

A History of
Black and Asian Writing in Britain,
1700-2000

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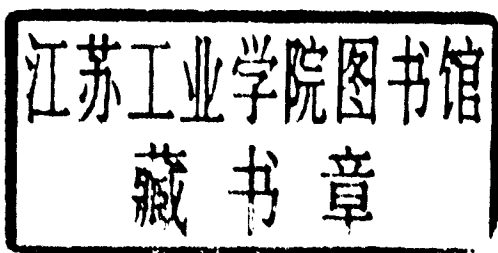


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BLACK AND ASIAN
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1700-2000

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Preface and acknowledgements

In 1870 my great-grandfather travelled from Bengal to London to petition parliament for recompense for the lands taken over by the East India Company from his family a century before. Despite considerable support from members of parliament, especially those from Ireland, the petition was unsuccessful. He remained in England for ten years, married the Englishwoman who became my great-grandmother, and wrote and published a now forgotten book. After his return to India in 1880, his two sons were sent to Dulwich College, with the requirement that they should receive a good Muslim education. The younger son, my grandfather, subsequently emigrated to Australia.

At school in Australia, I was intermittently and dimly troubled by the awareness that my family's story could find no place in the British history and literature that we were taught. Only when I myself emigrated to Britain in the 1970s did I begin to seek more consciously and actively for a wider pattern which might make my own small piece seem less anomalous. Here the work of historians such as Peter Fryer, Paul Edwards, and Rozina Visram has proved invaluable. The attempt to follow through the more extensive narrative of the interaction between South Asian, black and more familiar British writers in the context of a wider cultural and political history has been fascinating and sometimes frustrating. But now much new work is being done by scholars such as David Dabydeen, Anne Walmsley, Vincent Carretta, Susheila Nasta, and Sara Salih, and although many pieces remain missing, a clearer pattern is beginning to emerge. This book is my attempt to extend the outline and help fill in the details.

I wish to acknowledge the generous contributions of many colleagues and scholars, who have read and discussed sections of this study, brought material to my notice, or have allowed me to see unpublished work in progress. I am especially grateful to Vincent Carretta, Denise deCaires Narain, Ian Duffield, Rod Edmond, Abdulrazak Gurnah, Stephanie

Newell, Susheila Nasta, Sara Salih, Martin Scofield, Kate Teltscher, Gillian Whitlock, and Robert Young. Their willingness to see this research as a collaborative enterprise rather than a competition is particularly encouraging in these days of ratings and league tables. Susheila's reading and commentary on the whole first draft of the book have been invaluable. I also owe a considerable debt to the many postgraduate students whose own work and discussion have informed my thinking and awareness, and who have been party to a mutual encouragement pact. In recent years, these include Pamela Albert, Emma Bainbridge, Jennifer Ballantine-Perera, Jackie Belanger, Maggie Bowers, Stephen Cowden, Paul Delaney, Delia Jarrett-Macaulay, Furrukh Khan, Eugene McNulty, Kaori Nagai, and Mark Stein. To Delia and Mark I owe an unusually large debt, for their dissertation work on Una Marson and black British fiction respectively provided conceptual, contextual, and factual material which helped inform this book. Mark has also researched and written most of the biobibliographies at the end. I also wish to acknowledge Rachel Scofield's assistance in compiling the index and proofreading the manuscript.

I am grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Board and the School of English at the University of Kent for grants which made it possible for me to undertake the research for this book. I am also grateful to the editorial and production staff at Cambridge University Press, especially Ray Ryan, who consistently urged on the project, and Rose Bell, whose meticulous copy-editing eradicated many faults.

Sections of Chapter One have appeared in different form in *Reading the New Literatures in a Postcolonial Era*, ed. Susheila Nasta (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2000) and in *Bullán: A Journal of Irish Studies*. I am grateful to the English Association and to *Bullán* for permission to reprint these sections.

Chronological table of historical and literary events 1560–1960

HISTORICAL EVENTS

LITERARY EVENTS

1558 Loss of Calais; death of
Mary; accession of
Elizabeth I

1562 Hawkyns begins
English slave trade of
Africans

1577 Drake begins his
circumnavigation

1588 Defeat of Spanish
Armada

1588–92 Shakespeare's early
plays including 1, 2, 3
Henry VI, *Taming of the
Shrew*, *Love's Labours
Lost*, *Richard III*

1590 Spenser, *Faerie Queene*
(I–III); Lodge, *Rosalynde*

1600 Elizabeth I grants
trading charter to East
India Company

1601–4 Shakespeare plays
including *Hamlet*,
Twelfth Night, *Measure for
Measure*

1603 Death of Elizabeth;
accession of James VI
as James I; union of the
crowns of England and
Scotland

		1604–8	Shakespeare plays including <i>Othello</i> , <i>King Lear</i> , <i>Macbeth</i> , <i>Antony and Cleopatra</i> , <i>Coriolanus</i>
1606	Charter granted to Virginia Company	1611	'Authorized' version of Bible
1616	Death of Shakespeare		
1620	Pilgrim Fathers sail for America		
1625	Death of James I; accession of Charles I		
1640	Long Parliament summoned		
1649	Trial and execution of Charles I		
1649–52	Cromwell's campaigns in Ireland and Scotland		
1653	Cromwell becomes Lord Protector		
1660	Restoration of Charles II; reopening of theatres		
1665	Plague in London	1667	Dryden, <i>Annus Mirabilis</i> ; Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i>
1688	'Glorious Revolution'; James II flees; William III and Mary II succeed		
		1690	Locke, <i>Essay Concerning Human Understanding</i>
		1700	Congreve, <i>The Way of the World</i>
1701	War of Spanish Succession; Great Britain allied against France		

1707	Act of Union between England and Scotland	1712	Pope, <i>The Rape of the Lock</i>
		1719	Defoe, <i>Robinson Crusoe</i>
		1726	Swift, <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> ; Thomson, <i>Winter</i>
		1728	Gay, <i>Beggar's Opera</i> ; Pope, <i>Dunciad</i> (1st Version)
		1747–9	Richardson, <i>Clarissa</i>
		1749	Fielding, <i>Tom Jones</i>
		1755	Johnson, <i>Dictionary</i>
1757	Conquest of India begins under General Clive		
1759	Wolfe takes Quebec	1759	Johnson, <i>Rasselas</i>
		1759–67	Sterne, <i>Tristram Shandy</i>
1760	Death of George II; accession of George III		
1763	Peace of Paris ends Seven Years War; British gains in India and North America		
		1766	Goldsmith, <i>The Vicar of Wakefield</i>
		1768	Sterne, <i>A Sentimental Journey</i>
		1772	Gronniosaw, <i>Narrative</i>
		1775	Sheridan, <i>The Rivals</i>
1776	American Declaration of Independence	1776–88	Gibbon, <i>Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire</i>
		1779–81	Johnson, <i>The Lives of the Poets</i>
1780	Gordon Riots		
1781	British forces defeated by Americans at Yorktown		

		1782	Publication of <i>The Letters of Ignatius Sancho</i>
1783	Independence of American Colonies recognized by Peace of Paris		
		1786	Clarkson, <i>Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species</i>
1787	Association for the Abolition of the Slave Trade founded	1787	Cugoano, <i>Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil and Wicked Traffic of Slavery</i>
1789	French Revolution; Fall of Bastille; Declaration of the Rights of Man	1789	Blake, <i>Songs of Innocence</i> ; Equiano, <i>The Interesting Narrative</i> .
		1790	Burke, <i>Reflections on the Revolution in France</i> ; Blake, <i>The Marriage of Heaven and Hell</i>
1791	Toussaint L'Ouverture leads insurrection in San Domingo (Haiti)	1791	Boswell, <i>Life of Samuel Johnson</i> ; Paine, <i>The Rights of Man</i> (Part 1)
		1792	Wollstonecraft, <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i> ; Holcroft, <i>Anna St Ives</i>
1793	Execution of Louis XVI; Reign of Terror; Britain and France at war		
		1794	<i>Travels of Dean Mahomet</i>
1796	Bonaparte's Italian campaign		
1798	Nelson's victory at Battle of the Nile; rebellion in Ireland	1798	Wordsworth and Coleridge, <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> ; Wollstonecraft, <i>The Wrongs of Woman</i>
1800	Act of Union with Ireland	1800	Edgeworth, <i>Castle Rackrent</i>
1803	Renewal of war against France		

1804	Haiti gains independence		
1805	Nelson's victory at Trafalgar		
1807	Abolition of the slave-trade in the British Empire		
1808	Peninsular War begins		
1811	Prince of Wales becomes Regent; Luddite riots	1811	Austen, <i>Sense and Sensibility</i>
		1813	Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> ; Shelley, <i>Queen Mab</i>
1814	Abdication of Napoleon; restoration of Louis XVIII; Stephenson's steam locomotive		
1815	Battle of Waterloo		
1819	Peterloo massacre		
		1824	Robert Wedderburn, <i>The Horrors of Slavery</i>
1829	Catholic Emancipation Act		
		1831	<i>The History of Mary Prince</i>
		1832	Tennyson, <i>Poems</i> (dated 1833)
1833	Abolition of Slavery in British Colonies; Keble's Assize sermon	1833	Carlyle, <i>Sartor Resartus</i>
		1836	Dickens, <i>Sketches by 'Boz'</i> and the first number of <i>Pickwick Papers</i> (1836–7)
1837	Death of William IV; accession of Victoria	1837	Roper, <i>Escape from American Slavery</i>
1838	'People's Charter' published; London–Birmingham Railway opened	1838	Dickens, <i>Nicholas Nickleby</i>

xiv	<i>Chronological table of historical and literary events 1560–1960</i>			
1842	Chartist riots; second presentation of Charter to Parliament; Copyright Act	1842	Tennyson, <i>Poems</i> ; Browning, <i>Dramatic Lyrics</i>	
1846	Famine in Ireland; repeal of Corn Laws	1847	Tennyson, <i>The Princess</i> ; Charlotte Brontë, <i>Jane Eyre</i> ; Emily Brontë, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> ; Anne Brontë, <i>Agnes Grey</i> ; Thackeray, <i>Vanity Fair</i> (1847–8)	
1851	Great Exhibition; Louis Napoleon's <i>coup d'état</i> ; Fugitive Slave Act, USA	1851–2	Harriet Beecher Stowe, <i>Uncle Tom's Cabin</i> .	
		1852	Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> (1852–3)	
		1853	W.G. Allen, <i>Colour Prejudice in America</i>	
1854	Crimean War breaks out; Battles of Alma, Inkerman, and Balaclava (with the charge of the Light Brigade); Preston cotton spinners strike; Working Man's College opened	1855	Tennyson, <i>Maud</i> ; Kingsley, <i>West-ward Ho!</i> ; Browning, <i>Men and Women</i> ; Gaskell, <i>North and South</i> ; Trollope, <i>The Warden</i> ; Dickens, <i>Little Dorrit</i> (1855–7); John Brown, <i>Slave Life in Georgia</i>	

1857	'Indian Mutiny'	1857	Mary Seacole, <i>The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs Seacole</i>
1858	India transferred to British Crown	1859	Dickens, <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i> ; Eliot, <i>Adam Bede</i> ; Meredith, <i>The Ordeal of Richard Feverel</i> ; Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> ; Darwin, <i>The Origin of Species</i> ; Tennyson, <i>The Idylls of the King</i> (1859–72)
		1860	William Craft, <i>Running a Thousand Miles for Freedom</i>
1861	Victor Emanuel, King of United Italy; outbreak of American Civil War, death of Prince Consort		
1863	'Cotton Famine' in Lancashire	1863	Francis Fedric, <i>Slave Life in Virginia and Kentucky</i>
1865	Suppression of Jamaican rebellion by Governor Eyre; Emancipation of slaves in American south; assassination of Lincoln	1865	Arnold, <i>Essays in Criticism</i> ; Carroll, <i>Alice in Wonderland</i>
1870	Married Woman's Property Act; Franco-Prussian War; Forster's Education Act; Papal States incorporated into Kingdom of Italy; death of Dickens		
1871	Paris Commune	1874	Hardy, <i>Far From the Madding Crowd</i>

xvi	<i>Chronological table of historical and literary events 1560–1960</i>			
1876	Victoria proclaimed Empress of India	1876	Eliot, <i>Daniel Deronda</i>	
		1878	Hardy, <i>The Return of the Native</i>	
1880	Gladstone, Prime Minister			
1882	British occupation of Egypt	1882	Thomas Johnson, <i>Twenty-Eight Years a Slave</i>	
1884	Berlin Conference and division of Africa among European powers			
1885	Congress Party founded in India			
1887	Victoria's Golden Jubilee			
		1888	Kipling, <i>Plain Tales from the Hills</i> ; Ward, <i>Robert Elsmere</i>	
		1889	Stanford, <i>From Bondage to Liberty</i>	
1890	Parnell falls as leader of Irish Home Rule Party after being cited in the O'Shea divorce case			
		1892	Shaw, <i>Widowers' Houses</i> ; Yeats, <i>The Countess Cathleen</i>	
1895	X-rays discovered	1895	Wilde, <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i> and <i>An Ideal Husband</i> ; Wells, <i>The Time Machine</i>	
1896	Wireless telegraphy invented	1896	Hardy, <i>Jude the Obscure</i> ; Housman, <i>A Shropshire Lad</i> ; Shaw, <i>You Never Can Tell</i>	
1897	Victoria's Diamond Jubilee	1897	Stoker, <i>Dracula</i>	
		1898	Hardy, <i>Wessex Poems</i>	
		1899	Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i>	

1899–1902	Boer War	1900	Conrad, <i>Lord Jim</i>
1900	International Pan-African Conference in London		
1901	Death of Victoria; accession of Edward VII	1901	Kipling, <i>Kim</i> ; DuBois, <i>The Souls of Black Folk</i> ; Cornelia Sorabji, <i>Love and Life behind the Purdah</i>
1903	First aeroplane flight; foundation of Women's Social and Political Union		
		1905	Shaw, <i>Major Barbara</i> and <i>Man and Superman</i> ; Wells, <i>Kipps</i>
		1907	Synge, <i>The Playboy of the Western World</i> ; Conrad, <i>The Secret Agent</i>
		1911	Duse Mohamed Ali, <i>In the Land of the Pharaohs</i>
1914	Home Rule Bill passed by Parliament; Britain declares war on Central Powers (4 August)		
1916	First battle of the Somme; Gallipoli Campaign; Easter Rising in Dublin		
		1917	Eliot, <i>Prufrock and Other Observations</i>
1918	Second battle of the Somme; final German offensive collapses; Armistice with Germany (11 November); Franchise Act granting the vote to women over thirty		

1919	Treaty of Versailles; Amritsar Massacre; Atlantic flown	1920	Owen, <i>Poems</i> ; Lawrence, <i>Women in Love</i> ; Shaw, <i>Heartbreak House</i> ; Fry, <i>Vision and Design</i>
		1922	Eliot, <i>The Waste Land</i> ; Joyce, <i>Ulysses</i> ; Lawrence, <i>Fantasia of the Unconscious</i>
1924	First Labour Government	1924	Forster, <i>A Passage to India</i> ; O'Casey, <i>Juno and the Paycock</i> ; Coward, <i>The Vortex</i>
		1925	Woolf, <i>Mrs Dalloway</i> ; Gerhardie, <i>The Polyglots</i>
1926	General Strike	1926	MacDiarmid, <i>A Drunk Man looks at the Thistle</i>
		1927	Woolf, <i>To the Lighthouse</i>
		1928	Yeats, <i>The Tower</i> ; Lawrence, <i>Lady Chatterley's Lover</i> ; Waugh, <i>Decline and Fall</i>
1930	World economic depression	1935	Mulk Raj Anand, <i>Untouchable</i> ; George Orwell, <i>Burmese Days</i>
1936	Death of George V; accession of Edward VIII; abdication crisis; accession of George VI; Civil War breaks out in Spain; first of the Moscow show trials	1936	C.L.R. James, <i>Minty Alley</i>
		1937	Karen Blixen, <i>Out of Africa</i>

		1938	Jomo Kenyatta, <i>Facing Mount Kenya</i> ; C.L.R. James, <i>The Black Jacobins</i> ; Raja Rao, <i>Kanthapura</i>
1939	End of Civil War in Spain; Russo-German pact; Germany invades Poland (September); Britain and France declare war on Germany	1939	Joyce Cary, <i>Mister Johnson</i>
		1940	Mulk Raj Anand, <i>Across the Black Waters</i>
1941	Germany invades Russia; Japanese destroy US Fleet at Pearl Harbor		
1942	Fall of Singapore; British victory in North Africa at El Alamein		
1945	Surrender of Germany; atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Labour Government elected		
1947	Independence of India and Pakistan		
1948	The British Empire becomes the British Commonwealth; <i>Empire Windrush</i> brings 492 West Indians to Britain	1948	Desani, <i>All about H. Hatter</i> ; Greene, <i>The Heart of the Matter</i> ; Fry, <i>The Lady's Not for Burning</i>
		1949	Bowen, <i>The Heat of the Day</i> ; Orwell, <i>Nineteen Eighty-four</i> ; Eliot, <i>The Cocktail Party</i>
1950	Labour returned at election with reduced majority	1950	Auden, <i>Collected Shorter Poems</i> ; Beckett, <i>Molloy</i> (first volume of trilogy)

1951	Conservative victory at General Election; Festival of Britain		
1952	Death of George VI; accession of Elizabeth II; Kenyan war of independence ('Mau Mau War') begins		
		1954	Rattigan, <i>Separate Tables</i> ; Golding, <i>Lord of the Flies</i> ; Amis, <i>Lucky Jim</i>
		1955	Larkin, <i>The Less Deceived</i> ; Golding, <i>The Inheritors</i> ; Beckett, <i>Waiting for Godot</i> (first British performance)
1956	Egypt nationalizes Suez Canal; Britain and France intervene and are obliged to withdraw; Soviet invasion of Hungary	1956	Golding, <i>Pincher Martin</i> ; Wilson, <i>Anglo-Saxon Attitudes</i> ; Osborne, <i>Look Back in Anger</i> ; Selvon, <i>The Lonely Londoners</i>
1957	Ghana gains Independence	1957	Hughes, <i>The Hawk in the Rain</i> ; Spark, <i>The Comforters</i> ; Durrell, <i>Justine</i> ; Osborne, <i>The Entertainer</i>
		1958	Chinua Achebe, <i>Things Fall Apart</i>
1960	Independence gained by a number of states in the Caribbean and Africa	1960	Pinter, <i>The Caretaker</i> ; Wilson Harris, <i>The Palace of the Peacock</i> ; Lamming, <i>The Pleasures of Exile</i>