

Nothing but the Same Old Story?

Britain's Wars on Irish and Islamic Terror

Ann Rossiter

When the Danish *Jyllands-Posten* cartoons controversy broke in September 2005 over the representation of the prophet Mohammed as a terrorist, and signalled another round of the War on Terror, sighs of despair and expressions of *déjà vu* could be heard from many Irish in Britain who felt they smelt a rat. It seemed only yesterday that British newspapers were churning out an unrelenting diet of vicious anti-Irish cartoons at the height of another War on Terror, conducted by the British state from the 1970s to the 1990s, or for the duration of what is euphemistically known as “the Troubles.” Many of these were of a sexual or religious nature, depicting the Irish as having a highly developed taste for anarchy and violence, as well as a propensity for ‘thickness’ or stupidity. Word on the Irish street in Britain had it that, far from being a matter of harmless fun, these jokes were part of the British counter-terrorism propaganda arsenal, honed in theatres of war as far afield as Aden, Burma, Kenya and Malaya, and perfected by Brigadier General, Sir Frank Kitson (1971).

The “jokes” in question tended to be of the order of: “Did you hear the one about the Irish rapist who tied his victims legs together to stop her running away?”, or the limerick, “Paddy is a moron—spud thick Mick/Breeds like a rabbit—thinks with his prick/Anything floors him if he can’t fight or drink it.”¹ It has to be said that such *Paddywhackery*, or whacking “Paddy” (Mick and Paddy being archetypal Irishmen), failed to excite a national frenzy and collective hand-wringing on matters like freedom of expression in Britain, as has the recent spate of Muslim-baiting. This is in no small measure due to the fact the Irish Question (aka the Irish Problem) has hardly the same geopolitical and economic import as the Muslim Question. Nonetheless, the impact on the ground in Britain has proved to be depressingly similar in both cases: heterogeneous groups of people summarily designated cultural “others.” cast in the mould of criminal and suspect communities, and exhorted to look no further than themselves for the source of “the problem.”

As has been widely reported across the world, only two days after the London bombings of July 7, 2005, Tony Blair sourced “the problem” or, as he saw it, the existential threat to the British way of life, as residing in large measure in the heartland of British Islam, and declared: “In the end, terrorism can only be taken on

and defeated by the [Muslim] community itself.” This declaration marked the beginning of a wave of censure and exhortation fielded by the political establishment, dutifully shored up by the media, and couched in the language of a dangerous Islamophobia. Effectively, the blame and the burden of responsibility for the bombing was being laid on an *imagined* British Muslim community that includes significant numbers who are non-observant. British Muslims total about one-and-a-half million, encompass fifty-six ethnic groups, speak almost one hundred different languages, and have a social and economic profile that includes the poorest and most disadvantaged sections of British society, as well as the richest and most privileged (5,400 are said to be millionaires).² Added to these differentiating features are the many variants of Sunni and Shia Islam and their attendant theological and political divergence, which have representation in Britain. Understandably, these divergences stretch the concept of the *Ummat*, or the idealised universal Muslim family, to the breaking point, not only in Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Islamic world, but also in Britain.

With little regard for such disparities political establishment figures have weighed in and exhorted British Muslims collectively to keep “a close eye” (widely perceived as “spying”) on their children. Police, town hall chiefs, teachers and academics in “Muslim hotspots” have been ordered to identify universities, schools and mosques where young Muslim or “Asian looking” students are said to be brainwashed by fundamentalist radicals. The apartheid nature of Muslim (not Catholic, Protestant, Sikh, Hindu or Jewish) faith schools has been questioned. This is despite such schools having been a central plank of Tony Blair’s version of multiculturalism, i.e. integration or even assimilation through the promotion of religious identity, an experiment deemed successful with earlier waves of Jewish and Irish immigrants. Muslim police officers’ allegiance to the British state has been doubted. Above all, women’s wearing of the *niqab* (face veil) designated by Britain’s former foreign minister, Jack Straw, as a mark of social separation, has subsequently become a sacking matter and grounds for denial of education, etc. etc., the list goes on and on. Physical and verbal attacks on individuals and on property, especially on mosques, have become a commonplace news item. Together with a whole raft of new anti-terrorism

laws, the extent of this offensive, or open season on Muslims, moved the distinguished Jewish journalist Jonathan Freedland (2006), sensing a pogrom coming on, to muse:

I've been trying to imagine what it must be like to be a Muslim in Britain. I guess there's a sense of dread about switching on the radio or television, even about walking into a newsagent. What will they be saying about us today? Will we be under assault for the way we dress? Or the schools we go to, or the mosques we build? Who will be on the front page: a terror suspect, a woman in a veil or, the best of both worlds, a veiled terror suspect...? If this onslaught was about Jews, I would be looking for my passport.

Old and new "green perils"

The welter of information ever hitting us from multi-media sources has ensured that we are now all privy to the doings of Al-Qaeda, to the personal quirks of its main players—even those of their wives³—to the complexities of the origin, content and scope of the ideological virus called radical or political Islam, said to replicate itself anywhere there are angry young men and internet connections. Not only these, but the fine distinctions in Islam between, say, the Shia and Sunni, not to mention strains like Wahhabism⁴, are fast becoming part of our everyday language. However, the threat of violence apart, we are still foraging in the undergrowth for explanations for the speed of the rise and the depth of anti-Islamic sentiment or Islamophobia in Britain and elsewhere in Europe. In a recent study of French Islam, for instance, Jonathan Laurence and Justin Vaisse (2006) suggest that plain, old-fashioned racism or xenophobia directed indiscriminately against dark-skinned people may be at play, rather than Islamophobia as such. Ian Buruma (2006), in searching for answers in his native Holland following the ritual murder of the filmmaker and provocative critic of Muslim culture, Theo van Gogh, pinpoints the widespread anger at the reintroduction of religion into the public discourse and the questioning of gay and women's rights, something the majority of the Dutch had "painfully wrested themselves free from" beginning in the 1960s.

In Britain, a similar simmering discontent had pervaded Left and feminist circles during the Troubles over the issue of Irish nationalism (seen in Britain as virtually synonymous with political Catholicism), rejected out of hand as a diversion from class struggle by the former, and from the real business of women's liberation by the latter. After all, the British (English, Scots, and Welsh, but *not* Northern Irish Protestant Unionists) have gone to some trouble to cast off a past laced, not only with nationalism, but also with the jingoism of imperialism so brutally displayed in the carnage that was the First World War. Unsurprisingly, therefore, there has been hearty applause for Tom Nairn's acerbic characterisation of all (ethnic, civic, etc.) nationalism(s) as "the pathology of modern development history... inescapable as neurosis in the individual... [with a] built-in capacity for

descent into dementia" (1977:359).

The increasing use of a religious paradigm (Christian vs. Muslim) to explain societal and political issues, especially where the security agenda of European Union states (and increasingly of Britain and Ireland), and the consequent removal of civil liberties, is an explanation for the depth of Islamophobia offered by Liz Fekete (2006:1-22). She writes that a realigned Right, composed of post-fascists and even some social democrats, is influencing state powers to reinforce fears of the "alien horde" and to put into place legal and administrative structures that discriminate against Muslims. These are aimed at limiting the rights of existing citizens and long-term residents to family unification, especially through citizenship, loyalty and integration tests which include questions on belief and attitudes towards religious freedom, equality of the sexes, promiscuity, freedom of expression, the concept of honour killings, forced marriages and homosexuality. She cites questions such as, "Imagine that your adult son comes home and says he is homosexual and plans to live with another man. How do you react?", posed to a Turkish candidate for German citizenship.

In tandem with immigration control programmes and integration measures is the rise of a new phenomenon called "Eurabia" which is fuelling the notion that Muslim immigrants pose a threat to "Judeo-Christian" civilisation stemming from supposedly incompatible cultural values. As Matt Carr (2006: 1-22), writing on how terrorism has transformed the modern world, recounts, the notion of "Eurabia" began long before 9/11 as a batty conspiracy theory being peddled by trans-Atlantic neocons and arch-Zionists. In this nightmare scenario haunting the European imagination is the depiction of a continent doomed and spiritually exhausted from its pursuit of secular humanism, and fast being transformed into the Islamic colony of Eurabia which is anti-American, anti-Semitic and anti-Israel, replete with *sharia* law, shrouded females, etc. In Britain, it is thanks to the efforts of the *Daily Mail* columnist and author of *Londonistan* (2006), Melanie Phillips, the late Italian journalist, Oriana Fallaci (2003), and the novelist, Martin Amis (2006), in particular, that such views have been widely propagated and passed into the mainstream. Despite the shakiness of the evidence, the Eurabian construct has also gained serious scholarly support, not least that of the eminent British right-wing historian, Niall Ferguson, well-known on both sides of the Pond for his fervent support for a new American empire, and infamous for decrying the establishment of a department of Islamic studies in his Oxford college.⁵

In this Eurabian universe, Christianity's historic *jihad*⁶ against the "green peril" is frequently invoked, beginning with the First Crusade of 1096 and progressing to the sack of Constantinople in 1204. Furthermore, it is recalled that this *jihad* was only successfully brought to a close at the gates of Vienna in 1683 (the latter being

cited as one of the reasons for Austria's opposition to Turkey's membership in the European Union). In the light of this history, irrational fear of Muslims is nothing new. As Benjamin Balthaser (2004: 10-15) has argued, the traditional image of the Arab [or Muslims generally] has long been one of dread of the unknown, coupled with contempt for a decadent and decaying Orient in need of a strong civilising, paternal hand. Orientalism, however, is not simply about having prejudices, dislikes, or suspicions about alien "others." It is, to quote Edward Said, "a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (1979: 3). In short, it is the cultural apparatus that has been evolved to maintain control over the Orient and its resources. In recent decades, however, Balthaser contends that the dominant image of the near-Orient has shifted to a radically different one of the fundamentalist Islamic terrorist, reinforced through an endless stream of media stories, and recycled in a spate of Hollywood blockbuster films from *Delta Force* (1986) to *Rules of Engagement* (2000). The export of this terror to Western heartlands translates in Eurabianist terms to: "more Muslim Europeans means more terrorists," a blatantly ideological manoeuvre which casts Muslim immigrants as an incipient terrorist fifth column, stripped of their humanity and racialized, as have the Irish in Britain.

Old fears of another "green peril" haunted the British assault on a perceived fifth column in its midst during the War on Irish Terror, and was also one that carried a religious impress, this time Protestantism vs. Catholicism. Anti-popery, as well as the atavism and reactionary nature of Catholicism, became an organising principle of a worldview emanating from 16th-century England, the Netherlands, Scotland and Switzerland. However, as well as the perceived backwardness of Irish Catholics, there was the added problem of Ireland's geographical position on Britain's flank within easy reach of its belligerent imperial rivals, notably Catholic France and Spain. To guard against Ireland becoming Britain's postern gate, control of the island and its mainly Catholic inhabitants, the latter described by Disraeli as a "wild, reckless, indolent, uncertain and superstitious race," various offensives were conducted in the long process of colonisation, including military offensives, religious conversion and malevolent typecasting.

In fact, negative stereotyping had begun much earlier than the seventeenth century, being first recorded in the twelfth by Giraldus Cambrensis, or Gerald of Wales, a churchman of mixed Norman-Welsh ancestry, who maintained that the Irish could only be brought into colonial civility by the extirpation of their culture. Subsequently, the Elizabethan poet and author of *The Faerie Queene*, Edmund Spenser, argued contrarily in his book, *A View of the State of Ireland* published in 1596, that the laws and customs of the Irish rendered them barbarous and incapable of assimilation, and thus only fit to be remade as labourers for England's colonial project.

Depictions of insurgents as savage brutes were commonplace at key moments in Irish history, such as the United Irishmen's rising of 1798, Catholic Emancipation, led by Daniel O'Connell in the 1820s, the Fenian movement in the 1860s and land reform led by James Stewart Parnell in 1880s. Once again there were the ubiquitous cartoons published in newspapers and in satirical magazines, such as *Punch*, widely read by the middle and upper classes, and in the "penny dreadfuls" (the nineteenth-century tabloids or red tops) for the consumption of the lower orders, as graphically recounted by Liz Curtis (1984).

Mid-nineteenth century pseudo-scientific theories propounded by Victorian anthropologists and ethnologists simianised and rendered sub-human subject people, blacks and the Irish among them (L P Curtis 1971). The Cambridge historian and novelist Charles Kingsley, wrote to his wife while in Ireland in 1860 about being haunted by "the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country... to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not see it so much..."⁷ In arguing against their fitfulness for political self-determination, an opponent of Home Rule felt the Irish Celt was:

Warm-hearted but fickle; brave but wanting in endurance; brilliant but ineffective... with the fierce passions of men, the lack of sober calculation which often limits the power of the cleverest woman, and the unreasonableness of children ... we love them, but they irritate us; we admire them, but they disappoint us; we would feign trust them, but... they betray us.⁸

In the contemporary period, the portrayal of "Paddy" as stupid, drunken, violent, incomprehensible, incapable of self-government (aesthetic inspiration being one of his few redeeming characteristics), and "Bridget" his female counterpart, the ever-present servant and washerwoman memorable only for her bumbblings through kitchens demolishing the crockery as she went, were clearly long embedded in British culture. Proof of this is the ubiquity of anti-Irishisms in the English language, such as "taking the mick," "throwing a paddy," "paddywaggon" (police vans), "donybrooks" (violent melees), the invitation to "paddy whack" in the children's nursery rhyme, "Nick, Nack, Paddywhack, give a dog a bone," and so on (McVeigh 2002). The long-established tradition of the "stage Irishman" perfected in the plays of Dion Boucicault, notably *The Shaughbraun*, a smash hit when first performed in New York in 1874 and a year later in London⁹, has made a smooth transition to the portrayal of Irish characters, at worst as wife-beaters and rapists, and at best as generally dysfunctional, in English television dramas and soap operas. Unsurprisingly, such a tradition facilitated the rise and rise of "the Irish joke" and the anti-Irish cartoon in the period of the Troubles in Northern Ireland from the late 1960s to the 1990s.

The realisation amongst the Irish in Britain was that negative stereotyping, and being automatically viewed as suspects following the introduction of anti-terrorism leg-

isolation and a separate criminal system in 1974, were all of a piece. One detainee, released without charge after 72 hours, made the point: “They take you in and question you and they fingerprint you and they photograph you and they’ve got this hideous sign which they hang in front which says ‘Irish Suspect’.”¹⁰ As with Muslims in Britain, a collective identity was thereby thrust upon a population numbering over a million of Irish-born (and, to an extent, their British-born offsprings). Although lacking the astonishing diversity of Muslims, the Irish in Britain are differentiated in terms of class, political outlook and even religion—or the lack of it. Their position became even more beleaguered in 1974 following the IRA pub bombings in Birmingham in which 21 people were killed and 162 wounded. Widespread public outrage and fury ensued, much of it directed physically and verbally at Irish people in Britain (although a number of the bomb victims were Irish), and resulted in the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Acts (1974) being rushed through parliament and onto the statute book. Such was the public mood that not a single member of parliament felt able to vote against it.

The PTA gave the government three new powers: the proscribing of named organisations, such as the IRA; the serving of an order excluding people from Britain to Ireland without recourse to the courts or the production of evidence; and finally, the right of the police to hold people for questioning without charge, initially for 48 hours, and then for a further 5 days with the sanction of the Home Secretary. In cold statistical terms the impact of the PTA was that 7,052 people were arrested and detained in Britain in relation to Northern Ireland affairs between 29 November 1974 and December 1991 and then released, after periods of detention in police custody ranging from a number of hours to seven days, having been charged with no offence whatsoever; in the same period only 197 were charged with offences under the PTA; 349 people were excluded to either Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland (Hillyard 1993).

Millions of interrogations took place which failed to result in any charge being laid, to the degree that every hour of every day 10 people were having their details checked out on the police computer for PTA purposes.¹¹ The unrestricted power to question people, the failure of the law to define the type of question that could be posed, the volume of questioning and detention and, not least, the paucity of convictions led many to argue that this was far from being a process for unmasking terrorists, as was purported by the political and security establishments. Rather, it represented a massive trawling operation for the gathering of low-level intelligence and a method of curtailing dissent and political activity amongst the Irish in Britain. In many cases—but by no means all—this strategy worked, as the words of one Irish woman attests: “I put aside all my political ideas and Irishness years ago. It gets you nowhere in this country.” As for my politics, she said, “I just sit on it”

(Buckley 1997: 94) In fact, the use of the powers for questioning and arrest differed little from those used by the army in Northern Ireland under the Emergency Provisions Acts, where the main Catholic areas were systematically screened for intelligence and the control of political opposition since the start of the Troubles.

New Anti-Terrorist legislation

Roy Jenkins, Home Secretary in the Labour government when the PTA was introduced in 1974, described its provisions as “draconian.” In 1993, Tony Blair in his capacity as Shadow Home Secretary recognised the futility of draconian legislation when arguing—fruitlessly in the event—against the renewal of the Act in its entirety:

If we cravenly accept that any action by the government and entitled Prevention of Terrorism Act must be supported in its entirety without question, we do not strengthen the fight against terrorism, we weaken it. I hope that no Honourable Member will say that we do not have the right to challenge powers, to make sure that they are in accordance with the civil liberties of our country (Blair 1993).

How times change! The Terrorism Act 2000, introduced pre- 9/11, expanded the definition of terrorism to include simply “the threat” of “serious damage to property” in ways “designed to influence the government” for a “political cause.” It became a criminal offence for anyone in Britain to support such “terrorist” activities abroad, banning twenty-one organizations, including the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) and stigmatised legitimate political activity as “terrorism.” After 9/11, the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act (ATCSA) 2001 granted further powers of detention and surveillance. It imposed duties on everyone to inform the authorities of any “suspected terrorist” activities, as defined broadly by the 2000 Act. Under this law, moreover, the Charities Commission must freeze the bank account of any charity under suspicion of financing terrorism abroad. The Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005 created yet another crime: glorifying terrorism—again as broadly defined under the 2000 Act—on the grounds that violence against a government cannot be justified anywhere in the world, which together with the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 are designed to criminalise and stifle protest. The meagre harvest of convictions (of the 700 arrested only 17 have been convicted of any offence, and only three have been convicted of offences relating to terrorism) replicate the Irish experience and point to the same rationale for the legislation (F. Ansari 2006).

The impact of anti-terror legislation on Irish and Muslim lives follows a similar pattern: a loss of confidence in the law and the political system, cultural alienation, loss of employment and sometimes loss of abode, financial deprivation, social stigma, restrictions on freedom of movement, disruption of family life and damage to physical and mental health. Poignant stories have been recounted of doors being broken down in the early

hours of the morning, of houses being ransacked, of children being taken into the care of social services for the duration of their parents' detention, of heartbreak when suspended at work or sacked, of damaged work prospects, and of ensuing mental health problems sometimes resulting in suicide. Accounts abound of missed wedding celebrations—whether in Dhaka or Dublin, Kandahar or Kilkenny, Cork or Calcutta—or worse, the failure to attend a parent's funeral, all for fear of interrogation or even arrest and detention at the ports. Remarkably, there have been the cases of Northern and Southern Irish pregnant women forced to travel to Britain in order to obtain a legal abortion denied them on their own turf, and being questioned under the PTA on entry to Britain (Rossiter 2004).

The fuzzy frontiers of Englishness and Britishness

The omens for the future are not good. The Irish in Britain can rest easy (for the time being, at least) following the cessation of hostilities in Northern Ireland, the subsequent Good Friday Agreement achieved on 10 April 1998, and the national debate (The Peace Process) that took place on the future political shape of Northern Ireland. British Muslims, however, are confronted with a series of pre-existing and on-going political problems that the security fall-out from 9/11 and 7/7 merely exacerbated. These relate to issues of national identity in Britain thrown into stark relief as a result of Eastern-European, large-scale immigration following recent European Union enlargement, the crumbling of “the special relationship with America,” and the establishment of devolved governments (home rule) in Scotland and Wales, and intermittently, in Northern Ireland. Talk of the “break-up of Britain” has promoted a spate of existential musings not only amongst the Scots, Northern Irish Protestant Unionists, and the Welsh, but notably amongst the English. It was the Irish father of English political conservatism, Edmund Burke, who said: “It is in the nature of all greatness not to be exact.” In fact, he might well have been speaking about the inexactness of English/British national identity, a conceptual hole which a stream of popular articles, books and television programmes have attempted to plug over the past few years, such as Jeremy Paxman's book, *The English: A Portrait of a People* (1999), Andrew Marr's (2000) BBC TV series and book, *The Day Britain Died*, and the novelist Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2001).

Scholars, such as Benedict Anderson (1983: 12) have opined that the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland shares with the [erstwhile] Soviet Union “the rare distinction of refusing nationality in its naming in favour of a territorial-political distinction.” Brian Jenkins and Gunter Minnerup (1984: 86) have also argued that the British have never felt it necessary to “standardise” their national identity by either “Anglicisation” or “federalisation” despite having acquired through conquest a multiple monarchy in the

form of England, Scotland and Ireland by 1603, and having to all intents and purposes conquered Wales by 1414. The imperial project, and even the post-imperial Commonwealth, helped sustain the fuzzy frontiers of this entity for “as long as its global empire role provided it with the material conditions to submerge successfully the distinct English, Scottish, Welsh and Protestant-Irish identities in red-white-and-blue Britishness.”

The process of adjustment is proving extremely painful, given that the building blocks of Britishness are everywhere and complicating the dual British/English identity paradigm: a British monarchy and unified British ruling class, the Protestant religion (a waning but key ideological British resource for earlier generations), an integrated British economy, a British labour movement, common political institutions and political parties, a common military establishment and infrastructure, a common language, as well as the heavily centralised welfare state, the public-service broadcasting organisation (the BBC), still being an all-British affair, and a (former) British empire. In the words of Krishnan Kumar (2003:16),

In whatever direction they look, the English find themselves called upon to reflect their identity, and to re-think their position in the world. The protective walls that [hitherto] shielded them from these questions are coming down. It is in this environment, highly charged with the fall-out of 9/11 and 7/7, that immigrants and cultural diversity are construed as a political threat to an already shaky national identity. Significantly, Tony Blair has declared the long-standing policy of multiculturalism “dead”, a policy that, in the classical 1966 formulation of Roy Jenkins, a leading Labour Party intellectual, is “not a flattening process of assimilation but equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance” (Jenkins1966).

In conclusion

As stated at the outset, the impact on the ground on both the Irish and Muslim communities in Britain has proved depressingly similar in the face of anti-terror legislation. Both communities, however heterogeneous their composition, have faced demonization and racialization directly related to the colonial connection—Britain, in the Irish case, and Britain, France, Spain and the U.S. as far as Muslims are concerned. A further commonality is the depressing response in both cases from what should be regarded as natural allies on the Left and amongst progressives. After a limited, broad-based initiative led by Irish organisations in Britain around the issues of civil rights for Northern Irish Catholics, and the brutality of the British army in shooting unarmed civil rights protestors in 1972, support soon melted away amongst British progressives and the Left. This was particularly the case following the IRA's armed response and its bombing campaign in Britain. Thereafter, divisions over the nature of Irish republicanism, its socialism—or lack of it—its perceived alliance with the Catholic Church, its treatment of women, etc.,

all came under the microscope. The focus on these was such that any significant alliance against the British state's military, and security actions against Catholics in Northern Ireland and the Irish community in Britain, was soon abandoned.

In the same vein, the Muslim community in Britain has seen support eking away following the enthusiastic launch of a rainbow coalition arrayed against the war in Iraq. Under the umbrella of the Stop the War Coalition, a range of forces stretching across the Left, liberals, students, feminists, churchmen and women, moderate and radical Islamic groups, Indian sub-continental diaspora organisations, and even avowed British conservatives, were united for a brief moment against the Bush/Blair alliance, and tentatively began to address the impact of the war on the British Muslim population. 7/7 and the realisation that the bombers were home-grown *jihadis* changed all that. Now, the Left and liberals alike argue the toss over whether the tiny minority of Muslim women who don the *niqab*, or even the larger numbers who sport the *hijab*—whether as a fashion statement, a badge of resistance, or an expression of piety—are the walking symbols of an alien fundamentalism. British (including some ex-Muslim) feminist teeth are set on edge when highly-educated and articulate Muslim women insist on the same rights as their Western and Westernised sisters in their choice of apparel (or lack of it). Speaking from *within* Islam and within their communities, such women are striving to evolve a feminism to combat the sexism faced in daily life, whether at home, at the mosque, in the workplace, or in the larger society.¹¹

Debating the differences between moderate, radical/political Islam and the organisations to which they give rise, as well as the feverish cyberspace goings-on of *jihadis*—whether of the Al-Qeada or DIY variety—has become a research and publishing industry of some import.¹² For instance, much heat and not a great deal of light is generated around whether the Muslim Council of Britain and its numerous affiliates are tainted with the stain of their origins in Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood or Pakistan and Bangladesh's Jamaati-i-Islami.¹³ Other areas in contention are whether a Caliphate (as proposed by the banned Hizb-ut Tahrir) is a feasible proposition,¹⁴ or whether we should even entertain the idea of *sharia* law in areas such as domestic life (as championed by the Islamic Human Rights Commission).¹⁵ Unsurprisingly, such issues are guaranteed to bring a rush of blood to the head of Leftist, civil liberties, feminist or gay rights' activists. That we in Britain require an urgent and measured national debate about these and many other such matters goes without saying. However, in the present polarised climate, where the Muslim community is under siege and widely perceived as a fifth column in the heart of Christian (or post-Christian) Europe, hankering after a form of *convivencia*, or the coexistence that characterised the golden age of Muslim rule in Spain, remains remote. Such a *convivencia* was depicted thus by the Sufi poet of

al-Andalus, Ibn Arabi (1165-1240):

*My heart has adopted every shape; it has become a pasture for gazelles
And a convent for Christian monks,
A temple for idols and a pilgrim's Kabah, the tables of a Torah and
The pages of a Qur'an*¹⁶

Bibliography

- Ali, A.H. *The Caged Virgin: A Muslim Woman's Cry for Reason*, London, Free Press, 2006.
- Amis, M. "The Age of Horrorism: Faith and the Dependent Mind." *The Observer* 10/09/06.
- Anderson, B. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London, Verso, 1983.
- Ansari, F. *British Terrorism: A Modern Day Witch-bunt*, London, Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2006.
- Ansari, K.H. *Muslims in Britain*, Minority Rights Group International, 2002.
- Balthaser, B. "A New Orientalism: Another Look at Pre-War Coverage of Iraq". *Left Curve* (28) 2004: 10-15.
- Blair, T. *Hansard*, House of Commons, March 10, 1993, column 971.
- Bright, M. "It's time we united to fight radical Islam", *The Observer*, 30/07/2006;
"One minister who understand the problem", *New Statesman*, 23/10/2006.
- Buruma, I. *Murder in Amsterdam: The Death of Theo Van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance*, London, Penguin, 2006.
- Buckley, M. "Sitting on your Politics: The Irish Among the British and the Women Among the Irish." In *Irish Society, Emigration and Irish Identities*. Ed. J. McLaughlin, Cork, Cork University Press, 1997.
- Carr, M. "You are now entering Eurabia", *Race and Class*, volume 48(1) 2006: 1-22.
- Curtis, L. *Nothing but the Same Old Story: The Roots of Anti-Irish Racism*, London, Information on Ireland 1984.
- Coleman, C. "One UK legal system? Think Again", *Times*, 05/12/2006.
- Curtis, L.P. *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*, London, David and Charles, 1971.
- Fallaci, O. *The Rage and the Pride*, New York, Rizzoli International Publications, 2003.
- Fekete, L. "Enlightened fundamentalism?: Immigration, Feminism and the Right," *Race and Class*, Volume 42(2) 2006: 1-22.
- Freedland, J. "If this onslaught was about Jews, I would be looking for my passport," *Guardian*, 18/10/06
- Hillyard, P. *Suspect Community, People's Experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in Britain*, London, Pluto, 1993.
- Jenkins, B. and Minnerup, G. *Citizens and Comrades: Socialism in a World of Nation States*, London, Pluto Press, 1984.
- Jenkins, R. Address given as Home Secretary in 1966 to a meeting of voluntary liaison committees, London, NCCI, 1966.
- Kitson, F. *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping*, London, Faber and Faber. 1971.
- Kumar, K. *The Making of English National Identity*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- Laurence, J. and Vaisse, J. *Integrating Islam: Political and Religious Challenges in Contemporary France*, Brookings Institution, Washington DC, 2006.
- McVeigh, R. "Nick, Nack, Paddywhack: Anti-Irish Racism and the Racialisation of Irishness" in *Racism and Anti-Irish*

Racism in Ireland. Ed. R. Lentin and R. McVeigh, Belfast, Beyond the Pale, 2002.

Marr, A. *The Day Britain Died*, London, Profile Books, 2000.

Nairn, T. *The Break-up of British: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, London, New Left Books, 1975.

Paxman, J. *The English: a portrait of a people*, Woodstock, N.Y., Overlook Press, 2000.

Phillips, M. *Londonistan*, N.Y., Encounter Books, 2006.

Rossiter, A. "Sure we're all paddies over here: Northern Irish women and the British abortion trail," *Left Republican* 4, Belfast, Sinn Fein Publications, 2004.

Said, E. *Orientalism*, New York, Vintage Books, 1979.

Smith, Z. *White Teeth*, London, Penguin, 2001.

Notes

1. Explored in Robbie McVeigh's (2002) instructive analysis of anti-Irish racism in Britain cited in bibliography above.
2. Much of this information has been gleaned from the demographic profile of British Muslims available in Khizar Humayren Ansari's *Muslims in Britain* cited in bibliography.
3. Amongst the many tidbits of information is an account by Lawrence Wright in his *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*, NY, Knopf, 2006, of Umm Abdullah, "the first in the rank" of Osama bin Laden's four wives. According to Wright, Umm Abdullah jogged around the inner courtyard of the bin Laden compound in Afghanistan in Western-style jogging suits. She is also said to have a liking for expensive American cosmetics and lingerie.
4. Many books, among them Lawrence Wright's (cited above), describe the multiple splinter groups in Islam revolving around disputes over the prophet Mohammed's male descendants who, as imams or infallible exemplars, succeeded to his mantle. Amongst the most recent to document the battle lines of this internecine struggle and its offshoots, such as Wahhabism, named after Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab, a Sunni puritan, and favoured by bin Laden and fifteen of the nineteen hijackers involved in the World Trade Centre attacks, are Vali Nasr's, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts Within Islam Will Shape the Future*, NY, Norton, 2006, and Yitzhak Nakash's *Reaching for Power: The Shi'a in the Modern World*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006. These also cover another major contentious issue, that of the relationship between the state and religion.
5. Niall Ferguson, "The End of Europe?," American Enterprise Institute Bradley lecture 1/3/2004 and "Eurabia", *New York Times* 4/4/2004.
6. Struggle—jihad—is intrinsic to Islam and is described as its sixth pillar. It takes two forms: greater *jihad*, the internal or spiritual struggle with self for the attainment of purity, and the lesser *jihad*, the military struggle against infidels in the world outside Islam. At a military level, Christians have hardly balked at the concept of *jihad*. However, theologically there is something of a contradiction between holy violence and the pacifism expressed in the Beatitudes. This was resolved to a degree by Saint Augustine of Hippo at the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries when he evolved the notion of a "just war." See Christopher Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades*, Harvard University Press, 2006.
7. Quoted in Liz Curtis, *Nothing But the Same old Story...* p.10, cited in bibliography.
8. *ibid.*, p.13.
9. *The Shaugbraun, An Original Drama* was first performed at Wallack's Theatre, New York, on 14 November 1874. The play has been reprinted in a collection and introduced by Andrew Parkin. 1987. *Selected Plays, Dion Boucicault*. Gerrards Cross, UK: Colin Smythe.
10. Quoted in Paddy Hillyard, p. 159, cited in bibliography.
11. *ibid.*, pp. 27-30.
12. For example, a group of mainly Muslim women in political life, Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London, and Richard Stone, Chair of the Commission on British Muslims, argue that women must make their own personal choices about the clothes that they wear, and that inequality, racism, poverty and uneven power relations between men and women are the real source of division, and not apparel (*The Guardian* 13/10/2006). Contrarily, Marieme Helie Lucas, founder of Women Living Under Muslim Laws (based in France and represented in Britain), states that "the veil" is not a dress code rooted in culture or religion, and that "well-meaning Europeans, who imagine that they are paying respect to 'Muslims' by adapting to such a uniform, simply bow to modern far-right forces working under the cover of religion that manipulate Islam to their political benefit" while marginalizing women (<http://www.peaceneeds.info/issues/2479/2479091.html>). Liz Fekete (2006) refers to views, such as those of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, feminist, politician and author of *The Caged Virgin* (2006) who justifies state bans on the *hijab*, as "Enlightened fundamentalism" due to the invocation of European Enlightenment values in its justification for confronting an atavist Islam.
13. In their struggle to separate "the moderates" from "the radicals" (radicals are seen as including political Islamicists who argue for *sharia* law and a Caliphate etc., and way-out, violent *jihadis*), journalists, academics and politicians have since 7/7 concentrated their energies on rooting out both categories. The political editor of the Left-leaning, *New Statesman*, Martin Bright, has challenged the British Foreign Office's policy of developing links with political Islamist groups active abroad via the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), said to have such connections. Passionately opposing the Foreign Office's "wrong-headedness," Bright's considerable energies have focused on influencing the Home Office (the two Offices are frequently at odds with each other on matters political) and the Blairite Minister for the newly created Department for Communities and Local Government, Ruth Kelly responsible for "Muslim integration," to sideline the MCB, remove its state funding, and declare it "beyond the pale" until it comes to heel by "showing that it shares the common values of a democratic society" and, among other things, drops its boycott of Holocaust Memorial Day (see Bright, 30/07/2006 and 23/10/2006). Chetan Bhatt, Professor of Sociology at Goldsmith's College, University of London, is also indefatigable in his pursuit of radical Islam of both varieties. Along with Martin Bright, he has been vociferous in his denunciation of the British Left for its failure to grasp the primacy of what he terms "Islamofascism," the "fascisms of the powerless" or "the small communal fascisms in everyday life" perpetrated by the Islamic religious Right in Britain, particularly in its policing women and youth (cited in Bright, 30/07/2006).
14. The desire to unite Muslims, in particular Muslim nations, under one Caliphate or the theoretical government that would govern the Islamic world under Islamic law and ruled by a Caliph as head of state, was developed in the 1950s by Taqiuddin an Nabhani, an Islamist ideologue. Hizb-ut Tahrir, a political movement based in Europe, the Middle East, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Central Asia and elsewhere, is one of the principal exponents.
15. In *British Muslims' Expectations of the Government: Law and British Muslims, Domination of the Majority or Process of Balance*, authored by Saied Reza Ameli, Beena Faridi, Karin Lindahl and Arzu Merali of the Islamic Human Rights Commission, London, 2006, an argument is made for *sharia* law on the grounds of the equal rights of minorities under the law, and in the light of strong anti-Muslim prejudice within the existing legal and political systems. Clive Coleman (02/12/2006) makes the point that in Britain the orthodox Jewish, Beth Din, and a Somali *sharia* court in southeast London, are already in existence dispensing justice in commercial cases, neighbour disputes, violent attacks and divorce, and that these are permissible under English law.
16. Quoted in Matt Carr, p.20, cited in bibliography.