Introduction

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National and cultural identity, ethnicity and difference have always been major themes within the national psyche, but have recently become even more prevalent in public discourse. Perhaps now, more than at any other time, how ideas of 'race' are constructed is at the centre of public debates, both in the UK and the USA. Cultural diversity is increasing alongside acute, ongoing, and often racialised, inequalities. In the midst of complex global flows and accompanying economic and social insecurity, we are witnessing the rise and visibility of far-right politics and counter-movements in the UK and USA. Simultaneously, there is an urgent need to defend the role of public service media, given its position in the multicultural public sphere.[1] This collection emerges at a time when these shifts and conjunctures that impact on and shape how 'race' and racial difference are perceived, are coinciding with rapidly changing media contexts and environments and the kinds of racial representations that are constructed within public service broadcasting (PSB).

Even in the midst of these contemporary political and cultural transformations, PSB remains an important part of everyday practice (public debate, private domestic rituals and market trends), of national order (how the national community is imagined, organised and addressed) and ultimately, of public interest. However, as delocalisation develops, the role of national broadcasting as a kind of 'social glue' that produces the ideological pursuits of national unity, and what Raymond Williams called 'common culture', has become increasingly problematic.[2] PSB's apparently unifying project based around a national public culture and identification is tasked with being entirely inclusive and 'representative' and grappling with the nuances of living with difference – cultural, racial or otherwise – in a multicultural, if not multiculturalist, society. At the heart of this ethical dilemma is the question of representation and the relationship between the nation's media and lived multiculture: how PSB adjusts and responds to the complexities and contrasts within the fabric of British society. At the same time, as Georgina Born reminds us, each element that goes into 'public' 'service' 'broadcasting', is being called into question;[3] as the very notion of 'public' has never been messier, the paternalistic idea of 'service' is being challenged in an apparently more 'citizen-led' media environment, and the end of the age of television itself is already being mourned. It is precisely in such uncertain and, in many ways, alarming times, that public service media needs to be defended, renewed and reflected upon. Michael Tracey suggests, in his scrutiny of the threats to public television, that the arguments about PSB matter because they are 'about the whole character of our lives, about principles and values and moral systems'.[4]

These important debates about the nature and role of PSB overlap with discussions around how one particular dimension of the 'public' is constructed – Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities – and have not been a major focal point of critical studies in television. A broad focus on 'diversity' within scholarly, industry and public discussions often only obliquely references issues of race and representation. However, 'race' relates to important questions around the representative nature of PSB and the core question of media citizenship that also, of course, goes beyond a focus on BAME communities. This collection invites transnational interpretations of how Black people have been represented on British television. As has been previously pointed out, the early years of PSB in which it became a major aspect of UK cultural life developed at the same time as the mass immigration of people from the Commonwealth including the West Indies, India and Pakistan in the 1950s and 1960s.[5] This dual trajectory has produced a complex, dynamic relationship between Britain's post-imperial history and the institutional history of public service television. 'Black' communities come together in this discussion because of their shared post-colonial histories and the mass migration journeys that many embarked on after the Second World War. These communities have also remained at the forefront of debates about screen diversity, but have also traditionally been under-served as audiences and excluded as practitioners. The collection brings together a range of scholars who insist on foregrounding the role of public service television in a critical politics of racialised representations.

Contemporary critical concerns of race, representation and television

Recent studies point to the significance of these concerns and are reflected on here by the authors. Former studies that have addressed the matter of Black representation on British public service television include the work of Twitchin, Daniels and Gerson, Cottle, Malik, and Downing and Husband.[6] Issues of PSB policy have also been important for helping produce an understanding of the ways in which discursive frameworks and the public management of race and ethnicity are handled within the regulatory field.[7] Much of this work has also offered a wider European perspective.[8] Also noteworthy is the scholarly work examining other *loci* of cultural practices, beyond regulation, such as identity, production and consumption that foregrounds the connection between media, globalisation and cultural identities.[9] The role of diasporic media and cultural politics[10] and the transnational broadcasting marketplace as critical sites for the proliferation of difference[11] are especially useful in how we evaluate what is happening to nation-states and the idea of the national in relation to the media. Understanding processes of cultural production,[12] from a radical cultural industries perspective has also helped situate conditions of production within the dominant neo-liberal agenda that has been impacting public television since the 1990s. Saha's analysis, for example, suggests that ethnic minority producers are themselves implicated in industry shifts towards deregulation and the neo-liberal market models that we are experiencing.[13] All of these studies provide brilliant interventions into how we understand the politics of race and representation in the contemporary television space.

Significantly, the authors whose work is presented in *Adjusting the Contrast* are based in either the UK or the USA. This highlights the significance of British television for debates about cultural representation and also for non-UK scholars, but also provides a focus on the theme of comparison and translation that is apparent in this volume. On a basic level, the rationale for bringing together UK- and US-based scholars in one collection is because of shared research interests and a fascination with British television, both past and present. However, on a deeper level, and as the Black Lives Matter social media movement indicates, much is also shared and recognised in our different histories, politics and struggles. In 2016, Black Lives Matter activism – an articulation of anti-racist Black politics – seeped across from the USA to the UK. The politics of racisms, and indeed anti-racisms, that each country continues to be entwined in, along with the ways our respective media has the power to both reproduce and challenge such politics at this supposed post-racial time, is especially germane to what is actually a highly perceptible racialised contemporary climate.

But in any case, the UK has typically been at the forefront of public and scholarly debates around the politics of media representation and diversity in contemporary Europe. PSB was pioneered in the UK in the

1920s and has, since then, operated a particularly strong, civic-minded and globally recognised public service paradigm. By contrast, US broadcasting has been more overtly commercial in its frameworks and imperatives and, as Timothy Havens reminds us, increasingly seeks revenues abroad, including for the circulation of particular kinds of popular versions of African American 'blackness'. From its deep origins and first principles to its current reviews and repositioning, the public purposes that have underpinned UK PSB have been a major source of fascination beyond national boundaries. American scholars have, for example, long deconstructed and questioned the onus of public service undertaken by the BBC during its inauguration. Notable analyses of British television have been provided by Michele Hilmes, Darrell Newton, Christine Becker, and Jeffery S. Miller, among others.[14] Direct comparisons and contrasts have often been drawn within this work, of public service television origins and those of commercially driven networks in the USA – networks that began years before the advent of ITV in 1955. A principal concern within the literature has been the perceptions of American audiences who have long gleaned their ideas of British culture from a variety of radio broadcasts, and imported television programmes. These have included timeless favourites such as *The Prisoner* (Everyman/ITC, 1967–68), *The Avengers* (ITV/ABC, 1961–68) and the immensely popular *Doctor Who* (BBC, 1963–present).

As suggested by Michele Hilmes, national broadcasters such as America's A and E, ABC and CBS television networks have found it simpler to import popular foreign television shows at a relatively low cost, to place public funding into what she deems, 'original, nationally specific programs'.[15] It is also essential to note the co-production of many documentary and dramatic programmes, particularly in the 1970s, at first primarily for the public-service market. As independent broadcasting grew in the UK during the 1990s, Hilmes notes how digital platforms quickly created a 'new normal' of high-end co-productions. These have been particularly popular in the UK and the USA.[16] This continuing relationship between the UK and the USA highlights transnationalism, global audiences and cooperative productions, but also cultural engagement on an international scale; leading to the kind of further research this text seeks to initiate and subsequently interrogate.

There are, of course, wider domains around which contemporary debates about race and the media are taking place and which suggest that the focus of this collection is especially timely. We can loosely organise these into the following categories: the socio-cultural, the industrial and the regulatory, although we also understand these as interconnected terrains. The first falls to broader social, cultural and political developments that have called to question precisely what 'Britishness' is, and the media's role in framing such understandings. The most specific way in which this issue has not just surfaced, but shaken the UK to the core, is through the EU referendum that took place in June 2016. The result of that referendum demonstrated that nearly 52 per cent of the population wanted to leave the European Union (EU). While the hopes and motivations for such a desire to pull back from our European neighbours may have been diverse, and been driven by compelling, self-governing narratives around 'taking back control' – often fuelled by the more commercial aspects of the UK media, and most notably the UK tabloid press – what has materialised is a new mode of isolationism, a marked increase in hostility towards ethnic minorities and accompanying anti-immigration rhetoric, and a retreat towards a 'Little England' mentality.

The enactment of the EU 'in' or 'out' debates themselves and how these were mobilised and framed, also points to the significance and, indeed, power of the media in the processes whereby overlapping public identities are constructed and transformed; shaping public understandings of who we are and who we want to be as a nation. These seismic developments have coincided in the 2000s with a strong retreat from multiculturalism, a new discourse of global terrorism and terror/securitisation agenda, and a highly charged political climate wherever it touches on questions of racial and, increasingly, religious difference.[17] The ascent of Donald Trump to the US presidency in November 2016, just weeks after the 'Brexit' vote in June has highlighted new political commonalities hinged on new modes of nationalism and anti-immigration sentiment. Both of these events are of deep significance, described as a 'whitelash' energised by a move towards a politics of popular authoritarianism in which minority groups are increasingly being demonised. But there are also deep practical effects of these political developments. For example, on an operational level, the momentous implications of a 'Brexit' vote for UK PSB's relationship with European states outside a single market model are potentially huge and damaging.[18] In the USA, the role of the traditional news media has come under intense scrutiny and criticism, both by President Trump, but also be diverse publics who are pushing for more accountability and a questioning of the relationship between value, democracy and process.

Alongside these wider current political predicaments that suggest a move towards an exclusionary mode of politics, for the UK creative industries themselves, there is widespread agreement that not enough is being done to be sufficiently inclusive; specifically in terms of a crisis of diversity that is now apparent within the cultural industries. So the second domain pertains to industrial concerns that have been significant in the unveiling, and yet continued fact, of intense levels of inequality in the television sector. Another dimension that appears to be symptomatic of these deliberations about inequalities, shifting viewing habits among audiences and the cultures of production is what has been termed, 'Black flight' – where Black directorial and acting talent is actually moving to the USA for recognition and career progression, particularly to work in dramatic feature films, but also in prime-time drama series. Idris Elba and Naomie Harris (*Mandela*), Chiwetel Ejiofor and Steve McQueen (*12 Years a Slave*), Biyi Bandele (*Half of a Yellow Sun*), Amma Asante (*Belle*), Richard Ayoade (*The Double*), David Oyelowo (*Selma*), Archie Panjabi (*The Good Wife*, CBS) and Marianne Jean-Baptiste (*Without a Trace*, CBS) are all such examples. For Jean-Baptiste, Britain's first Black Oscar nominee for her performance in Mike Leigh's *Secrets & Lies* in 1996, the problem can be defined in one word: opportunity; a problem which also resonates for many of these Black and Asian actors who have moved between film and television roles within PSB and more commercial television projects. Jean-Baptiste says that,

> There needs to be more film directors of colour. They bandy about the word diversity a lot, but when I say of colour, I mean Asian, black, I mean people of *all* colour. We need to have those voices given the opportunity, not told that their films will not be distributed or will not sell well abroad. It's a very, very tricky subject, and it's one that I'm tired of.[19]

These predicaments about systemic inequalities and an opportunity gap in the UK general media sector are now very familiar. In 2013, the BBC's most senior Black executive, Pat Younge, echoed BBC Director General Tony Hall's concerns at an earlier select committee meeting: the BBC was not doing enough to provide programmes that Black audiences would find relevant.[20] At the time, Hall called for 'plans … in how we reach those audiences'.[21] Younge highlighted the efforts put into employment and portrayal on screen in prime-time television leading to some real gains. However he also identified significant problems with both story lines that often do not resonate with Black audiences, and also with a white commissioning elite stronghold. He noted the lack of Black, powerful decision-makers in television, such as budget controllers, channel controllers and senior commissioners.

The Creative Skillset Employment Census (2012) indicated a significant drop in the proportion of BAME people working in the creative industries in the previous decade.[22] Between 2006 and 2012, Black, Asian and minority ethnic representation in the creative industries had declined by 30.9 per cent, to 5.4 per cent, the lowest figure since the body started taking the census. There has also been a decrease in BAME working specifically in TV. Figures fell from 9 per cent in 2009 to 7.5 per cent in 2012. At a diversity summit at the BAFTA headquarters in London in November 2013, Simon Albury, former Chief Executive of the Royal Television Society, said that diversity has become a game of 'pass the parcel'; it has no permanent leadership that is devoted to changing the industry. Since 2014, an important set of discussions about culture, value and inequality has partly been triggered by evidence of this still strong under-representation of BAME employees in the industry, raising questions about still unresolved inequalities within the structure of the creative industries at large, and about how best to tackle this.

As pointed out in the Warwick Commission on Cultural Value, 'representation of people with a disability, women and ethnic minorities in the cultural workforce has deteriorated over the last five years'.[23] Such depressing figures have triggered new campaigns to improve diversity within public service television – and in the light of the Creative Skillset findings, this has been targeted at tackling diversity in the workforce. In 2014, for example, the BBC introduced the Diversity Creative Talent Fund for projects to promote BAME employment and on-screen representation. On-screen targets have also been set up, including a 15 per cent target for on-screen BAME in 2017, the progress of which is measured by an on-screen diversity-monitoring tool (DIAMOND).[24]

One of the ways that these concerns have been carried forward relates to regulatory issues, which leads us to the third domain that we briefly consider here. The founding pillars of PSB – independence, universality, citizenship and quality[25] – are under intense scrutiny. Prior to its renewal in 2016, the actor and comedian Sir Lenny Henry, along with a large number of campaigners,[26] called for the BBC Royal Charter to better embed diversity into its remit. Henry's campaign called for a structural response to better represent communities, just as the BBC has responded to better representing nations and regions since it first identified a problem there in 2003. This would involve ring-fencing money specifically for BAME productions.[27] Henry, among others, noted how, in 2014, BSkyB pledged that by 2015, at least 20 per cent of writers and actors of UK-originated TV shows would come from a Black, Asian or other minority ethnic background. For many, this effort was considered more far-reaching than the BBC's plans to increase BAME on-screen representation to 15 per cent over a period of three years. Henry and others criticised the dismal percentage of Black and Asian people in the creative industries, and cast doubts over the BBC's plans ever coming to fruition without specified investment designated for ethnic minorities.[28]

The BBC Charter Review in 2016 stressed an improvement in audience appreciation and performance figures, and the organisation proudly reported that 'positive steps' in regards to diversity and representation had been taken in the form of proposals to enhance the World Service. However, the Review also noted that specific diversity obligations for the BBC and disparities in levels of service could be addressed through more representative employment, including BAME employment, and that departments must take an obligatory look at business and production units and their accurate reflection of the population demographics 'where they are based'.[29] As it turned out, the 2016 Charter Review more overtly entrenched diversity into its future strategy, placing diversity within the new Charter's purposes, and noting a 'new overall commitment to ensuring the BBC serves all audiences', and remaining a major advocate for representing diversity both on screen and behind the cameras. The problem remains, however, of how to make meaningful diversity interventions and encourage deeper, more critical ways of opening up debates around cultural representation, rather than 'quick-fix' solutions such as specialist diversity training or placing more BAME faces on, or indeed off, screen.

New claims and campaigns to improve diversity in these ways implicitly register the actual difficulties and contestations around how to produce real change within our public media. They also call into question the legitimacy and real impact of devising quantitative strategies to tackle deeper, structural inequalities, cultural bias and the kinds of cultural representations that end up being produced and, indeed, where they end up being placed in the schedules (see Saha's discussion in Chapter 2 of this volume). Nevertheless, it is also worth remembering that lobbying and debates about training and access for Britain's Black cultural workers helped to prepare the ground for the formation of Channel 4 which was heavily campaigned for by those who realised the importance of introducing a third space to the BBC and ITV duopoly. In 1982, the channel's commitment to 'say new things in new ways', its minority-based rationale formally inscribed in a Multicultural Programmes Department, along with its commitment to independent filmmaking, meant that it could offer a new form of cultural support to Black British film and programme-makers.[30]

Given the stealthy rise of commercial imperatives for 'serving audiences', reference should also be made here to the currently very fragile relationship between BAME audiences and PSB provision. A 2015 report by the UK media regulator, Ofcom, identified a marked concern among minority audiences about the ways in which they are represented on television, which suggests a deep sense of dissatisfaction and exclusion.[31] Further, when considering the rapid decline in television viewing by younger audiences in this new media world, it should be noted that many are choosing instead to watch on-demand services such as the BBC's iPlayer, Netflix and Amazon. Ofcom notes a 'widening gap' between younger and older viewers with a considerable reduction in television viewing, with the most significant drop being among the 16–24-year-old demographic.[32] This loss of traditional television viewership is just one of the many market challenges that PSB is currently implicated in. These socio-cultural, regulatory and market developments have raised new quandaries about the relationship among 'race', diversity and media culture. For all these current critiques of what it could be doing better and how, the status of public service television as a cultural form, 'public good' and democratic form of public service content provision is strongly defended by multiple publics, campaigners and, indeed, scholars.[33]

Focus of the collection

Through contextual and textual analyses, this collection explores a range of contexts and practices that address the ongoing phenomenon of 'race' and its specific relationship with public service television. Chapters address questions of textual representation and the ways in which meanings associated with cultural diversity are made on screen, such as that of the 'racial Other'. Further, authors address how television is implicated in such constructions. The analysis is broad-ranging and overlaps the concerns of media studies, sociology, cultural history, visual culture, film and television studies, cultural studies and race and ethnicity studies, reflecting television studies' 'disciplinary hybridity and continuing debate about how to conceptualise the object of study "television"'.[34] Contributions are diverse, ranging from the role of scheduling in 'race management' to how transnational relationships between the UK and USA are forged, and from key historical questions of representation to textual interpretations of race and 'blackness' in recent popular programming.

There is also a shared interest across the contributions in historiography, in reflecting on and bringing into view critical historical – albeit fairly recent – moments in what has been a fascinating and complex journey of cultural representation. This attempt to historicise some of the landmark moments in one collection represents an intervention on two fronts. First, there has, as John Corner notes, been a lack of 'historical scholarship on programme culture of British television' and this collection insists on catching moments and issues that reveal the complexities of the relationship among 'race', representation and television.[35] And second, as already indicated, studies of Black representations on British television have themselves been further marginalised, even within historical television studies, pointing to the existence of a deep cultural amnesia in how the Black presence in Britain has itself been historicised.[36]

Chapters deal primarily, although not exclusively, with the 1990s to the early 2010s, a period that has seen significant shifts both in terms of how PSB is framed and operates, but also in emergent discourses around what it means to be 'Black and Minority Ethnic' in the UK today. So while there is a strong impulse to 'look back' in what is presented here, the chapters are produced within, and are informed by, what is now a new age of television, replete with digital services, streaming and on-demand downloads. For us, it is precisely the speed and capacity of today's cultural turnover that intensifies the educational, social and political value of looking back.

So the collection offers an opportunity to pause and reflect on some of the landmark television moments in this intricate history. How have minority ethnic communities been represented on public service television, how do constructions of 'race', difference and multiculturalism shape our understandings of the nation and who we are? There is a relaxed approach to terminology, particularly respectful to the often divergent UK and US styles of presentation. In any case, categories and terminology around 'race' are themselves socially constructed and can further produce racial and cultural stereotyping.[37] Recognising these confines, we use BAME, 'people of colour', 'visible minorities', Black, Brown, Asian, but are always aware of the surrounding debates about their relevance and value. When we use 'Black', it is used as a collective political working term to refer to those of African, Caribbean and South Asian descent, although we accept its limitations several decades on from the original anti-racist struggles in the 1970s and 1980s that gave rise to this umbrella political term that was used within UK, and indeed US anti-racist campaigns and strategies. We also use 'Asian' when referring to those specifically from the Indian sub-continent. 'Race' does not simply refer to what has traditionally been understood as comprising the 'new communities', but is used as an analytical concept referring to the social construction of ideas related to different ethnic and cultural groups and formations. As many of the chapters highlight, 'race' intersects with a range of variables including class, religion, gender and sexuality. We also recognise that a larger emphasis in this book is on the specific representations that have materialised in relation to African Caribbeans in the UK, although many of the issues of representation are also pertinent to South Asian communities.

Together, the chapters help us to reflect on the framing of 'race' in wider contexts of production, but specifically in fictional genres, and most extensively in drama. As well as providing a potential space where 'racial typing' is challenged, drama has also provided a significant genre for debates around cultural representation. Examples would include multicultural content, integrated casting, narrative diversity and minority access. In 2016, much was made of the BBC drama, *Undercover*, because it featured two Black lead actors, Sophie Okonedo and Adrian Lester in a prime-time slot, and it was heavily promoted as a breakthrough. These kinds of historical television studies serve to remind us that there have been a few 'Black British television dramas' over the years, ranging from *Man from the Sun* (BBC, 1956) to *Luther* (BBC, 2010–) in which there have been Black leads, again pointing to the common gaps that tend to appear in media memories.

All the chapters present contemporary and up-to-date positions regarding conceptual debates, critical interventions and case studies. Bringing together a range of international scholars to explore questions of race and television is still, remarkably, virtually unknown. The significance is in presenting a diverse variety of perspectives and angles that together make a significant contribution to understanding how to research race critically and what the objects of analysis can be. All the contributors, even given the disciplines that they cross, also operate from a similar critical media and cultural studies perspective, and there is a unified endeavour to question assumptions and to provoke evaluation of the relationships we might have with different television programmes. The range of fictional examples and case studies presented here range from perhaps, more 'obvious' examples such as *Shoot the Messenger* and *Top Boy* to *Doctor Who* and *Call the Midwife*. Contributors, alongside textual analysis, also address issues of cultural production.

Chapter overview

The collection begins with Darrell Newton's chapter, which outlines how current studies of transnationalism highlight the importance of contemporary information societies, and the global consortiums of transnational corporations. Of particular interest to this research is BBC America; a channel launched in March 1998 via BBC Worldwide and its multi-million dollar partnership with Discovery Communications, launching several channels as global joint ventures. This chapter examines BBC America as a digital cable channel within the USA that offers a smattering of British comedies, sci-fi, reality programming and news for American audiences. The channel's advertising campaign identifies itself as 'eminently watchable programming' that 'pushes the boundaries to deliver high quality, highly addictive' programmes that are a 'little Brit different'. While the BBC seeks to increase revenues through its programme library, the offerings on BBC America feature shows that seemingly represent a Britain devoid of Black and Brown faces other than the occasional character actor or sidekick. Absent are controversial, yet thought-provoking BBC dramas such as *Holding On* (1997), *Babyfather* (2001) and *Shoot the Messenger* (2006), and other programmes featuring multiracial casting.

While the intention of BBC America may be to avoid heavier, thought-provoking dramas for lighter fare, the omission of these narratives seemingly contradicts efforts initiated by then Director General Greg Dyke to incorporate more diversity in programming and hiring practices (phenomena discussed in the chapter); a prime component of post-millennial cosmopolitanism. For Newton, this matter is particularly disconcerting when considering BBC's historic public service doctrine and its chosen responsibility of cultural education and integration. As BBC America interprets its notions of traditional programming for American tastes, its choices merely offer the occasional character of colour as an inoculation of the racial other, not as a naturalised part of British society. Within the collection, it is Newton's chapter that most directly addresses transnationalism and its associated politics and tensions.

The point in Newton's chapter about the cultural exclusions that perpetuate in these transnational politics –in spite of widespread expectations of PSB's status, as an instrument of cultural integration within PSB – is one that recurs in various ways within the book. While all the chapter address questions of production, representation and reception, using a range of approaches, Anamik Saha's focus on television scheduling provides a critical perspective because it reminds us how representation can be examined not just with regard to what is on screen, but also in how it gets there. Again, the point about what is – and what is not – included in prime-time public service television is significant. Saha explores, through a critical analysis of literature and new empirical research, how cultures of production steer the work of minority producers in ways that produce racialised tropes. He reminds us of the prevalence and persistence of traditional forms of television – and indeed traditional forms of viewing – in everyday practices in households in the UK. Saha talks about the marginalisation of representations of British South Asians, not just in terms of what is commissioned, but also in the hour in which certain programmes get scheduled. The focus is on the conditions of television production, produced through a dynamic among political economic structures, cultural policy, public service remits and wider discourses of multiculturalism and worker agency. It takes as a case study the scheduling of 'Asian' programming, including *Desi DNA* (BBC, 2003–), *Goodness Gracious Me* (BBC, 1998–2015), and *Indian Food Made Easy* (BBC, 2007–10), and focuses on the ways in which cultural producers feel their work is in the hands of schedulers, who effectively determine whether the programme in question will get attention or not. Based upon interviews with directors and producers, conducted by Saha, the chapter argues that schedulers – themselves working in increasingly commercialised and constraining cultures of production – have an indirect, though sometimes direct, effect on the type of narratives on race that enter the mainstream. The chapter usefully explores the politics of 'tick-boxing' especially in regard to public service remits. It therefore moves beyond the idea that we need more 'positive' representations of minorities on TV, in order to argue that bigger structural change is needed first if we are to achieve this.

Leading on from these two chapters, which provide a critical interrogation of some of the wider contexts of BAME representations, the collection assembles a range of discussions that focus on specific screen representations and position these in relation to wider social, cultural and political contexts. Dealing with especially timely themes around nostalgia, imagined communities and the nation, James Burton's chapter takes us back to reflect on how race is constructed on recent British television productions – including *The Bletchley Circle* (ITV, 2012–14), *Call the Midwife* (BBC, 2012–), *The Hour* (BBC, 2011–13) – that are set during the 1950s and purport to present a corrective to established notions of the nation at that time.

Contrary to the nostalgia that many Britons have for the post-Second World War era, Chris Waters has argued that attempts to secure the imagined community of nation amid a time of rapid change and uncertainty in 1950s Britain depended on reworking established tropes of little Englandism against the migrant other. Although ostensibly concerned with asserting gender politics, Burton argues that these series speak volumes about race and immigration both explicitly and implicitly. Where discussions of 'heritage' programming often descend into reductive categorisation and knee-jerk mockery, this chapter critically interrogates the anti-nostalgic impulses of this programming, as well as the heroically rose-tinted version of the past that they often represent. The chapter further analyses the promotional discourses that surround, and subsequently shape, the reception of their narratives. Additionally, of central concern are the politics of representation and the dynamics of race that are present in, as well as absent from, these stories and how such dynamics speak to present-day racism, xenophobia and immigration debates.

Continuing the book's interest in issues of representation, Sarita Malik discusses the 2006 BBC drama *Shoot the Messenger*, based on the psychological journey of a Black school teacher, Joe Pascale, accused of assaulting a Black male pupil. The allegation triggers Joe's mental breakdown which is articulated, through Joe's first-person narration, as a vindictive loathing of Black people. In turn, a range of typical stereotypical characterisations and discourses based on a Black culture of hypocrisy, blame and entitlement are presented. Malik suggests that the text is therefore laid wide open to a critique of its neo-conservatism and hegemonic narratives of Black Britishness. However, she argues that the drama's representation of Black mental illness opens up the potential to interpret *Shoot the Messenger* as a critique of social inequality and the destabilising effects of living with *ethicised* social categories. The chapter considers audience reactions to the drama alongside the commissioning and production contexts. The aim of the analysis is to reclaim this controversial text as a radical drama and examine its implications for, and within, a critical cultural politics of 'race' and black representation.

Staying with British television's preoccupation with the Black/male/criminality nexus, Kehinde Andrews examines the Channel 4 'urban drama', *Top Boy* (Channel 4, 2011–13), Andrews draws on Elijah Anderson's work which explains that 'the ghetto is where "the Black people live", symbolising an impoverished, crime-prone, drug-infested, and violent area of the city.' Andrews suggests that, in the American context, such representations have become so pervasive that the ghetto has become an iconic feature of African American representation, whereby to be Black is synonymous in the popular imaginary with being 'ghetto'. For Andrews, Britain does not have as many reference points for Black culture on the small screen as the USA, but the iconic ghetto still features heavily in the representation of Black Britons. He comments that young Black men, in particular, are associated with crime and street violence in the British media. The chapter outlines how, while there are very few predominantly Black-cast television programmes on British television, those in recent years have all been concerned with stories from the 'iconic ghetto', for example, *Dubplate Drama* (Channel 4, 2005–7) and *Youngers* (E4, 2013–14). Channel 4's *Top Boy,* based on the story of a drug gang on an inner city estate in London, has been the most high profile. The chapter analyses and applies the key features of the iconic ghetto using *Top Boy* as an example of how these tropes appear on British television. Andrews concludes that the problem of representation is not just that there are so few spaces on British television, but also that the available space is also narrowly filtered through this representational lens of the iconic ghetto.

Just as Malik's chapter on *Shoot the Messenger* and Andrews's chapter on *Top Boy*, offer an in-depth analysis of particular texts, Susana Loza focuses on the case of the globally recognised BBC series, *Doctor Who* (BBC, 1963–). Loza suggest that the series has been fabricating and exporting British racial fears and fantasies across the globe since the 1960s. By utilising an interdisciplinary amalgam of critical ethnic studies, media studies, cultural studies and post-colonial theory, her chapter examines how the 2005 reboot of the classic series utilises deracialised and decontextualised slavery allegories to absolve white guilt over the transatlantic slave trade. Loza argues that the narrative reinforces xenophobic anxieties about post-colonial Britishness through the reinforcement of black racial stereotypes and by bolstering white privilege in demanding that viewers adopt the series' colour-blind liberal humanist standpoint. By carefully examining the imperial fictions and post-racial slavery parables of *Doctor Who*, she illuminates the programme's 'structural opacities', how its colour-blind universalism sustains and nourishes the boundaries of contemporary whiteness and colonial consciousness, and the full place of race in multicultural and ostensibly postcolonial Britain.

The myth of a multicultural England in BBC's *Luther* (BBC, 2010–15) is the focus of Nicole Jackson's chapter. In the run-up to BBC America's broadcast of the second season of Neil Cross's famed drama, the American press cast the titular character, John Luther, played by Idris Elba, within a long line of quirky, dark detectives who also seemed to be fading from US television screens. For Jackson, Luther's intuition was as spot-on as his personal life was a wreck. While a mild success in both countries when it debuted in 2010, the series became a cult classic, gaining a considerable following through word of mouth and social media. For all its commercial success, Jackson argues that one cannot view *Luther*, its characters or London as its backdrop, outside of history. Rather, she encourages a reading of John Luther's 'man-on-the-edge' within a historical development of London as a racially diverse city and the battles over the multiculturalism that this diversity precipitates. John Luther, she claims, stands in as the representative of a police force with a long history of antagonism with Black and Asian communities. London's modern-day reputation as a racially and ethnically diverse metropolis often obscures the racial antagonism within the city, much of which has centred on the police who often serve as gatekeepers of the nation. Luther's London is a place where race has ceased to matter; a tall tale with a long life. Thus, the absence of race in the show becomes curious in context.

Jackson reminds us that in the official reports on the 1981 Brixton disorders and Stephen Lawrence's 1999 murder, the authors posited that remaking the relationship between the police and Black and Asian communities was essential to improving race relations in the city. She outlines how the Metropolitan Police was encouraged to hire ethnic minority officers, but despite repeated recruitment schemes, officers of African and Asian descent have not flocked to the profession in droves and, in some quarters, beliefs that police are racist have not changed very much. Thus, besides the representation of a genius detective and man 'gazing into the abyss', Jackson's chapter urges an interrogation of how *Luther* signifies long-held myths about race, citizenship and nation in England. One of the myths about multiculturalism was that Black and Asian people could become part of the body politic by accentuating their Britishness and de-accentuating as many markers of 'foreign origin' as possible. Thus, John Luther is never a Black copper, in that blackness itself, with its ties to former colonies, has been inextricably linked to foreignness and the drama presents him as an example of the positive assimilative model. This chapter views Luther through the lens of multiculturalism to mean assimilation, rather than a potentially transformative radical process, where Luther's black body displaces historical and present-day complaints of institutional police racism, which makes race, as a lived reality, invisible; seemingly the ultimate goal of institutional multiculturalism.

Gavin Schaffer, while also considering fictional constructions, offers a close-up analysis of the comedy genre and formulations of race. His chapter examines the uses of race, immigration and multiculturalism as comic themes in British television sitcoms from the 1960s to the 1980s. Looking in depth at popular programmes such as *Till Death Us Do Part* (BBC, 1965–75), *Love Thy Neighbour* (Thames, 1972–76), *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* (BBC, 1976–81) and *Mind Your Language* (LWT, 1977–86), Schaffer argues that the genre of the racial sitcom privileged white constructions of racial difference and stifled the development of Black and Asian British comedy. Nonetheless, in the face of ambivalent attitudes and racism, Schaffer suggests that important comedy representations did begin to emerge in this period. This effort initially began through programmes such as *The Fosters* (LWT, 1976–77), which although it was not Black-British written, at least began to foreground black comedy talent such as Lenny Henry, Norman Beaton and Carmen Munroe. Building from these modest foundations, programmes such as *No Problem!* (LWT, 1983–85), *Desmond's* (Channel 4, 1989–94) and *The Lenny Henry Show* (BBC, 1984–85, 1987–88) slowly began to give voice to a wider experience of black and Asian British comedy. Simultaneously, he argues, these narratives wrestled black and Asian comedic constructions away from discourses of essential difference and racial exoticism. By using these programmes as its core source, the chapter considers the importance of humour and laughter as sites of struggle in multicultural British society; reflecting on the meaning of jokes and who tells them, and the thinking behind television comedies. Finally, it evaluates the significance that has been, and might be, placed on the laughter of television audiences.

As all of these chapters demonstrate, there is no simple progress model, in terms of how televisual representations of 'Blackness' and lived multiculture develop. Recent developments in relation to, for example, the renewed Royal Charter, suggest that there is still much to do in order to build a more racially representative and inclusive public service media culture and a large degree of contestation about how best to achieve this. All of the chapters presented in this small collection encourage us to read and re-read the important ways in which 'race', identity and difference are imagined and positioned in our national culture through public service content. The potential value is in helping us to better understand our historical and contemporary representations as well thinking ahead about the future that we want for our public service television.

Notes

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