British Novel in the Twenty-first Century." *The British Novel in the Twenty-First Century. Cultural Concerns – Literary Developments – Model Interpretations*. Ed. Vera Nünning and Ansgar Nünning. Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2018. 21-52. 26.

Runaways (2015)[789] and Mahsuda Snaith's *The Things We Thought We Knew*[790] (2017) confirm this trend. Compared to the protagonists Nazneen, Bhupinder, Jas and Sarfraz, their main characters seem to face darker destinies, at least initially. They resonate with the accounts in Imogen Tyler's sociological study about disenfranchised British subjects[791]. Her study provides an overview of current forms of abjection, of how subjects are being made abject in neoliberal Britain. In her critique of Sahota's text, however, literary scholar Gesa Stedman points out that it missed the chance of linking "individual lives to the bigger picture of global neoliberal economic forces without falling into the usual happy-end-plot-trap."[792] The grim depiction of migrants in the UK dissolves on the last few pages when it becomes clear that the central characters all 'made it' in one way or another. The novel deploys the myth of meritocracy at its finest. Snaith's story about her protagonist's life in a council estate flat touches on the grand themes of illness, death and trauma but does not address structural problems at all. Although Sahota's and Snaith's narratives[793] gesture toward inequalities and injustices in the UK, they demonstrate a cruel optimism similar to the novels analysed above. In fact, their optimism is crueller considering the hardship which their characters experience. This brings me back to Foucault. Although he dissected governmentalities of neoliberal regimes in his lectures about the "Birth of Biopolitics"[794] in 1978 and 1979, he did not question 'the economy' as such. "The market as portrayed by Foucault in his late lectures on neoliberalism is the *sole legitimate site for the production of indubitable knowledge of the whole*; in other words, an absent deity […]."[795] Holding the market up as an independent reality precludes any attempt of resistance. I maintain, however, that knowledge is made for cutting – as Foucault himself once proclaimed: "le savoir n'est pas fait pour

[789] Sahota, Sunjeev. *The Year of the Runaways*. London: Picador, 2015.
[790] Snaith, Mahsuda. *The Things We Thought We Knew*. London: Doubleday, 2017.
[791] Tyler. *Revolting Subjects*.
[792] Stedman, Gesa. "Review of Sunjeev Sahota's The Year of the Runaways." *Literary Field Kaleidoscope*. 10.07.2017. http://literaryfield.org/review-sunjeev-sahota/ [18.12.2018].
[793] Obviously, other kinds of narratives also exist, for instance, in the essay collection *The Good Immigrant* or in the anthology of new British Asian short stories *Too Asian, Not Asian Enough*. As this research project focuses on novels of transformation, however, I did not take them as examples of British Asian fiction published after 2008 here. Shukla, Nikesh, ed. *The Good Immigrant*. London: Unbound, 2016. Bhanot, Kavita, ed. *Too Asian, Not Asian Enough. An Anthology of New British Asian Fiction*. Birmingham: Tindal Street Press, 2011.
[794] Foucault. *The Birth of Biopolitics*.
[795] Mirowski. *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste*. 98. [Emphasis in the original]

comprendre, il est fait pour trancher."[796] Authors criticising a political situation need a sharp awareness for the premises of their own factual or fictional narratives. Otherwise, their narratives, their potent ideological forms, might stabilise hegemonic discourses that enabled this situation in the first place.

[796] Foucault, Michel. "Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire." *Hommage à Jean Hyppolite*. Ed. Suzanne Bachelard et al. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971. 145-172. Quotation 160.

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Which forms of agency does literature offer to the reader in the twenty-first century? This study investigates migrant lives in contemporary fiction published by young British Asian writers. Examining the protagonists' ideas of 'success' in becoming a full member of their society, Jessica Fischer carves out the naturalised model of *homo economicus* in these texts and in contemporary fiction more generally. She draws attention to the enterprising self as the preferred subject in today's hegemonic discourses and postulates a new conceptualisation of 'agency'. This book offers an interdisciplinary approach to narratives of transformation. Moreover, it is an urgently needed combination of cultural and postcolonial studies that tackles ethical questions concerning the normative construction of the subject in identity politics.