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The Zone of the Other: Imposing and Resisting Alien Identities in Chapeltown, Leeds, During the Twentieth Century

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Introduction

Chapeltown, since the 1960s, has become the most notorious area of the northern English city of Leeds. It is marked in the popular imagination by its reputation for prostitution, drug dealing and street crime. This reputation is inseparable from the clustering within Chapeltown, since the early 1960s, of a small but significant proportion of Leeds' citizens of African-Caribbean origin. Visitors to Leeds who ask how to get to Chapeltown will find their way there immediately, but if they consult a map which includes a reference to Chapeltown they would arrive in Chapel Allerton, about a mile to the north of the area known to local knowledge as Chapeltown. This gap between contemporary local knowledge, and historically-defined territorial boundaries, promotes interesting questions. The map indicates the sediment of history, since, as a Leeds historian recorded in the early Nineteenth century, the village of Chappel Allerton included a 'delicate green commonly known as Chapel-Towne Moor'. The police station, built in the mid-nineteenth century on that green site was, until its vacation in 1998, known as Chapeltown Police Station. But the land now called Chapeltown, in the early Nineteenth century, was known as New Town, indicating the novelty of building large, detached houses among farm land, some three miles from what is now the town centre of Leeds. From the 1870s onwards, when it began its major transition from fields to bricks and mortar, much of this land was known as Button Hill, remembered now only in a street name on the western side of Chapeltown Road. Between 1870 and 1914 a suburb occupied by the expanding, prosperous Leeds' middle class was created. Its reputation was seen to be challenged shortly after 1918 when Jewish people began to acquire property at the southern end of Chapeltown Road, and it ceased to be known as Button Hill some time after that.

It would be simple to assume that the area took on, in local knowledge, the name 'Chapeltown' after the name of the main road passing through its centre. But why should it lose the name 'Button Hill'? Why should the name 'Chapeltown' have not remained a synonym for Chapel Allerton? My suggested answer is that 'Button Hill' had to acquire a new name in order to signify its transition from a middle-class suburb of English families to a zone of the Other. Since part of the former Leeds-Harrogate Turnpike Road had been renamed Chapeltown Road, with the section running through Chapel Allerton now known as Harrogate Road, and since the area around Chapeltown Road had from the 1920s been seen to be stained by the presence of the Jewish Other, Chapel Allerton had an interest in shedding its association with the almost-forgotten Chapel-Towne Moor. Chapeltown Road ran right through Button Hill, thus it was possible to name this locale of doubtful social repute 'Chapeltown'. The erection and maintenance of symbolic boundaries around Chapeltown over the next seventy years is one of the main topics of this chapter. Boundaries, symbolic and physical, are one of the constituents of the social imaginary called 'community'. It is within these boundaries that the Jewish residents of Chapeltown forged their identities in the first half of the Twentieth Century. Their 'otherness', it is argued is structurally related to the previous construction of this area as a quintessentially 'English' suburb, populated by the Anglo-Saxon, Christian middle classes. Since an alien identity had been stamped upon the Jewish residents, the African-Caribbeans who began to settle in the 1960s inherited a zone demarcated as Other, and then found themselves represented in even more hostile terms than those experienced by the Jews. The gap between imposed identities and self-defined identities must be recalled, however, as we note the impassioned protests against racist discrimination launched by the African-Caribbean and Asian residents of Chapeltown throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

This chapter proceeds chronologically in its discussion of these themes. It utilises a range of materials including newspaper reports, a novel, and census statistics. These materials are filtered through the mesh of contemporary cultural theory which is derived from the work of Henri Lefebvre on the social production of space and from the theorisation of identity in the work of Stuart Hall. It is divided into four parts: Chapeltown as an English city suburb; Chapeltown as a 'little Israel'; and Chapeltown as a metaphor for Hell; and Chapeltown as a site of resistance.

Chapeltown: the making of an English suburb

The suburbanisation of Chapeltown is most simply expressed by reference to maps of the territory (Maps 1 to 4). The 1580 map shows a patchwork of named fields. In 1752 the winding track running northwards on the 1580s was rebuilt and named the Leeds-Harrogate Turnpike Road. By 1840, the map indicates that large detached houses, some of which are still standing, had been built on the street named Spencer Place. By that time the land now known as Chapeltown, as well as land to the north and east (now Harehills and Gipton) was owned by three men: Lords Cowper and Mexborough and a Mr. Brown (Map 5). Cowper and Mexborough had attempted to sell off parts of their land in 1845, but were not able to achieve sales at prices they would accept until the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s. By this time Brown too went to market and the result was a frenzy of building. Large semi-detached houses and substantial through-terraces were built over most of this land, occupied by the middle-class families and their servants. The 1876 Street Directory lists the following occupations of residents of the now enlarged Spencer Place: engineer, upholsterer, leather manufacturer, cigar merchant, corn factor, draper, merchant, manager, solicitor, wine merchant, Reverend, amongst others. The 1890 map shows the first two phases of this building (Map 3). By 1914 all but the smallest plots of land had been built over. Henri Lefebvre has argued that ‘space is permeated with social relations’, ‘shaped and moulded from historical and natural elements’. The conflictual process of carving out the buildings and streets of Nineteenth century Chapeltown from the fields and farms of earlier centuries exemplifies Lefebvre’s theory.

Gordon Stowell’s *A History of Button Hill* (1929) is a novel which describes the process of suburbanisation in Chapeltown. It provides a rich source for cultural historians, although its style would fail to inspire our colleagues in literary studies. We know that this novel is about Chapeltown from its title and by the meticulous and transparent coding of the names of streets and places. ‘Fleece’ is a pseudonym for the wool-town that was Leeds. Harrogate, a town to the north of Leeds, is named Bathwater, after its Spa. Reginald Terrace is named ‘Algernon Terrace’ and we can place it because of its proximity to the Anglican Church. Sheepscar is named ‘Lambswell’ and the adjacent area, which still houses a tannery, is named ‘Tannersdale’, both at the southern end of Chapeltown Road. With local knowledge each of the events? if that is not too dramatic term for this soporific tome? described by Stowell can be precisely placed on the topography of present-day Chapeltown.

Clyde Binfield, in an extensive discussion of Christian Nonconformity in this are of Leeds, based on *The History of Button Hill* and documents such as church records for the period, suggests that these texts could be read as 'a political essay in representative self-government'. Its interest for the purposes of this chapter, however, lies in its representation of a class-in-the-making and the construction of boundaries around this class. From the outset, Stowell positions the residents in stark contrast to those outside Button Hill. The neighbourhood was built, Stowell tells us, 'because the housing problem [in Leeds] was becoming troublesome'. But this is not a prelude to discourse on slums, despite their well-documented existence in Nineteenth and Twentieth-century Leeds. Stowell informs us that

> [t]he prime difficulty was not the housing of the working-class population (as it was called then). For them only too many houses had been provided, street after street of squalid little back-to-back dwellings, with no gardens and little sanitation. The people who were hardest hit were the really nice people, the people with nice ideas and aspirations, who, though not extravagantly rich, had made a little money for themselves . . . To such as these the new suburb of Button Hill was in the nature of a godsend (ibid. pp. 12 - 13).

This novel came from the socialist publishing-house of Victor Gollancz and there is more than a hint of irony in much of the narration. Gordon Stowell, the son of the minister of the Newton Park Union Church, in Button Hill/Chapeltown, was an artist and journalist (editor of both *The Radio Times* and *The Children's Encyclopaedia* (30th edn.). Knowledge of his precise intentions in writing this novel? to applaud or to satirise the residents of Chapeltown? are not essential to my reading of his text. The important point is that Stowell was a literary participant observer of Button Hill/Chapeltown at the end of the Nineteenth and beginning of the Twentieth centuries. The individual reader may decide whether to admire, to mock, or to condemn the residents of Button Hill. Instead of treating this as a work of literature, then, I treat it as a historical-sociological text: as a particular representation of a particular suburb at a particular moment in history. One passage will serve to illustrate the point that this text provides a portrait of a middle-class suburb intent on fortifying its boundaries. This passage has the additional merit of exposing the heterogeneity of the middle-class suburbans.

Stowell is at pains to construct Button Hill as a neighbourhood: 'no-one could live long at

Button Hill without beginning to feel, beneath the lifelong habit of “keeping himself *to* himself” natural to his kind, the impulse of a neighbourly urge . . . The neighbourly urge became a fact’ (p. 45). Nevertheless, as ‘Button Hill began to solidify’ it took on the texture of ‘a badly mixed custard. There was a Congregationalist lump, a Wesleyan lump, a Baptist lump, a Presbyterian lump, a United Methodist lump, and of course? over-riding them all? an Established lump (p. 49). More controversially, one of its residents, Mr Ellersby, rose ‘a solitary cry’ (p. 69) against the ‘Tory Imperialists’ and the ‘weak, wicked’ Liberals (p. 73) who supported the Boer War of 1899-1902. Despite being ‘cranky’ and eating ‘vegetarian sandwiches’, Mr Ellersby ‘was a neighbour, one of the fraternity, and therefore to be respected’ (p. 70). This was just as well, since, during the British counter-offensive against the Boers in 1900, ‘the mob’ marched up Chapeltown Road and attacked Mr Ellersby’s house in Algernon (i.e. Reginald) Terrace, to the consternation of his wife and children. Stowell depicts the social origins of ‘the mob’ are depicted by Stowell by reference to mufflers and accents, their lack of middle class-ness represented on the page by their lack of aspirants and grammar, as in:

> “Where’s yon Ellersby?” they cried.
> “Come on, you bleeder . . . I’ve ’ad two sons killed in the war, I ’ave, an’ I’ll let you know it” (p. 87).

Relief, however, was at hand. His neighbours, reinforced by an Alderman and the local MP, and subsequently by the young men of Button Hill, repelled these ‘bounders’, using a garden hose, thereby giving these proletarians their ‘first bath’ (p. 90). ‘“Get away from here and leave decent people alone. We don’t want thugs like you round this way”’ (p. 91) was the final shout, as ‘they melted into confusion and fled’ (p. 92). Class membership and its boundaries are consolidated in this incident, as the residents of diverse religious and political persuasions come together to defend their eccentric member, who is thrilled to feel fully included at last. Middle-class identity is structured by the recognition of what the middle classes believe they have in common with each other, and what they identify as ‘different’ in the other classes. In this incident, we observe Button Hill/Chapeltown enacting its identification and consolidation of its middle-classness in the expulsion of the alien working class. In this dramatic opposition to a territorial invasion by the class Other, the residents of Chapeltown are also more firmly delineating their geographical boundaries. There is another dimension to these structures of exclusion. The young man who wielded the hose and subsequently knocked down the man in the muffler says: '"Well, we're not going to have dirty cads like that kicking up a rumpus in *our* suburb"' (p. 92). The repeated reference to dirt and bathing is significant. The cholera epidemic of 1842 in Leeds was quickly linked to the insanitary working-class houses near the River Aire. The first suburban building on Headingley hill was a direct response to the proximity of middle-class housing to those dirty places where cholera was endemic. By the turn of the century the importance of public hygiene was well established and the positioning of the working classes as the carriers of dirt and disease was an established feature of middle-class discourse [Reference???]. As Mary Douglas has demonstrated, 'clean/unclean' is a binary opposition which fundamentally structures human sociality; the rules governing human decisions about what is dirty and what is clean are fundamental to the maintenance of social order. These working class, dirty 'ruffians' were the first Others who attempted to destabilise this clean and orderly middle class suburb. We see this lower class clearly represented as both a symbolic and a physical threat in Stowell's description of this incident. It discursively establishes the boundary around Button Hill most powerfully because the dichotomy of 'purity and danger', as Mary Douglas called it, does its symbolic work by stealth.

The Jewish settlement of Chapeltown: 'a little Israel'

Just as this novel sets up its class dichotomy, so to it sets up, though in a covert form, an ethnic dichotomy. And both are narrated by use of the device of a breach of the geographical and symbolic boundary around the suburb of Button Hill/Chapeltown. Despite its rout of the working class in 1900, Button Hill was unable to repel all in-comers after the 1914-18 War. It seems that the mass destruction of Leeds' battalions interrupted the transfer of property from the parents to the young middle-class men of Button Hill and no doubt the slump of the mid 1920s affected the business prospects of those who survived. Outward movement from the city centre slums was also taking place, but Stowell alludes not only to the movement of the English working class, but to another group of Leeds' residents: Jewish people who had migrated between 1870 and 1900 from the Russia/Poland border regions. When the gang of muffled white men entered Button Hill on foot in 1900 it was easily sent packing. But, in 1919, this class can no longer be excluded because it is driven by 'industry', advancing in its most treacherous form:

> Industry, overflowing the confines of Lambswell and Tannersdale, has begun to invade the lower reaches of Bathwater [Chapeltown] Road. Not openly, with honest, unashamed factories and warehouses . . . but stealthily, insidiously (op. cit. p. 373).

But this is not merely an invasion by another class. A hint of the ‘racialisation’ of a fraction of this class comes in the information that ‘firms of ready-made clothing manufacturers’, the profession which Jewish migrants had established on arrival in Leeds, were ‘indiscriminately’ erecting ‘wooden sheds’ at the southern end of Chapeltown Road (p. 373). In case this coding of ethnicity is too subtle, we hear that another building in the same area has been converted into ‘a Jewish maternity home’ (p. 374). Two houses in ‘Edwin View’ (possibly Francis Street) have been sold for conversion into a synagogue (p. 376). To make matters worse, ‘the [Christian] churches are bleeding to death’ (p. 376).

By 1956, a respected Leeds journalist was able to describe Chapeltown as ‘a Little Israel in full working order’. One of the interesting features of Ronald Stott’s account of Chapeltown? now identified quite precisely as a Jewish suburb? is the clarity with which its borders are demarcated. The area is spatially defined in terms of its specifically Jewish buildings: its Kosher shops (the butcher’s, the grocer’s, the fishmonger’s? ‘The Jew is a great fish-eater’) and ‘at least six major synagogues’. Its difference from the rest of Leeds is further emphasised by social relationships embedded in representative organisations and clubs: ‘The Leeds Jewish Zionist Council, the Jewish Workers’ Co-operative Society, Leeds Jewish Representative Council headquarters and the Beth Din’. If there were any doubt in the reader’s mind about whether or not these organisations are exclusive, the repetition of the adjective ‘Jewish’ leaves no doubt. Several other organisations are listed, and even the Citizen’s Advice Bureau gets the identity-descriptor ‘Jewish’ attached to it.

Clearly, those who established these organisations had voluntarily included that word in their title, and Stott’s repetition could be construed as innocent of the charge of deliberately inscribing ethnic boundaries around Chapeltown. As with Stowell’s account, however, the political motive of the writer is irrelevant. What is important here is the type of discourse that is being promoted. And Stott’s is, I would argue, in effect an anti-Semitic discourse which demarcates Chapeltown’s Jewish population from the rest of Leeds. Just as the clean/unclean opposition structures in secrecy, Stott’s representation of Jewish Othernes is buried in apparent sympathy for the Jewish residents of Chapeltown. Following the conventional picture of this migration as having been forced by Russian pogroms (a view somewhat undermined by Gartner's authoritative account), Stott tells us that:

> It was natural for them to keep together. For while the Jew moves in the normal life-stream of the place of his adoption, he must often in many things remain slightly apart. He must live as an integral part of his exiled minority whose saga of suffering has taught it that strength and defence can only be found in a close-knit communal life.

Stott’s legitimation of Jewish people remaining ‘slightly apart’ is highly significant. It constructs this apartness in a particular way: Jewish people have separated themselves by choice, albeit in the context of their ‘saga of suffering’. Nowhere does Stott seek out a local person to recall the gangs of Leeds’ youths who would invade the Leylands (the area closer to the town centre where most Jews originally settled) and smash the windows of Jewish homes during the 1914 - 18 war, as Derek Naylor did when he interviewed Louis Teeman twenty years later. Nor does he recall the 722 votes polled in 1940 by the British Union of Fascists in the constituency which covers part of Chapeltown. Omitting such memories in a text published in Leeds’ premier newspaper on a topic about which some of its readers (Jews and non-Jewish anti-fascists) would be well informed, but most would be poorly informed, is a rhetorical move of considerable power. Jewish people, in Stott’s account, have not been actively excluded, they have voluntarily demarcated their territory and erected boundaries around their physical and cultural space. Chapeltown is discursively constructed as a ‘little Israel’, a nation with self-inscribed boundaries, within the city of Leeds. This trope, as we will see, is replicated in the local newspaper’s representation of the migrants from the Caribbean who arrived later in Chapeltown.

One final example illustrates the subtlety of a discursive construction of Chapeltown’s Jewish residents situated in a wider, post-Holocaust discourse of sympathy, even admiration, for Jewish people. Stott offers a carefully composed statement of the position of Jews simultaneously inside and outside of the presumed entity of Leeds:

> Leeds Jewry, while often giving service to the city, remains an outpost if an ancient civilisation, loyal to the age-old doctrines, precepts, customs and beliefs of the race ? its faith undimmed and undoubted by the passage of centuries by wanderings, by persecution.

If the reading of this appears to emphasise the Otherness of the Jews, both the opening phrase? ‘service to the city’? and the closing word? ‘persecution’? guard against any simple assertion that the preferred reading of this article is to enforce exclusionary boundaries around Chapeltown's Jews. But both the reference to the biologically absurd idea that Jewish people form a 'race' and the emphasis on their loyalty to specific 'age-old doctrines' unsettle Stott's earlier claim that the Jews are 'slightly' apart from the rest of Leeds. I see this text as exemplifying a point made by Zygmunt Bauman in his book on the Holocaust:

> Christianity . . . endowed the Jews with a powerful and sinister fascination they would otherwise hardly possess . . . The conceptual Jew was . . . slimy (in Mary Douglas's terms)? an image construed as compromising and defying the order of things . . . he [the Jew] visualised the horrifying consequences of boundary-transgression . . . of any conduct short of unconditional loyalty . . . he was the prototype and arch-pattern of all nonconformity, heterodoxy, anomaly and aberration.

Of course, Stott cannot openly allege 'aberration' among Chapeltown's Jewry, but his account amounts to a vivid portrait of 'nonconformity, heterodoxy and anomaly'. Implicit is the suggestion that, were non-Jews to cross the border into Chapeltown, the order of things would be disturbed, both for the residents and the intruder.

To move from the consideration of the discursive positioning of Jewishness within the carefully delineated zone of the city called Chapeltown to the issue of identity is a difficult matter. Identity is, as Richard Jenkins puts it:

> the systematic establishment and signification, between individuals, between collectivities, and between individuals and collectivities, of relationships of similarity and difference . . . [it] is the product of agreement and disagreement, it . . . is negotiable.

But the negotiation that is at the heart of the construction of identity, the arguing through of the points of similarity and difference with those with other identities, goes on among Jews largely 'behind the scenes' in Leeds. So far as I know, there was no published angry response to Stott's article from the Board of Deputies, or individual Jews. While I read this article as the imposition of an identity upon Jewish people as 'aliens', it might be that some Jewish people would read it as a relatively acceptable, even accurate, description of their identity. Whereas I see it as a virtual identity, perhaps some Jews would see it as a nominal identity, to use Jenkins' distinction. But whether or not the 'difference' that is being described by Stott reflects the 'difference' that some Jews actually feel, the striking feature of this article is that it makes no effort to capture the ‘sameness’ that plays a necessary part in the dialectic of identity construction. I am referring here to the operation of ‘sameness’ in two dimensions. If Jewish people establish their identity as Jews partly through their identification of what they believe they have in common with each other, their ‘sameness’ as Jews, it is equally important to note that they are equally emphatic in identifying what they have in common with every other member of the species: their ‘sameness’ as humans. What we persistently observe in most writing about ethnic identity is the process by which the writer emphasises the ‘sameness’ of the group in question and its ‘difference’ from others. A shift of intellectual and political focus towards ‘sameness’ is provoked by Paul Gilroy’s work. Stott’s description of Chapeltown in the 1950s is a vivid example of the consequences of an exclusive focus on ‘difference’. Similar? and equally, if not more powerful? discursive manoeuvres are evident when we examine the black settlement of Chapeltown.

The black settlement of Chapeltown: a metaphor for Hell

The settlement of people from the Caribbean was, in fact, beginning to be apparent at the time that Stott was depicting the area as ‘a little Israel’. The newspaper discourse which erected symbolic barriers around Chapeltown, and imposed racialised identities on its residents, was far more strident than that examined above. Some statistics are need to demonstrate how divorced was the newspaper coverage of Chapeltown from a rational, empirical account of the area.

In 1966 it was estimated that there were around 3,000 black people living in Chapeltown, about 0.6% of the population of the city. By 1981 there were around 11,000, about 1.6% of the population of Leeds. By 1991, Chapeltown’s black population had dropped to 7,830, 1.15% of Leeds’ population. I am using ‘black’ here to signify both people of African and Asian origin. When we examine the media discourse on Chapeltown, we will note that it focuses almost exclusively on African-Caribbean people. In 1991 only 3,739 such people lived in Chapeltown, and that includes the grouping defined in the census as ‘Black Other’, who are not necessarily African-Caribbean. This group represents 0.55% of the population of Leeds. Thus, statistically, Chapeltown’s Asian and African-Caribbean population is hardly significant. When we add to this the fact that in the 1990s less than a quarter of Leeds' black population live in Chapeltown the media concentration on Chapeltown may seem disproportionate, to say the least. The headlines and strap lines of a selection of articles over a twenty-year period provide a clear guide to the mode of representation of the people who live within the boundaries of Chapeltown:

> '"Mecca of Vice" girl warned in court' (*Yorkshire Evening Post* 30.1.74).
> followed the next day by 'Spotlight on Leeds "Mecca of vice" - Hamilton Place [in Chapeltown] Where prostitutes are just part of the scenery' (*Yorkshire Evening Post* 31.1.74).
> 'The colony within'; 'You can't legislate against the heart' (*Yorkshire Evening Post* 28.6.73).
> 'The [Yorkshire] Ripper's shadow over Scott Hall Avenue [in Chapeltown]'; and 'Murdered girl's self portrait' (*Daily Express* 27.6.77).
> 'Chapeltown - a Special Enquiry' (*Yorkshire Evening Post* 28.5.80).
> 'Where trouble waits on the corner' (*The Times* 1.4.86).
> 'Woman 'in fear of witchcraft'; 'Woman in fear of the occult, says QC' (*Yorkshire Evening Post* 8.12.87).
> 'Ten years on and another city is on the brink of riot'; 'About once a fortnight arrests in Chapeltown have turned ugly, with the gathering of crowds and attacks on police cars' (*The Observer* 7.4.91).
> 'Vice over virtues.' 'Chapeltown in Leeds, sharing a reputation with Brixton, Toxteth, Moss Side and St Paul's in Bristol for drugs, prostitution and riots, has been hi-jacked in terms of media attention by a small, visible and disaffected minority' (*Yorkshire Post* 8.8.91.
> '45 held in drug swoop.' 'Police under fire from missiles' (*Yorkshire Evening Post* 6.12.91).
> 'The other side of hell.'. 'Chapeltown, a small triangular district of Leeds, is the worst district for crime in west Yorkshire. On the frontline, the drug dealers are busy and mobs of youths look for victims. But there is another side: a strong sense of multicultural community, and many people trying desperately hard to make something of their lives' (*The Guardian* 1.11.94).

In this 'incitement to discourse' Chapeltown is represented as an area in which prostitution, murder, drug abuse and crime are the predominant motifs. Only the 'colony within' (*Yorkshire Evening Post* 28.6.73) articles signified in their headlines that the people living in this area were black, and they did so by a large photograph, turned almost into a daguerreotype, of an African-Caribbean woman and her child. This 'colony within' reminds us of the representation of the earlier Jewish settlement as a 'little Israel'. Both Jews and black people, the reader is supposed to conclude, are an other people, an other nation, insidiously inserting themselves, and creating their own institutions, within the city. In the early 1970s the anti-colonial struggles by British subjects in Africa in the 1950s and the

1960s? and the extraordinary panic engendered by the activity of the Kenyan Land and Freedom Army (the so-called Mau-Mau)? were not far from popular memory, so the 'colony within' had sinister connotations.

But, even where such motifs are not included at the head of the articles, colour is coded into each article in subtle or not so subtle ways. From the 1960s onwards, public debate in the UK, initiated by right wing politicians and newspapers, and crystallised by the former Conservative Cabinet member Enoch Powell, had effectively identified male British Caribbean settlers as disproportionately involved in crime (particularly pimping, drug-dealing and mugging). The local media, and from time to time the national media, imposed a criminal identity upon many of the residents of Chapeltown. When, in the early 1990s, a liberal national newspaper characterised Chapeltown as 'the other side of hell' (*The Guardian* 1.11.94) it was merely stating 'the truth' as previous journalists had seen it. This is the zone in which bodily experience is pushed to the edge, in sexual, narcotic and violent forms. It is the area in which black youths will, with, as the media see it, no provocation, riot, joined, on the most extreme occasion in the summer of 1981, by disaffected white youths from other parts of Leeds. Riot is usually symbolised by fire and physical destruction, further signifiers of hell.

It would be wrong, however, to characterise the media construction of Chapeltown as pursuing this theme alone. Partly as a result of protests from within Chapeltown against the prejudicial stereotyping of the area, and partly because several journalists have provided accounts of practices within Chapeltown which are widely regarded as socially positive, a more complex picture may be acquired by the discerning reader. Nevertheless, the overwhelming message from the media is that Chapeltown is a dangerous place, a place where outsiders enter only to purchase drugs or sex, or to intervene as agents of the various agencies of social control. Since these journalistic constructions are not completely without foundation in material fact, and therefore get reinforced by the publication of crime statistics and the reports of people deemed to be experts on these matters, the symbolic barriers around this area are well-nigh impenetrable. But local black people have never passively accepted the negative representations of themselves or the locale.

Resisting alien identities

From the late 1960s to the mid 1970s, Chapeltown was the site of a series of militant campaigns usually lead by local Caribbean organisations, but on one occasion by organisations of Sikhs, and on others by the white dominated, but multi-cultural, Chapeltown Community Association. Two of these events are particularly relevant to the question of self-defined (in contrast to imposed) identities. In July 1973 the Chapeltown Parents Action Group organised a strike of children at Cowper Street Middle School. Organised by African-Caribbeans, the strike resulted in the removal of the headmaster, identified as racist by the black parents and children, and significant improvements in the staffing and resourcing of the school. The militancy of the action and the precision of the demands? for high quality education, with real involvement of black people in this education? indicates that these parents identified themselves as politically conscious, intent on educational achievement, and quite willing to engage in struggle with an establishment which they characterised as racist. These are far from the identities constructed in the white media.

The second event, between July and November 1974, indicates that Asians of the Sikh faith, who had settled in Chapeltown from the mid 1960s onwards, were also willing to engage in public, political struggle to assert their identity. The issue that provoked a series of meetings and a demonstration was the refusal by the employer to allow two Sikh bus workers to wear their turbans at work, a refusal backed by a threat by the union to strike if the uniform code was changed to permit the turban to be worn. Pressure exerted by the Leeds branch of the Indian Workers Association (GB), with grudging support from the leadership of the Sikh Temple, finally forced the employer to back down. The Sikhs were able to symbolise their identity by wearing their turbans, in place of their former practice, contrary to the demands of their faith, of cutting their hair in a European style.

In 1975 and again in 1981, Chapeltown witnessed violent mass actions against the police. The former was composed exclusively of local Caribbean youth, but the latter drew the support of whites. The question of virtual and nominal identities occurs again here. In public discourse, those who launched the attacks were identified as criminals and hooligans. In the discourses of some sections of the political left, and in the locally produced *Chapeltown News* (in 1975 - 6) and *Come-Unity News* (in 1981), they are identified as politically conscious young people engaging in a justifiable response to unemployment, racism and police oppression. These locally-produced newspapers included quotes from young black men designed to substantiate the latter as a self-defined identity. This problem of interpretation did not occur in 1987 and 1988, when two major anti-racist protests were launched by local blacks (of Asian and African descent) and supported by white people. Both of these were accompanied by clear demands for the employment of black people at higher levels within the community education department, and for the removal of a police Inspector accused of identifying Chapeltown's African-Caribbeans as pimps and pushers. The protagonists in these events again defined themselves as politically conscious, arguing for multi-culturalism and equal treatment and defiantly opposing the racist misrepresentation of black people. Yet another event indicating the assertion of a self-defined identity, this time by Muslims, many of whom lived in Chapeltown, took place in 1989. A mass demonstration took place in Leeds against Salman Rushdie's novel *Satanic Verses* (1989). Here, the objection was to the alleged identification of the prophet Muhammad as sexually immoral and of contemporary Muslims as deceitful and dishonest. Local Muslims were emphatic in their rejection of this representation, asserting the purity of their religion and their identities as intensely moral devotees of a faith which, unlike Christianity, was militant in its defence against secularisation and moral torpidude. In each of these events, local people were attempting to forge identities in opposition to those usually imposed upon them in mediated discourses which are unable or unwilling to reflect the various self-definitions of ethnic minorities.

Conclusion

Having already acquired a history of Otherness, Chapeltown became host to black populations whose own history as colonised and racialised subjects fitted them perfectly to fill the place once occupied by the heterodox, aberrant Jews. Forty percent of Chapeltown's population is white (1991 census). Since no public discourse is incited by these people it is impossible to know how they are represented. Perhaps they are subsumed within the hellish symbolism of black-ness. Perhaps their invisibility casts them into even further reaches of Otherness: the non-existent, the symbolically dead. In fact, many of them have played an active part in the plethora of social and political struggles against the damnation of Chapeltown. However firmly the barriers have been discursively erected around Chapeltown, however emphatically it has been deemed to be a zone of the Other, this chapter has sought to emphasise that local people have resisted those practices and burst out of their confines.

It has also highlighted the unusual degree to which a small patch of land within the boundaries of a large city has been ‘placed’ in the popular discourse (and, to the extent that it is also the subject of academic research, in intellectual discourse). We are familiar with the idea that the presence of visible assemblies of black people in a predominantly white city will result in the marking of that territory’s boundaries by the operation of racialised practices. This chapter has attempted to show, however, that this process can be traced in Button Hill/Chapeltown to a period long before the arrival of black residents. The white middle-classes who built this area from the 1870s onwards were emphatic in the delineation of the suburb as their preserve. They noted with some alarm the insidious intrusion of (white) Jewish people in the 1920s. The local press constructed this place as a ‘little Israel’ in the 1950s. It was, as it were, ready-made for the arrival and settlement of the black Other from the late 1950s to the present. It is evident that there is an extraordinary persistence in the process of spacialising this area as a place marked first by class and Christianity, then by Jewish ethnicity and now by the over-definition of the cultures of whose supposed difference is encoded by the colour of their skin.

Further reading

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