Postcolonial London

rewriting the metropolis

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For Liz Ekstein

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Acknowledgements

One book, many obligations. My biggest debt is to the undergraduate students who have taken my module, 'Postcolonial London', in the School of English at the University of Leeds since 1996. The influence of their discussions, disagreements and imaginative explorations of writers and issues will, I hope, be felt throughout the following pages, and many of my ideas are indebted to their enthusiastic and stimulating engagement with texts. *Postcolonial London*'s merits are as much theirs as they are mine (suffice to say, its weaknesses are solely my responsibility).

Shirley Chew first encouraged me to pursue my interest in postcolonial London in the classroom and, later, on the page. Her wisdom and generosity remain inspirational. I have also benefited enormously from the input and insight of David Richards, whose support for my career continues to be a valued and vital source of strength. His friendship is precious and dear, and I have much to thank him for. Elleke Boehmer and Bart Moore-Gilbert offered intellectual, moral and practical support, as well as their time. I am especially grateful to Professor Boehmer, and to Catherine Batt, for helping me think creatively about my personal investment in postwar representations of London. I am also indebted to Caryl Phillips for inviting me to New York in October 2001 to give the Lucyle Hook Lectures at Barnard College, Columbia University, where I had the invaluable opportunity to share my work with, and learn much from, a new constituency of students. And I am most grateful to Bernardine Evaristo for memorably introducing me to Notting Hill, her willingness to provide some personal information which I use when reading her work in Chapter 5, and her supportive enthusiasm for my research over several years.

I owe a major debt of gratitude to Alison Creedon, James Procter and Andrew Warnes, who gave up their valuable time to read this book at manuscript stage, offered expert advice, and made many helpful suggestions. In particular, I benefited tremendously from the imagination and keen intelligence of Dr Procter whose guidance was characteristically

Introduction

Locating postcolonial London

One afternoon, in May 1955, the anthropologist Sheila Patterson took a journey to Brixton in South London. Turning down a side-road away from the main shopping street, she was 'overcome with a sense of strangeness, almost of shock'. In the familiar environment of a South London street, she was surprised to find that 'almost everybody in sight had a coloured skin':

> waiting near the employment exchange were about two dozen black men, most in the flimsy suits of exaggerated cut that, as I was later to learn, denoted their recent arrival. At least half of the exuberant infants playing outside the pre-fab day nursery were *café noir* or *café au lait* in colouring. And there were coloured men and women wherever I looked, shopping, strolling, or gossiping on the sunny street-corners with an animation that most Londoners lost long ago.
>
> (1965: 13)

Patterson's shock at the London she sees emerging just off the main shopping thoroughfare, down an innocuous side-street, bears witness to a new London community in its interstices and hitherto neglected locations. Its transformative potential is adumbrated by the uses the newcomers make of urban space, liming Brixton's streets and turning the street-corners into sociable sites of community and communication that perhaps recall similar locations in Kingston, Bridgetown or Port of Spain. There is another London being created here, one which admits the times and places of overseas to the supposedly humdrum heart of the aged British Empire, creating a novel environment which also epitomizes the perpetually changing milieu of city living.

Yet some of the difficulties faced by these latest Londoners are suggested by the queue which has formed outside the employment exchange, and the fact that this neighbourhood seems enclosed by an imaginary border which

Patterson crosses when she turns off the high street and confronts a scene of 'strangeness'. These difficulties are partly social and economic, but also bound up with modes of perception and representation. Patterson's disorientation stems from her inability to read the scene of what should be familiar and unspectacular, namely 'a fairly typical South London side-street, grubby and narrow, lined with cheap cafés, shabby pubs, and flashy clothing-shops' (13). In the struggle to render the source of her disconcerted feelings, the newcomers are granted an almost prelapsarian innocence: they stroll happily in the sunshine and display an animation which most Londoners lost 'long ago'. Her diplomatic attempt to describe the multiracial children playing outside the nursery with recourse to French (so bizarre to the twenty-first-century eye) cannot escape the racializing optic it wishes to eschew, while also raising the issue of miscegenation frequently found in discussions of New Commonwealth immigration at the time (Webster 1998).

Patterson's study of Caribbeans in Brixton, *Dark Strangers*, crystalized several contradictions on the part of those keen to understand how London was changing as a consequence of migration and settlement in the immediate postwar years. On the one hand Patterson made an important attempt to expose and address many of the difficulties facing newcomers to the city, such as their expectations of London nurtured from afar and the prejudicial attitudes they found in employment and housing which reflected the infamous 'colour bar' of which Learie Constantine had written a year before Patterson travelled to Brixton (Constantine 1954). She also recorded the survival strategies and initiatives of Caribbeans in 1950s London, such as the 'pardner' associations of which the Trinidadian novelist Sam Selvon wrote humorously in his Brixton-based novel *The Housing Lark* (1965). On the other hand, Patterson's study also revealed the extent to which, in the 1950s and 1960s, Caribbeans were within, but not a part of, London's economic and social fabric, while her vocabulary often intimated something of the imaginative assumptions and barriers that would impact centrally upon the lives of London's newcomers for many years to come. Brixton's diasporic peoples, like many other new Londoners from countries with a history of colonialism, would be subjected to a series of attitudes which frequently objectified and demonized them, often in terms of race, while questioning their rights of citizenship and tenure in one of the world's most historically cosmopolitan cities. The perpetual identification of these peoples and their families as 'strangers' in, rather than citizens of, London bears witness to the profoundly polycultural character of the city in the postwar years and to a number of reactionary responses at the levels of state and street which refused to accept the newcomers' legitimacy and rights of tenure.

Almost forty years later, the poet and playwright Gabriel Gbadamosi described the pleasures of driving into 1990s Brixton, turning off London's major thoroughfares and heading for the excitements of its market. Here, he exclaimed, one finds streets moving 'with a different flow':

> Go up Coldharbour Lane, especially in summer, Electric Avenue or Atlantic Road, and you enter the Bermuda Triangle of Brixton market, one of those places where you pass from the fluent curses of the London traffic to the stop-start acceleration of shouts in the street, stand-offs and stylish getaways. As the road slips from mainstream London road culture it hits an interchange with the pulse of Jamaican street life, the go-slows of Lagos . . . There is a buzz of community, of jostling preachers, socialist newspaper sellers, street vendors and hustlers, an exchange and display of often very singular identities.
> (1999: 185)

Gbadamosi's mapping of Brixton echoes Patterson's – he too situates Brixton in juxtaposition to London's 'mainstream' – yet the sense of place is entirely different. Here is a vision of Brixton articulated from the other side of Patterson's vista. Gbadamosi offers a reading of these streets that is visceral and knowing rather than anthropological and shocked. In talking of the 'Bermuda Triangle' of the market he toys with the notion of Brixton at the end of the century as a dangerous location, a racialized ghetto in the minds of too many Londoners; yet it is the heady excitements created by Brixton as a cultural crossroads which Gbadamosi wishes to lay bare, where Brixton as a cultural crossroads which Gbadamosi wishes to lay bare, where Brixton's Caribbean street life is inflected by the 'go-slows' of Lagos. The pulse of Jamaican street life is inflected by the 'go-slows' of Lagos. Epitomized by its market which 'pulls London, Africa and the Caribbean into itself' (185) Brixton appears as a vibrant transcultural site of exchange: of voices, memories, musics, rhythms, ideas and politics, where new communities have been created from its transnational human traffic. Brixton harbours a perpetual process of 'interchange' in London, one that is continually created from the legacy of postwar migration, settlement and diaspora.

For Gbadamosi as it was for Patterson, the challenge facing those concerned with London is 'to read the signals of and responses to movement among people making sense of their experience in a new place' (185–6). *Postcolonial London* is my attempt to respond constructively to Gbadamosi's challenge and read critically the ways in which those who have arrived from once-colonized countries in London and their descendants have since the 1950s represented their experience in a 'new place' which, by their very presence, has itself been made new. In this book we engage with the visions and versions of the city which Londoners such as Gbadamosi have created. What, I ask, has been made of the city by these Londoners in their

creative endeavours, often in the midst of seemingly insurmountable hostility, prejudice and, most bleakly, violence? What has London meant for them, and how have they rewritten its meanings? How have their cultural energies helped reimagine London, nurturing new ways of regarding and living in the city, and to what extent have their creative initiatives resourced modes of resistance at large? How has living in, and writing about, London enabled new ways of thinking about regional, national, diasporic and transcultural identities?

First and foremost, then, *Postcolonial London* is a book about change: cultural, social, political, aesthetic. Change is never easy, of course, and many of the changes to London intimated in this book have occurred in the midst of discouraging and difficult conditions. As John Eade reminds us, for example, 'Black and Asian settlers from former British colonies have played the major part in creating London's multicultural society, but it is they who experience some of the highest levels of poverty and discrimination' (2000: 2). The writing of these and other Londoners often bears stark witness to the subaltern lives and fortunes of those rendered other or marginal in a frequently hostile and unwelcoming city where prejudices towards newcomers have been, and still can be, found within employment, housing, government and the Metropolitan Police. Yet as we shall see, their writing offers alternative and revisionary narratives of subaltern city spaces which do not easily succumb to the demands of authority.

Since the end of the Second World War, the urban and human geography of London has been irreversibly altered as a consequence of patterns of migration from countries with a history of colonialism, so that today a number of London's neighbourhoods are known primarily in terms of the 'overseas' populations they have nurtured. Whitechapel and Tower Hamlets boast significant Bangladeshi communities; Brixton has long been associated with Jamaican, Trinidadian and Guyanese settlers; Southall has significant numbers of Indian and Pakistani peoples; Earl's Court is renowned for its Australians and New Zealanders; Hampstead is a centre for South Africans in London; Clapham and Balham are home to many with links from Ghana. It is estimated that 300 different languages are readily spoken within the boundaries of the British capital. Although this mapping of London makes tidy a number of different cultural constituencies whose members perpetually move through the city and interact with others, it none the less gives an indication of the patterns and histories of settlement which characterize London at the beginning of the twenty-first century. *Postcolonial London* is my attempt to explore critically and closely some selected examples from a much wider body of texts which take as their subject the lives, struggles, disappointments, achievements, conflicts and creations of such peoples in the city since the 1950s.

In exploring the cultural endeavours of the writers in this book under the heading 'postcolonial London', I am using a term which has enjoyed occasional currency in postcolonial studies but which has yet to be precisely rendered or adequately explored (Nixon 1992; Jacobs 1996; McLeod 1999; Ranasinha 2002). In this introduction I want to specify exactly what is meant in my articulation of 'postcolonial London', and why it may prove a productive conceptual tool. Paul Gilroy has argued that '[t]he postcolonial character of contemporary London has a simple facticity which leaves it not really amenable to debate' (1999: 57). Yet the 'simple facticity' of postcolonial London is no guarantee of visibility when the history of London society or culture is narrated. It is not just the case that, as Whisky Sisodia stutteringly suggests in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988), '[t]he trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means' (343); there also remains a troubling lack of acknowledgement of the history which has happened *within* the imperial metropolis as a consequence of colonialism and its aftermath (which Rushdie's novel, of course, attempts to confront). As Laura Chrisman has recently argued, British colonialism created a complex 'interplay of the metropolis and imperialism' (2003: 22) in which events and people from overseas made an impact at the Empire's administrative heart. It was not simply the case that London as the centre of the Empire stood in powerful contradistinction to the colonial margins. As Jonathan Schneer has shown in his fascinating study *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis* (1999), although London's built environment and public spectacles cheerfully celebrated the grandeur and fortunes of British imperialism, the city was also affected by the endeavours of those who had arrived via the international routes opened by imperial traffic. Elleke Boehmer's exploration of resistance to Empire nurtured through the transnational encounters of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries calls attention to London as a significant site of dissident thought, where intellectuals and radicals from colonized countries created interdiscursive modes of resistance through their interaction. As she vividly demonstrates, 'London, pullulating with secularist, anarchist, socialist, avant-garde, and freethinking circles . . . thus formed an important meeting ground for Indian, Irish, African, and Caribbean freedom movements' (2002: 20). Boehmer demonstrates how the South African intellectual Sol T. Plaatje fashioned his forms of oppositional expression in 'the cosmopolitan London of the 1910s and 1920s in which elites from different colonial contexts were able to mingle and exchange opinions in clubs, salons, and debating halls – in effect to experience different forms of cultural and political self-representation' (153). So by the early decades of the twentieth century, London's role as the metropolitan heart of the Empire meant that, as

C. L. Innes explains, it was also the 'the heart of resistance to empire' (2002: 167). It was in 1930s London that a number of influential intellectuals and radicals – such as Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore, Jomo Kenyatta, Amy Garvey and Ras Makonnen – formulated their own opposition to Empire through their interactions with themselves and other political groups (Geiss 1974; Gikandi 2000; McLeod 2002a).

For these reasons, it is important to proceed with an historical understanding of London as a much more complex and conflicted location than that implied by the totalizing and abstract concept of the undifferentiated colonial 'centre'. As Laura Chrisman remarks, such a view 'leads rather easily into the problematic notion that this unit has a unitary consciousness', serving 'an aestheticisation of space that obscures as much as it illuminates the operations of imperial cultures' (2003: 6). London occupies a particularly significant place in the evolution of postcolonial oppositional thought and action, and has long been an important site of creativity and conflict for those from countries with a history of colonialism. The social and cultural changes we explore in this book might be thought of as representing the latest phases in a much longer and complex history, to which they are in part indebted.

Indeed, the presence in London of individuals and communities from overseas is as old as the city itself, and might be considered to constitute its definitive characteristic. In the early 1990s the Museum of London embarked upon a project titled 'The Peopling of London', the aim of which was to call attention to 15,000 years of settlement in the city. In claiming that 'immigration from overseas has been a persistent theme in the city's history' (Merriman and Visram 1993: 3), the project proposed that the ancestry and present existence of both London and Londoners was most accurately conceived of in terms of multicultural diversity. Anna Marie Smith has pointed out that '[t]he black population in London numbered between 15,000 and 20,000 in the late eighteenth century – almost 3 per cent of the total population of the city' (1994: 134). Further evidence of London's multicultural and multiracial diversity can be found in Gretchen Gerzina's study of eighteenth-century black peoples in the city, *Black London* (1995), Stephen Alomes's account of the postwar 'expatriation' of Australian creative artists to Britain in *When London Calls* (1999), and Sukhdev Sandhu's anecdotal and chatty survey of black and Asian London writing, *London Calling* (2003) – as well as historical studies of Britain's diaspora populations by such figures as Peter Fryer (1984), Ron Ramdin (1999), Rozina Visram (1986, 2003) and James Walvin (1984), in which London features as an important location. Yet these endeavours and achievements, both before the Second World War and since, are still to be fully acknowledged at large. As Paul Gilroy demands in his essay on

London, 'we have to produce histories of the city in [the twentieth] century which allow the presence of diverse colonial peoples and their stubbornly non-colonial descendants far greater significance than they have been allowed in the past' (1999: 60). For these reasons, *Postcolonial London* joins with the work of those above and responds to Gilroy's demand by focusing attention upon the heterogeneous, diverse and polycultural character of the city's society and culture. It does so partly in a spirit of critical admiration for the cultural creativity of the period – evidenced by the work of figures such as Lord Kitchener, Colin MacInnes, Janet Frame, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Bernardine Evaristo and others – but also to support politically the contestation of London as defined in terms of racial, ethnic and cultural purity which has often resulted in the hostile subjection of those descended from countries with a history of colonialism to unacceptable experiences of racialization, exclusion and discrimination.

In speaking of postcolonial London, then, I am in part attempting to make visible a number of contexts resulting from colonialism and its legacy which have contributed to the social and cultural fortunes of London since the end of the Second World War. These include the postwar impact 'at home' of the waning of Empire and formal decolonization; the relatively large-scale movement of peoples into London from countries with a history of colonialism; the establishment of London-born transnational communities often regarded to be 'strangers' to London in equal measure to their migrant parents or grandparents; and the transition from London as 'imperial metropolis' to a globalized and transcultural 'world city'. The historical facticity of postcolonial London is certainly a major element foregrounded by the term. However, I also intend it to be responsive not only to historical or sociological phenomena but also to the imaginative endeavours of aesthetic creativity. As important as its declaration of 'facticity' is the term's attempt to articulate novel and divergent ways of regarding and representing London. In other words, 'postcolonial London' does not factually denote a given place or mark a stable location on a map. It emerges at the intersection of the concrete and the noumenal, between the material conditions of metropolitan life and the imaginative representations made of it. It is as much a product of 'facticity' as a creation of the novels, poems and other texts explored in this book.

In order to conceptualize postcolonial London in this way, let me say more about how I understand each part of my phrase before making some claims about the validity of their conjunction. In writing of London I am engaging with a location which might be conceptualized as inseparably tangible *and* imaginary. As Julian Wolfreys defines it in his thought-provoking study of London culture, London 'is not a place as such' but also '*takes place*' (1998: 4) in the representations made of it. My approach to

London in this book is similarly informed by a sense of the city simultaneously as a physical location 'as such' and also produced, experienced and lived imaginatively. James Donald's work on the modern city helpfully conveys a sense of the city fashioned at the conjunction of the material and the imaginary:

> ways of seeing and understanding the city inevitably inform ways of acting on the space of the city, with consequences which then in turn produce a modified city which is again seen, understood and acted on. It is not just that the boundaries between reality and imagination are fuzzy and porous. In the development of cities can be discerned a traffic between the two, an economy of symbolic constructs which have material consequences that are manifested in an enduring reality.
>
> (1999: 27)

To this line of thought, it is not possible to conceive of representations as simply mimetic of, determined by or antecedent to urban realities. Donald invites us to consider the ways in which perceptions of the city influence urban change and how people come to live within cities with recourse to symbolic constructs. In using the suitably urban metaphor of traffic, he conveys something of the scale and complexity of city life which takes place amid the inseparable relations between the material and the invented. Cultural production constitutes a vital part of the imagining of the city and, as Donald suggests, has the potential to impact upon the understanding of urban reality. As he importantly explains, '[i]t is not that the images are over here, on the noumenal side of representation and text, as opposed to the phenomenal space of the city over there. The reality of the city emerges from the interplay between them' (41).

Donald's sensitivity to 'the creative but constrained interchange between the subjective and the social' (18) which takes place in the city is influenced by his reading of the work of a number of thinkers of urban life such as Walter Benjamin, Georg Simmel, Robert Park, Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau. The influence of de Certeau is especially prevalent – especially his work on walking in the city found in *The Practice of Everday Life* – to the extent that Donald mounts a spirited defence against those who consider de Certeau's thinking to be flawed by its tendency towards binarisms or its breathless poeticism. Despite these criticisms, de Certeau's essay, 'Walking in the City', offers several important resources for the conceptualization and exploration of postcolonial London which are worth exploring. Much of de Certeau's thinking rests upon his juxtaposition between the 'Concept-city' of officious discourse, where all is rational, planned and functional, and the spatial practices of those who invent a

'metaphorical' city in the 'proliferating illegitimacy' of their unplanned, individuating and 'surreptitious creativities' (1984: 96). The Concept-city is understood specifically as a synchronic 'place' that de Certeau distinguishes in terms of orderliness and stability in which 'the law of the "proper" rules' (117). Contrastingly, a 'space' has none of the 'univocity or stability of a "proper"' (117). It is defined as a diachronic and heterogeneous location of migration, mobility and instability, an 'effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programmes or contractual proximities' (117). It is akin to 'the word when it is spoken . . . modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts' (117). By regarding the movements of city dwellers in terms of speech acts, with each spatial journey through the city constituting its own destabilizing narrative in conflict with the obligations of place, de Certeau offers a resistant grammar of city living where the concrete, regulated and panoptic certainties of authority are contested by the brigandly, spontaneous and subversive contingencies of spatial practices. If the map is the defining representation of the Concept-city which colonizes space in order to produce a static depiction of the city as place, then the wanderings of those who tour the city write new scripts of city-space in the delinquent narratives of their passage. 'What the map cuts up', de Certeau writes, 'the story cuts across' (129).

De Certeau's work on the spatial stories of city living, although perhaps too conveniently schematic, remains enormously suggestive as a point of departure for the conceptualization of postcolonial London. It crucially recognizes that cities are crucibles of power, and that city dwellers are constantly in negotiation with factors which attempt to regulate and police their lives. Their activities contribute to the subversive practices of everyday life as tactics of resistance and survival: 'Innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other's game . . . that is, the space instituted by others, characterize the subtle, stubborn, resistant activity of groups which, since they lack their own space, have to get along in a network of already established forces and representations' (18). The antic and stubborn stories which create the 'metaphorical' city are always scripted in relation to the Concept-city which attempts, but fails, fully to contain them. As de Certeau importantly remarks, stories engage with the determinations of both places and spaces and carry out 'a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places' (118). Hence, representations of postcolonial London bear witness to modes of authority which attempt to trap London's newcomers and their families in a particular mapping of the city (if not erasing them from the map entirely), regulating their movements and placing their activities under surveillance. But these texts primarily give expression to the improvizational, creative and resistant tactics of those

who make possible new subaltern spaces in the city. Postcolonial London, then, stages the contest between the authoritarian, regulated and policed 'place' of the city and the insubordinate, contingent and ultimately creative innovations of 'space'.

It will be clear by now, I hope, that while acknowledging the agency of the imagination in mediating and shaping urban reality, I do not wish to proceed with the relaxed notion of urban space which collapses material forces into the two-dimensional weightlessness of postmodernist representation where issues of power and authority conveniently evaporate. Although Iain Chambers claims that the metropolis is 'as much an imaginary reality as a real place' (1990: 54, emphasis added), his postmodernist approach tends to emphasize the saturation of images which occurs in the city and results in the evacuation of a sense of stable reality (and hence contradicts his view of the city existing as a concrete entity 'as much' as it is noumenal): 'Literature, cinema, television, video and advertising have accustomed us to environments that are no longer geometrically organized by streets, buildings, parks, boulevards and squares. The media, and the images of the metropolis they offer, provide us with a city that is immaterial and transparent: a cinematic city, a telematic hyper-space, the site of the modern imaginary' (54). One might ask exactly to whom he refers when using 'us' in these sentences. Chambers's vision of the city is as abstracting and non-referential as 'the telematic hyper-space' he discusses in which all sensitivity to facticity disappears. Postcolonial London will not be found here.

The dangers of proceeding with a postmodernist notion of the metropolis in terms of 'telematic hyperspace' have been outlined in the collaborative work of Michael Keith and Malcolm Cross concerning racism in the postmodern city. They acknowledge the noumenal aspect of city living in their comment that 'the postmodern city, if it exists at all, incorporates a way of seeing as well as a way of being' (1993: 2). Although they agree that the city 'is an imaged urbanism as well as a historical product' (8), their attention to the role of race in the metropolis powerfully demonstrates how imagined divisions and hierarchies can impact upon urban social relations. Using the phrase 'the racialization of space' (3) to explain the ways in which certain peoples and neighbourhoods are defined pejoratively through the optic of race – and hence are 'placed' in terms both of the built environment and their imagining at large – Keith and Cross pursue the ways in which social and semiotic processes combine to construct unequal experiences of city life. The centrality of race to the fortunes of contemporary cities cannot be underestimated: 'Contemporary urban form incorporates a set of racialized values which structure the architecture of power in the city' (11). These values contribute to the maintenance of a

racialized underclass and the construction of racialized ghettoes perceived as sites of criminality and danger. The postmodernist city of telematic hyper-space actually contains 'tacit social orders which potentially naturalize the putative existence of a racialized other whose claims to redress are rendered suspect by a set of racial characteristics which may begin with subtle models of second-class citizenship and stretch to the crudest articulations of genetic criminality' (11).

In speaking of London in this book as both a location 'as such' and that which 'takes place' in representations, my intention is to approach postcolonial London writing in relation to the social and material inequalities that have in part resulted from the city's divisive architecture of power. In the chapters which follow I shall be concerned with the ways in which the cultural initiatives of postcolonial London confront different schematics of the city's architecture of power, and suggest the possibility of making new spaces in London where the subaltern contingencies of everyday life contest and dismantle authority. Of course, race is not the only authoritative discourse of power with consequences for London's diaspora communities, and nor do such modes of domination emerge exclusively from outside their bounds. As we shall see on many occasions, but especially in Chapter 3, diaspora neighbourhoods are capable of creating and perpetuating their own forms of coercion. In addition, although the subaltern creation of new spaces in London may be the subject of several of the texts explored in this book, the attitudes of the writers involved may not always be entirely supportive, as my exploration of V. S. Naipaul's representations of London in the 1960s will reveal. Although de Certeau's thinking problematically suggests that the operations of power in the city can be grasped in terms of a binary struggle between panoptical modes of authority and tactics of resistance on the ground, it is better to conceive of power as much more supple, complex and intricate – as Michel Foucault terms it, 'a complex strategical situation in a particular society' (1990: 93). London's diaspora communities are not immune from pursuing internally their own forms of compulsion which mobilize hierarchies of gender, sexuality, age, class, caste and other social categories of identity; while structures of state authority are by no means inevitably or perpetually oppressive. Jane M. Jacobs's understanding of the city captures very well the sense of postcolonial London as a contested terrain and site of potential transformation for which I am aiming. As she explains in her work on the imperial legacy in London, Perth and Brisbane, cities are 'promiscuous geographies of dwelling' (1996: 5) where complex structures of power are constantly insisted upon, revised, contested, renegotiated and resisted: 'Precisely because cities are sites of "meetings", they are also places which are saturated with possibilities for the destabilization of imperial arrangements.

This may manifest through stark anticolonial activities, but also through the negotiations of identity and place which arise through diasporic settlements and hybrid cultural forms' (4). The operations of power, like modes of 'destabilization', are numerous and always changing. There is no one singular process which fixes 'tacit social orders' into place, just as there is no singular mode of resistance or means of negotiation. As Homi K. Bhabha describes it, in such 'cramped conditions of cultural creativity . . . claims to cultural authenticity and sovereignty – supremacy, autonomy, hierarchy – are less significant "values" than an awareness of the hybrid conditions of inter-cultural exchange' (2000: 139). It is with a conception of London as a vexed space of inter-cultural exchange, as emphasized in Gabriel Gbadamosi's rendering of Brixton market, that I proceed in this book.

Jacobs's focus on the propensity within cities for the renegotiation of 'imperial arrangements' takes us to a consideration of what I intend by 'postcolonial'. As is well known, postcolonial, postcolonialism and post-coloniality are highly contested terms which have enjoyed considerable critical attention from many quarters in recent years (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1989; Ahmad 1992; Moore-Gilbert 1997; Gandhi 1998; Loomba 1998; San Juan 1998; McLeod 2000; Quayson 2000; Ashcroft 2001; Huggan 2001; Young 2001). Although it is not possible to explore these debates in depth here, it is worth observing that several disagreements concerning the postcolonial revolve around its advocacy of, and potential for, meaningful change. On the one hand there are those such as Bill Ashcroft for whom 'postcolonial' describes the agency and capacity for transformation of once-colonized peoples who have been, and may well remain, subjects of colonial authority. For Ashcroft (who quotes de Certeau favourably in his work), 'the range of strategies, the tenacity and the practical assertiveness of the apparently powerless' (2001: 17) make possible acts of transformation which ceaselessly contest the operations of 'imperial power' (55). The postcolonial, then, describes valuable protean forms of resistance, disruption, agency, contestation and change. However, Graham Huggan's exploration of the postcolonial as a potentially exoticizing and disabling concept checks much of the enthusiasm and utopianism of Ashcroft's approach by warning that the postcolonial may well function to repackage and fetishize the seemingly disruptive energies of cultural difference within the familiar and manageable category of the exotic. In mounting this argument, Huggan makes a distinction between post-colonialism and postcoloniality. The former can be understood conventionally as an 'anti-colonial intellectualism that reads and valorises the signs of social struggle in the faultlines of literary and cultural texts' (2001: 6). Postcoloniality, on the other hand, 'is a value-regulating mechanism within the global late-capitalist system of commodity exchange' (6). Each

is bound up with the other, creating a contemporary situation where 'post-colonialism and its rhetoric of resistance have themselves become consumer products' (6). The postcolonial exotic, hence, emerges at a 'site of discursive conflict between a local assemblage of more or less related oppositional practices and a global apparatus of assimilative institutional/commercial codes' (28). It follows, then, that all forms of postcolonial resistance and counter-value are always readily commodifiable by global capitalism as exotic spectacle. And although Huggan retains some faith in the ability of the producers and consumers of postcolonial culture to intervene and challenge the depoliticizing propensity of commodification through acts of 'strategic exoticism' (32), his argument more often than not casts doubt on the agency of postcolonialism as a disruptive and resistant discourse to free itself from the exoticizing propensity of postcoloniality.

My understanding of the postcolonial resides somewhere between these two attitudes. In a similar fashion to Bill Ashcroft, I argue for a notion of the postcolonial which is connected to successful modes of resistance and transformation – and indeed this book aims to provide several such examples. That said, Ashcroft might at times think more deeply about the effectiveness of his examples of postcolonial transformation to disrupt the systems of power/knowledge in which they are contained. Sadly, even if oppressed peoples intend and attempt resistance at a local level, it does not always follow that their tactics have significant global impact. Huggan's alertness to the ways in which postcolonial culture in recent years has comfortably and successfully entered academic institutions and the global marketplace is timely and instructive, and adds weight to the views of those critics who declare a worrying complicity between postcolonial critique and global capital – such as E. San Juan, Jr., for whom post-colonialism is 'a peculiar excrescence of the geopolitical climate in the metropolis' (1998: 10) and little more than the pathetic 'pseudoresistance' (11) of a cosmopolitan intellectual elite produced by global capitalism that has nothing critical to offer those still suffering from colonialism's practices in either the present or the past. Even if Huggan would no doubt question the voracity of San Juan's argument – which unforgivably dismisses the intellectual struggles, successful forms of resistance and transformative achievements of postcolonial artists and intellectuals at a stroke – and is careful to maintain a faith in the transformative potential of the postcolonial, the tenor of his argument makes one ultimately wary of its capacity for meaningful change.

The work of Simon Gikandi and Stuart Hall is useful here in negotiating between these contrasting positions, maintaining a faith in the possibility of postcolonial transformation while remaining alert to the continuing unequal relations of power – social, cultural, economic – with which the postcolonial

is inevitably bound up. Gikandi defines postcoloniality as 'the term for a state of transition and cultural instability' (1996: 10). This state is generated by the appropriations of and resistances to the culture of colonialism which continues to resonate during and after much postwar decolonization. In these terms, the 'post' in 'postcolonial' describes a condition 'in which colonial culture dominates the scene of cultural production but one in which its face has been changed by both its appropriation by the colonized and the theoretical oppositionality it faces in the decolonized polis' (14). In the context of London, the culture of colonialism still has agency as one of several meaningful determinants; but its face has been changed by, on the one hand, the resistant spatial practices which have emerged within the city by those who have contested the conditions in which they have been forced to live, as well as (and more depressingly) the evolution of *new* forms of racial and cultural differentiation that continue to divest power from London's racialized peoples and keep them in 'their place'. It is important to acknowledge these complex relations without tending towards either an overconfident notion of postcolonial transformation or a gloomy disillusionment with the postcolonial's political effectiveness. As Stuart Hall puts it, the postcolonial 'does *not* mean that we have passed from a regime of power-knowledge into some powerless and conflict-free time zone. Nevertheless, it does also stake its claim in terms of the fact that some other, related but as yet "emergent" new configurations of power-knowledge relations are beginning to exert their distinctive and specific effects' (1996: 254). Many of the writers whose work we consider in this book arguably contribute to the imagining of the new 'power-knowledge relations' which resource social and cultural change in the city.

Having elaborated upon my conceptual understanding of both the postcolonial and London, let us place these terms together and take stock of the semantic resonances of 'postcolonial London'. It must be acknowledged that the deployment of this term involves a degree of risk. An articulation of the postcolonial in relation to a significant Western metropolis, which might be regarded generally as the beneficiary of imperial power rather than as a site of subjugation and exploitation, potentially deflects critical attention away from the economic, social and cultural circumstances in countries with a history of colonialism. If postcolonial studies is primarily the study of such locations, in speaking of postcolonial London I am in danger of recentralizing the Western metropolis. When proceeding with a perception of London in terms of the postcolonial we must be careful to note that its postcoloniality is not at all commensurate with sites of colonial settlement in once-colonized countries. But as we have seen, it would also be inappropriate to consider London as solely the undifferentiated colonial 'centre' or immune from the consequences of Empire, its resis-

tance and its decline. As Ania Loomba has argued, postcolonial studies shows how 'both the "metropolis" and the "colony" were deeply altered by the colonial process. *Both* of them are, accordingly, also restructured by decolonisation' (1998: 19). It is entirely legitimate to try to understand how this restructuring has impacted upon the metropolis. With this in mind, then, I would suggest that 'postcolonial London' may be considered a conceptual stratagem intended to foreground the consequences of metropolitan restructuring *as they have been represented* by writers who have arrived from, or who have ancestral links with, countries with a history of colonialism. As a way of regarding metropolitan culture it foregrounds the subaltern agency and activities of those who have struggled to settle owing to the architecture of power which creates mappings of the city in terms of officious 'place'. It admits the facticity of London's colonial and diaspora histories to the study of cultural production, and also recognizes that the experience and understanding of the city cannot free itself from imaginative and discursive modes. It engages enthusiastically with the cultural endeavours explored in the following chapters, but does not prematurely celebrate London as a tolerant, democratic or hybrid location. It names a frequently utopian subaltern aesthetic which emerges from the representations made about the city, yet remains absolutely bound up with the sobering social conditions and relations which are expressed in London's divisive architecture of power.

The utopian slant of postcolonial London writing requires more comment. Sallie Westwood and Annie Phizaklea have suggested that there exists 'a deep rupture between the poetic and experiential and the sociological and economistic discourses which have sought to render migratory processes intelligible' (2000: 4). In their view, popular cultural representations of the migrant figure have fallen foul of problematic romanticizing tendencies 'which are curiously at odds with the ways in which sociologists and economists have tried to conceptualize and analyse migration' (4). In *Postcolonial London* my reading of the cultural texts I have selected attempts to avoid cheerleading 'the pleasures of difference' (3) and steers clear of the thoughtless romanticization of migration and settlement. Cultural creativity should not be considered outside of London's insoluble and unforgettable social conflicts. But I also want to sustain a notion of cultural creativity as a critical, resistant and – above all – utopian political pragmatic activity. Aesthetic practices are not confined or fully determined by the social circumstances within which they emerge. The resources which cultural creativity may offer the pursuit of political and concrete change are extremely valuable and can be too quickly dismissed as solipsistically poetic and experiential. In a discussion of the cultural dissidence of racially subordinated peoples, Paul Gilroy has referred to the 'politics of transfiguration'

(1993a: 37) which are discovered in utopian imaginings of 'qualitatively new desires, social relations, and modes of association' (37). The creative endeavours of such peoples frequently function '[b]y posing the world as it is against the world as the racially subordinated would like it be' (36). The postcolonial rewriting of London as a utopian space of cultural and social transformation is often engaged with a transfigurative politics. Time and time again in this book we shall encounter texts in which the capacity to rewrite the metropolis is not simply enabled by social privilege or an escape from social experiences, but a groundbreaking and -making act of proleptic imagination which suggests new models of social possibility. Such utopian vistas refuse to accept the predominant mapping of London as an imperious place for newcomers and their descendants. They daringly imagine an alternative city in which divisive tensions are effectively resisted, and pro-gressive, transformative kinds of social and cultural relationships are glimpsed. As we shall see, such projections are often inspired by the popular cultural energies of everyday life in London – its dance halls, music, street-culture and so on – where received models of race, identity and belonging begin to break down. In the work of Colin MacInnes, Linton Kwesi John-son, Hanif Kureishi and others, for example, the articulation of utopian visions of London which take seriously the possibilities of diasporic living are frequently bound up with the critical advocacy of youth. This is not, of course, to presume that new versions of London spring into concrete exis-tence immediately when they are voiced, or that the social divisions of the city magically disappear at the moment when they are semiotically chal-lenged in novels, films, songs or poems. I do not wish to pursue an unrealistic culturalist approach to the mystical effectivity of postcolonial London writing, but I would like to suggest that such projective, utopian impulses possess a transformative potential which contributes to and resources the changing shape and experiences of London's 'facticity'.

There is one further configuration impacting on the articulation of postcolonial London in this book which requires comment: the vexed rela-tionship between city and nation. As the capital city of the British isles and seat of state authority, London is imagined to possess a particularly important relationship with the nation. The slippage between London, England and Britain as corresponding terms can be unhelpful, perplexing and extremely difficult to resist, but is worth questioning in order to lay bare the disjunctive relationship between capital city and nation which informs many representations of postcolonial London – and which makes the study of postcolonial London resolutely *not* the equivalent study of postcolonial England or Britain. To proceed first with the relationship between England and Britain, consider Paul Gilroy's account of their connection:

The term 'English', which is so often mistakenly substituted for [British], acts as a partial and manifestly inadequate cultural counter-part. The disjuncture between the two terms is a continual reminder not just of English dominance over Scots, Welsh and Irish people, but also that a British state can exist comfortably without the benefit of a unified British culture. The idea of an authentic cultural content of our national life is therefore constructed through an appeal to English-ness rather than Britishness. It is around this concept that the difficult tasks of creating a more pluralistic sense of national identity and a new conception of national culture revolve.

(1993b: 75)

Gilroy's distinction between the British state and an English national cul-ture at its service indicates the cultural hierarchies which have operated in Britain in the postwar decades, with the creative endeavours of the other British nations considered to be of local or minor 'fringe' interest. The visions of national culture which have emerged from the articulation of a mystical sense of Englishness have tended to be remarkably exclusive. The representation of the English countryside as epitomizing the unspoiled essence of Englishness has a long history and – coupled with postwar initia-tives in the so-called 'heritage industry' – has made a pastoral vision of England a major aspect of English national culture which has continued to the present day.

In contradistinction, notions of British culture have seemed more open to multicultural and transnational influences, yet in effect serve to protect the sanctity of Englishness from unwelcome interference. As Robert Young has pithily remarked, '"British" is the name imposed by the English on the non-English' (1995: 3). Or as Iain Chambers puts it, Britishness can be understood in two ways which in effect keep English and British safely apart: 'One, is Anglo-centric, frequently conservative, backward-looking, and increasingly located in a frozen and largely stereotyped idea of the national, that is English, culture. The other is ex-centric, open-ended and multi-ethnic' (1990: 27). In the postwar decades, the primary location of open-ended models of Britishness has been the city: the disruptive energies of British transcultural ex-centricity are deemed to be safely contained within the *cordon sanitaire* of urban limits, beyond which conventional models of Englishness remain untouched. As Gilroy argues:

Contemporary racism has identified black settlers with the cities in which most of them live and their cultural distinctiveness with its urban setting. Black life discovered amidst urban chaos and squalor has contributed new images of dangerousness and hedonism to the

anti-urbanism of much English cultural commentary. How much less congruent is a black presence with the natural landscapes within which historically authentic English sensibility has been formed?

(1993b: 80)

In terms of national culture and identity, this scenario puts London in an interesting and productively conflicted position. On the one hand, London is the location where the British Government and so many state agencies have their national headquarters, circumstances which assist in the city's imaginative fashioning almost as a synecdoche for the nation. On the other hand, as a specifically urban location which has welcomed for centuries peoples from overseas, London's transcultural facticity has made possible new communities and forms of culture indebted to its history of 'peopling' which, in turn, come to pose a considerable challenge to the pastoral articulation of English national culture as representative. In this conception, London can be considered a profoundly disruptive location, incubating new social relations and cultural forms which conflict with the advocacy of a national culture or the pursuit of cultural nationalism. As Chapter 2 demonstrates, the disjunctions between capital city and nation have been abrasive, with the former enabling a confrontation with the imagining of the latter. If a certain vision of English national culture legislates against (in Gilroy's words) a more pluralistic concept of national identity emerging, representations of postcolonial London perhaps offer the means of challenging its exclusive and undemocratic characteristics and opening up exclusionary national categories through an attention to the social and cultural possibilities of transcultural exchange.

For example, in responding to a question about the resurgence of English nationalism in the 1990s Hanif Kureishi looked to London as solving the quandary of his own struggle with national belonging: 'suddenly you see London and you think it can belong to us, it doesn't belong to the English, it's international ... [Y]ou can claim London as your own' (Moore-Gilbert 1999: 9). Coming from the South London suburbs as the child of a Pakistani father and an English mother, Kureishi clearly regarded London as making possible the opportunity of new forms of identity and belonging which contrasted with the sense of exclusion beyond the city's limits. 'I find going to the country[side] terrifying', he continued, 'because you always feel excluded. One gets very bad paranoia' (9). For some, living in and writing about London affords an opportunity to intervene in, critique and contest the received notions of culture and identity that impact nationally *as well as* locally, even though national and local culture is not coincident. Enabled and energized by London's transcultural traffic which perpetually traverses national borders, postcolonial London texts

can constitute centrifugal subaltern significations that legislate against the consolidation of illiberal models of national culture and identity. City and nation are set at odds.

The following chapters are best considered as affording five particular opportunities for reading critically and patiently a select body of significant texts, rather than constituting an exhaustive or seamless narrative which summarizes the period covered and its conflicts. They open up a number of different vistas on the city at important moments of social and cultural contestation, and each has at its heart a recurring motif or key metaphor. In Chapter 1 I explore the consequences of Caribbean and African migration to London in the 1950s, from the arrival of the SS *Empire Windrush* to the Notting Hill riots of August and September 1958, in terms of the utopian visions created in Sam Selvon's novel *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) and Colin MacInnes's novels *City of Spades* (1957) and *Absolute Beginners* (1959). These writers imagine the potential for new forms of community and identity in the city often nurtured by the popular cultural energies of the decade. Specifically masculine and inspired by the youthful 'spatial creolization' of London, such visions have at their heart festive images of song and dance, the energies of which are mobilized to inspire new social visions of London's transcultural changes. Crucially, although the fortunes of the city's newcomers are often plotted as proceeding from expectation to disillusionment in the 1950s, I suggest that these utopian and often optimistic visions of London articulated during a period of mounting tension and hostility represent a significant and often forgotten achievement when regarding the cultural output of the decade, as well as constituting politically potent cultural responses to the decade's enduring problems.

In Chapter 2 I consider the representation of London in a number of texts written during the 1960s by three self-consciously literary figures who arrived in London after the Second World War with the intention of becoming successful novelists. In their work, the conflict between received models of Englishness and the new cultural and social possibilities of London receives an ambivalent welcome and is often expressed through images of the city's insubstantiality and weight, especially bomb-sites and ruins. In V. S. Naipaul's writing of the time, especially his novel *Mr Stone and the Knights Companion* (1963), the postwar changes to London are portrayed as upsetting received notions of English identity and civility which Naipaul nurtured and admired from afar. In Doris Lessing's *In Pursuit of the English* (1960) and Janet Frame's *The Edge of the Alphabet* (1962), contrariwise, such changes afford the possibility of challenging the legitimacy and authority of English national culture which is deemed to service colonial prejudices towards those arriving from colonized countries. In writing about London, Lessing and Frame discover subversive ways of opening

exclusionary models of England and Englishness to some of the transformations of the immediate postwar years.

The operations of gender preoccupy Chapter 3 in which I examine the writing of three figures, Buchi Emecheta, Joan Riley and Grace Nichols. Their work, which spans the 1960s to the early 1980s, calls into question some of the utopian and optimistic visions of London explored previously, especially in Chapter 1, by male artists, as well as outlining some of the different ways in which black women have experienced and responded imaginatively to metropolitan life. Two related recurring motifs are stasis and arrested movement, as each writer explores differently the particular difficulties for women in moving freely in the city's spaces. In Emecheta's novels *In the Ditch* (1972; rev. 1979) and *Second-Class Citizen* (1974), and Joan Riley's *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), the difficulties of settling in London are compounded by attitudes to gender, so that women find themselves stuck as second-class citizens in London's diasporic neighbourhoods. None the less, and as Nichols's collection *The Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984) especially suggests, it is possible to imagine tentative yet emancipatory visions of London where female agency is able to contest the coercive demands of the city at large and the specific neighbourhood in question, suggesting resources which resist the problematic construction of migrant women in London.

In Chapter 4 I explore the representation of the incendiary riotous conflicts of 1980s London, in an attempt to read critically the representation of violence in the dub poetry of Linton Kwesi Johnson, Hanif Kureishi's film *Sammy and Rosie Get Laid* (1988) and Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988). Of particular interest is the extensive use each writer makes of images of fire. In exploring Johnson's work as engaging with the London of so-called 'second generation' settlers in which the streetwise combination of poetry and music sounds its own signature as an urban cultural creation, I explore the ways in which his careful representation of fiery resistance in London establishes its legitimacy, righteousness and validation as an act of meaningful political resistance indebted to the history and culture of Caribbean anti-colonial insurgency. In Kureishi's film there is also a sympathetic exploration of youthful riotous protest as a significant subaltern challenge to the officious policing of the city, yet a certain squeamishness remains towards those who eschew the creative and pacifistic possibilities of popular culture in favour of incendiary protest. Finally, in my reading of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*, a novel most frequently connected to the celebration of London's transcultural and heteroglot character, I question Rushdie's problematic representation of popular protest as contradicting the supposedly translational vision of London he elsewhere promotes.

Finally, in Chapter 5 I consider the representation of 1990s London as a purposefully transcultural location in David Dabydeen's *The Intended* (1991), Fred D'Aguiar's collection of poetry *British Subjects* (1993) and Bernardine Evaristo's prose-poem *Lara* (1997). Beginning with a consideration of the sense of optimism about London as a multicultural and hybrid city that pervaded much opinion at the end of the decade – as evidenced by the reception of Zadie Smith's novel *White Teeth* (2000) – I turn to the work of three figures who offer more sceptical and troubled visions of contemporary London while also finding in its transcultural contemporaneity the source for determined creativity, muted celebration and continued resistance to the city's social conflicts which have not disappeared. These depictions of London are frequently figured through images of water. They call attention to the social and cultural problems which endure into a new century while also looking forward to the refashioning of London as a transcultural space of social possibility at the turn of a new century. As Bernardine Evaristo writes in *Lara*, 'the future means transformation' (1997: 139).

Let me make two important concluding remarks concerning the historical and cultural shape of this book (which inevitably cannot cover adequately such a potentially wide field in a single volume). As will be clear from the above, *Postcolonial London* proceeds in a loosely chronological fashion from the 1950s to the end of the century. This arrangement, combined with the examples from Patterson and Gbadamosi with which I began, suggests something of the changes to London across the period, in terms both of the experiences of the city and of the kinds of representations made about it. As Gbadamosi's travelogue exemplifies, diasporic Londoners have taken control not only of the spaces in which they have found themselves but also of the agency to make their own representations about the city and their experiences. But it would be wrong to conclude that London's postcolonial history generally proceeds happily from postwar exclusion and struggle to multicultural inclusion and millennial chic. Four years before Patterson published her study, in May 1959 an Antiguan carpenter, Kelso Cochrane, was stabbed to death in North Kensington by six white youths. Six years before Gbadamosi published his essay, in April 1993 a young black South Londoner, Stephen Lawrence, was murdered by five white youths in Eltham. The killers of each victim have never been convicted. Let us be clear: much has been achieved, both socially and culturally, in combating the unacceptable social attitudes which have spoiled the experience of London for many newcomers and their descendants; yet there remains more to be done. Although change has occurred in London in the decades between the 1950s and the 1990s, often for the better, many problems, prejudices and conflicts remain. So, although *Postcolonial London*

attempts to be sensitive to change, as I suggested earlier, it does not presume or glibly promote an emancipatory narrative of London's diasporic communities.

Second, the cultural representations we shall explore in this book refer us to a number of different historical trajectories that cannot be readily totalized into one common story of arrival and settlement. The factors which affected the arrival and fortunes of Caribbeans in London is not necessarily commensurate with that of South Africans, Australians or South Asians. Similarly, the different London neighbourhoods to which the cultural texts explored in this book take us – Brixton, Notting Hill, Kentish Town, Balham, 'Brickhall' – open several vistas on the city which do not readily aggregate into a common view of London. London is the location of many different localities and neighbourhoods, and appears differently when viewed from Soho or Willesden. There are as many different postcolonial Londons as there are postcolonial Londoners perhaps, and far too many visions of the city to explore adequately here. That said, one of the most persistent issues which emerges across a number of different postcolonial London texts is race, not least because race became an increasingly influential discourse in many reactionary responses to both London's and Britain's postwar transformation. The new communities established by Sri Lankans, Jamaicans, Nigerians and other migrants have in the past been pejoratively represented under the singular racial category of black, with differences of ethnicity, culture, location and religion ignored. This in turn has impacted upon the ways in which white newcomers to London from Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Ireland have been perceived and accepted in the postwar city. As Kathleen Paul has demonstrated in her excellent study of the 'whitewashing' of Britain in the postwar years, 'formal definitions of [British] citizenship increasingly have had less influence than racialized images of national identity. Thus skin color and the races which were presumed to follow came to be perceived as natural dividers of people' (1997: 189). Although it is difficult to identify typical or indicative experiences when exploring the social and cultural history of postcolonial London owing to the divergent trajectories involved, officious metropolitan responses to the settlement of diaspora communities have tended to ignore many newcomers' cultural and historical differences and mobilized instead the homogenizing modality of race. For these reasons, the articulation and critique of race in postwar London constitute a central preoccupation of this book, not least because Londoners who are descended from a number of countries with a history of colonialism have found it difficult to avoid the social and cultural consequences of racializing assumptions throughout the period. As we shall see subsequently, race as a divisive social and cultural discourse has impacted

widely in London, from the ways in which space is cognitively mapped to the policing of the city's streets.

As Kathleen Paul has put it, 'it is the nature of migration to remake a society and the fate of societies to be remade' (vx). In what follows, I explore an important body of cultural texts and consider the visions of London which they negotiate from a number of often conflicting points of view. Rather than registering London's remaking with strangeness and shock as Sheila Patterson did when she turned a corner in Brixton in 1955, there are other ways of approaching London's postwar transformation which aim – as this book does – to make sense of postcolonial Londoners' remaking *on their own terms* as well as engage critically with the valuable and transformative representations they have made.

1 Making a song and dance

Sam Selvon and Colin MacInnes

'Calypsos sung at Lord's', reported *The Daily Telegraph and Morning Post* on Friday 30 June 1950. Underneath a photograph of nearly a dozen jubilant West Indian cricket fans dancing on the grass at Lord's cricket ground, the newspaper's reporter described the vivid scenes of jubilation which had followed the previous day's historic victory by the West Indies over England in the Second Test, the first to happen on English soil:

> the invading spectators formed in a group and, led by a guitarist, broke out into a rhythmic calypso (a West Indian impromptu song) extolling the great achievement of their team.
>
> Other spectators, instead of hurrying to the gates, stood silent and amused. Above the continuous hum of excitement from West Indians at the far end of the ground the words of the calypso carried across the hot air:
>
> > *This match will stir our memory.*
> > *We hope it will be noted in history;*
> > *All through our bowling was superfine,*
> > *With Ramadhin and Valentine . . .*
>
> The same exultant party later continued its celebration down St John's Wood-road and out of sight. Then Lord's, the green arena deserted, once more returned to its characteristic calm and dignity.

The calypso, known both as 'Cricket, Lovely Cricket' and 'Victory Test Match', was composed at the game by Lord Beginner (Egbert Moore), a popular figure in the calypso tents of San Fernando and Port of Spain in Trinidad since the late 1920s (Rohlehr 1990). Legend has it that Lord Beginner arrived in London with his friend and fellow calypsonian Lord Kitchener (Aldwyn Roberts) aboard the SS *Empire Windrush*, which docked at Tilbury on 22 June 1948, with 492 Caribbean migrants aboard seeking a new life in London. Kitchener was also at the Test Match. In a recent interview he recalls what happened when the jubilant West Indian supporters slipped out of the reporter's sight:

> I went there, with a guitar. And we won the match. After we won the match, I took my guitar and I call a few West Indians, and I went around the cricket field, singing. And I had an answering chorus behind me, and we went around the field singing and dancing. That was a song that I made up. So, while we're dancing, up come a policeman and arrested me. And while he was taking me out of the field, the English people boo him, they said, 'Leave him alone! Let him enjoy himself. They won the match, let him enjoy himself.' And he had to let me loose, because he was embarrassed. So I took the crowd with me, singing and dancing, from Lords [*sic*], into Piccadilly in the heart of London. And while we're singing and dancing and going to Piccadilly, the people opened their windows wondering what's happening. I think it was the first time they'd ever seen such a thing in England. And we're dancing in Trinidad style, like mas, and dance right down Piccadilly and dance round Eros. The police told me we are crazy. So, we went a couple of rounds of Eros. And from there, we went to the Paramount, a place where they always had a lot of dancing. And we spend the afternoon there, dancing and having a good time.
>
> (Phillips and Phillips 1998: 103)

Although Lord Kitchener's memory might be misleading – it was Lord Beginner who composed the calypso – it brings into view several vital elements of postcolonial London writing of the 1950s. Of particular importance is the role of popular cultural activity in the reimagining and reconstruction of London. The reference made to the Paramount, a popular dance hall situated in Tottenham Court Road in London's West End, indexes a number of London entertainment venues burgeoning in the postwar years which featured Caribbean- and African-influenced music and dancing, and where Londoners old and new encountered each other across the identitarian divides of race and gender. These locations, concentrated mainly in West London, were essential in helping facilitate the promise of social change. In spilling beyond the boundaries at Lord's, dancing around the pitch and into the streets, Lord Kitchener's dance captures something of the transgressive and festive creativity of music and dancing in 1950s London. It is a spontaneous moment of 'spatial creolization', where the sound, motion and energy of other times and places – the road marches and carnivals of Trinidad, the dynamism of the Paramount – shape a new passage through the city. Its itinerant route tethers the officious 'calm and dignity' of Lord's cricket ground with the subcultural joviality and energy