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Multicultural Glasgow: Imagining Scotland as a Space of Cultural Intersection in Scots-Asian Films of the 2000s

Emily Torricelli

Abstract: *In films, even contemporary ones posing alternatives to the mythic representations of Scotland, Scottish identity is often constructed as homogeneous and white. Though a small number of films have been made addressing Scotland's white minority groups, it is not until the 2000s that filmmakers such as Ken Loach and Pratibha Parmar began to explore non-white Scottish identities. This article explores the ways the former's* Ae Fond Kiss… *(2004) and the latter's* Nina's Heavenly Delights *(2006) construct hybrid, plural Scottish identities by first considering the way the two films construct these identities, and then by considering the how the identities constructed were received by film critics.* Ae Fond Kiss… *suggests that racial and ethnic minorities understand "Scottishness" in varied ways that are often influenced by gender, whereas, for* Nina's Heavenly Delights*, race, gender, and sexuality are some of the many identities that are united in the Scottish nation. In support of the plural and hybrid Scotlands these two films construct, film critics, despite the complications of genre, strongly label both as Scottish films, which suggests they understand Scotland as a diverse or hybrid place or culture.*

In cinema, Scottish identity has traditionally been constructed as white. Even contemporary films that posed alternatives to mythic representations of Scottishness such as *Gregory's Girl* (Bill Forsyth, 1981) or *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle, 1995) often assume the racial and ethnic homogeneity of Scottish identity. Though a small number of films such as *Comfort and Joy* (Bill Forsyth, 1984) and *Orphans* (Peter Mullan, 1998) were made during the 1980s and 1990s that address Scotland's white minority groups—in these films Italians and Irish respectively—it was not until the 2000s that filmmakers began to explore nonwhite Scottish identities. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, new constructions of Scottishness began to emerge as films such as *Nina's Heavenly Delights* (Pratibha Parmar, 2006), *American Cousins* (Don Coutts, 2003), and *Red Road* (Andrea Arnold, 2006) raised questions of difference regarding race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality.

This increasing diversity has been understood in a number of different ways by academics. Sarah Neely notes that, in contemporary Scottish cinema, "issues of national identity are dealt with more tentatively. Issues of migration come to the fore, identity is not fixed but fluid, and breaks with narrative convention serve to mirror the fragmentation of experience" (161). Likewise, for Jonathan Murray, the conditions of film production this century suggest a turn toward the transnational (88). David Martin-Jones, however, defines Scottish cinema of the 2000s as a "global cinema", the product of

> both a youthful film industry with a global impact and a small nation in which the global film industry makes films … Scotland is understood as a country that exists in

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> the midst of, and interjects in various ways with, the increasingly decentralised flows of film production and distribution that circulate the globe. (11)

These approaches share commonalities. First of all, they observe that as Scottish film production was becoming part of an increasingly globalised industry, so filmmakers working in Scotland or with Scottish funding began offering a more plural, diverse and inclusive representation of Scotland. Second, they associate this Scottish filmmaking with identities that go beyond the national. For Martin-Jones, the turn in Scottish film away from national identities towards internally diverse or transnational ones can contribute toward an understanding of why strong Scottish cultural identity may not necessarily equate a strong Scottish political identity exemplified by the desire for independence (Stroh 171).

However, recent census data suggests the continued relevance of the national for understanding Scottish identities. Of the 5,295,403 respondents to the 2011 census in Scotland, approximately 4% of the population identified as nonwhite, with the biggest minority ethnic group being Asians at 2.7% ("National Records").[1] While the overall proportion may be small, especially when compared to the 14% of the population in England and Wales who identified themselves as nonwhite in the census ("Ethnicity and National Identity"), the number of people in Scotland identifying as a minority ethnicity has doubled since the 2001 census ("Ethnicity, Identity"). But while Scotland's population has been diversifying, in terms of national identity, the 2011 census also demonstrated a heavy identification as Scottish rather than British. Approximately 62.4% of the respondents to the census identified as Scottish only; a further 18.3% responded as being equally Scottish and British, while 1.9% responded as being Scottish and another national identity ("National Records"). Furthermore, more than 30% of those identifying as a minority ethnicity also identified their nationality as Scottish ("National Records"). It would therefore seem that, regardless of ethnic background, more people are finding ways in which to identify as Scottish. Sociologist David McCrone suggests that this arises out of people's everyday experiences living in Scotland (174).

McCrone's concept of the Scottish nation is one that is plural and contingent; for him "'Scotland' exists at different levels of meaning" (37). A return to this understanding of Scotland is necessary to understand the continuing importance of Scottish national identities amidst transnational and global ones. This article will go beyond the work done by Murray, Martin-Jones, and others to take a more in-depth look at *how* Scots-Asian films—those films that explore the experiences of Scotland's diasporic Asian communities—particularly Ken Loach's *Ae Fond Kiss…* (2004) and *Nina's Heavenly Delights*, construct the variety of identities they offer as plural and hybrid and demonstrate the ways identities based on gender, race and nation interact with each other.

In support of this, reviews of these two films will also be considered. This is an area that has received little attention, particularly in the narrow field of Scottish cinema studies. For the study of identity in film, the perspectives of audiences are important because, according to McCrone, "we may think that we are making it [our identities] up as we go along, but we are in fact dancing to a tune laid down by others. We can do it our way, but … it must bear a passing resemblance to its representation to be treated as tolerably recognisable and authentic by the audience" (152). Therefore, one's claim that a film is Scottish, Asian, etc., needs to be supported by others who receive it as such. Film reviews provide a useful tool, then, because they account for the variety of ways audiences approach and understand film. Mark Jancovich defines the function of film reviews as follows:

> reviews and feature articles set agendas for audiences by drawing attention to what is taken to be interesting or noteworthy about a film. They also reflect differing attitudes of different sections of the media to varying taste formations. In the process, they focus their attention on different features and employ wildly different notions of cinematic value. (37)

Therefore, analysis of film reviews is important not only because it provides insight into how one specific audience, film critics, understands film, but also because this audience is one that can shape how other audiences understand it. While the identities the films construct may not be directly mirrored in their reception, the sense of hybridity present in them reaffirms the presence of the national alongside transnational and global identities.

Both of these Scots-Asian films construct Glasgow as a place of intercultural exchange though the use of interracial romantic couplings in the forms of melodrama and romantic comedy genres. *Ae Fond Kiss…* is director Ken Loach's fifth feature collaboration with Glaswegian screenwriter Paul Laverty, and the third in their "Glasgow Trilogy" following *My Name Is Joe* (1998) and *Sweet Sixteen* (2002).[2] *Ae Fond Kiss…* has much in common with these films: it received funding from Scottish Screen and the Glasgow Film Fund in addition to German, Spanish and French sources, making it, like many of Loach's films, a European coproduction. It is also set and filmed in and around Glasgow, features local professional and nonprofessional actors, and is filmed in a realist style as is typical of Loach's over fifty-year directing career. However, it differs from the "typical" Loach film in two regards. First, it is more upbeat and hopeful than the majority of his productions. Second, instead of focusing on matters of class, Loach and Laverty focus here on issues of race and culture. Laverty has stated that they made *Ae Fond Kiss…* in order to explore the problems facing Western Muslims in a post-9/11 world (Mottram 22–3). This is pursued through the melodramatic love story between Casim (Atta Yaqub), who lives with his Pakistani Muslim family, and Roisin (Evie Birthistle), an Irish Catholic. The relationship meets difficulties on both sides: Casim's family, especially his parents, hold on to a "traditional" cultural perspective that disapproves of him dating a white woman and expects him to participate in an arranged marriage. Meanwhile, Roisin faces opposition from her parish priest who disapproves of her living out of wedlock with a non-Catholic. Ultimately, Casim must make the difficult decision to abandon either his family or his lover; he chooses Roisin.

Most critical analyses of *Ae Fond Kiss…* have focused on the way it explores racial tensions. According to Jonathan Murray, Loach uses Roisin's inability to understand Casim's family to show how race is a problematic (though one not without the possibility for progress) issue in Scotland:

> On the one hand, the film openly acknowledges the existence of racial prejudice and tension within present-day Scotland. But on the other, it also outlines a tentatively optimistic analysis of the progressive social and cultural possibilities inherent within an increasingly multicultural national sphere. (119)

Steve Blandford goes further, suggesting that the film reveals that it is not just England that is multicultural; there are multiple ethnic and national identities in Celtic Britain. Race is problematic throughout Britain, not just in England, and the film "seeks … to expose the causes of suspicion and division between communities which define themselves partly via reference to Scottishness" (Blandford 102–3). However, Blandford also suggests that while

the national community constructed in *Ae Fond Kiss…* may be divided along racial and religious lines, it nevertheless still defines itself as Scottish. By contrast, Martin-Jones suggests that "Loach depicts this hyphenated Scottish-Pakistani identity as a global/local, as opposed to national, phenomenon" (184).

According to John Hill, while *Ae Fond Kiss…* explores race relations in Scotland, "[i]t does so, however, in a way that seeks to avoid mapping these in terms of a simple contrast between tradition and modernity" (100). The film, therefore, indicates that there are multiple ways by which ethnic and racial Others can understand themselves as Scottish, but to identify as such is easier for some than for others. As McCrone reminds us, posing the question of who is constructing Scotland reveals that there are competing versions of the nation (51). Scotland is thus conceptualised as a plural entity; there are many different ways in which individuals can understand themselves to be Scottish.

For Roisin, national identity is problematic in a different way than for the Asian characters in the film. As a white minority, she is not confronted with racism in the same way that Casim is. Although she faces pressures from the community concerning her relationship with an Asian Muslim—exemplified by the traditionalist priest who refuses to approve her for teaching in a Catholic school—her minority identity does not challenge her sense of belonging the way it does for Casim and his family. Most obviously, her whiteness clearly differentiates her from them. In addition, Ireland and Scotland have common Celtic origins, and there is an established Irish Catholic community in Glasgow, one that found common religious ground with displaced Highland Catholics. Therefore, Roisin's racial identity and the entrenchment of Irish Catholics in Glasgow save her from having to make the difficult choice between family and romantic love that Casim must make.



Figure 1: Sadia and Tariq in the home, the former wearing traditional dress.
***Ae Fond Kiss…* Sixteen Films, 2004. Screenshot.**

The Khan family's relation to the nation they inhabit is far more varied.[3] The older generation, Casim's mother, Sadia (Shamshad Akhtar) and his father, Tariq (Ahmad Riaz), has a strong Pakistani identity (Figure 1). Sadia is strongly associated with the old country: she is always in traditional dress, we never hear her speaking English, although she evidently understands it, nor does she appear outside of the domestic sphere of the house and its environs. Tariq is also traditional, but less so than his wife. He wears both a mix of traditional and Western clothes, speaks both English and Punjabi at home, and is shown to be strongly paternalistic in his reactions to both Casim and Roisin's relationship and their daughter Tahara's decision to attend university away from home. In his treatment of Roisin, Tariq may appear to be bigoted, but he also seems to be on friendly terms with the white Glaswegians builders who construct an extension to his home.

The younger generation of the family, particularly the two female children, share more complex understandings of their identities. Casim's youngest sister Tahara (Shabana Bakhsh) tells us that her older sister Rukhsana (Ghizala Avan) identifies as a Black Muslim, suggesting that she understands herself in essentially political terms: she sees herself in more transnational terms in the way she identifies with other global racial and religious minorities. Tahara herself identifies as both Pakistani and Scottish. At the beginning of the film she gives a speech to her class in which, after describing the way other members of her family identify, she declares that she is "a Glaswegian Pakistani woman teenager who supports Glasgow Rangers in a Catholic school" (Figure 2). This overtly postmodern expression of identity suggests that she is able to identify as both at the same time. But Tahara has embraced a more Western than traditional Pakistani way of life. She goes clubbing with her white friends, wears what her brother thinks is provocative clothing, and applies to study journalism at the University of Edinburgh rather than medicine in Glasgow, as her family wants.



Figure 2: Tahara sports a Glasgow Rangers jersey amongst her presumably Celtics-fan schoolmates. *Ae Fond Kiss…* Sixteen Films, 2004. Screenshot.

Casim's understanding of himself as Scottish and/or Pakistani is less defined. He wants what the West has to offer: to choose whom he wants for a partner and, in terms of business, to open a club where all people can mix without judgement. However, he struggles with a desire to uphold his parents' culture. Before he meets Roisin, he seems not to mind an arranged marriage, which suggests that it is not the idea of an arranged marriage that bothers him. It is difficult for him to dishonour and disobey his family. Furthermore, his attitude toward Tahara—telling her to go home when he runs into her in a club and supporting his parents' insistence that she stay in Glasgow to attend university—indicates the same kind of paternalism that his father shows to him. Casim may want to be Scottish, but he also adheres to the patriarchal structure of his Pakistani family.

Casim's inner conflict, then, is not his Scottish identity versus his family's Pakistani identity, but rather comes from his liminal or hybrid state of inbetweenness.[4] Unlike Tahara, whose plural understanding of identity allows for both, Casim does not fully identify as Scottish or as Pakistani. It is because he cannot learn how to balance both identities that he must eventually choose Roisin over his family. Here, Loach suggests that Casim's masculinity is what prohibits him from coming to terms with his identity. However, the film's most prominent female characters, Roisin and Tahara, are much more comfortable with their identities. In contrast to Casim, Tahara's identity allows for a more hopeful solution to her own rebellion. After Casim has left home permanently, Tahara tells her parents that she will be going to Edinburgh, and that she will not be breaking off contact with Casim. However, she then follows this announcement by thanking them—in Punjabi, not English—for all they have done for her and promising, in her own way, to make them proud of her. That her father does not react with anger suggests that this act of defiance will be far less disruptive to the family. Unlike Casim, who sees his Scottish and Pakistani identities in conflict with each other, Tahara has embraced them both and is therefore able to offer a solution acceptable to all parties.

The critical reception of *Ae Fond Kiss…* also shows a complex understanding of Scottish identities, but uses different strategies to those used by the film. In both Scottish and London-based papers, the Glasgow setting was important to how critics understood *Ae Fond Kiss…* as Scottish. For Andy Dougan of *The Evening Times*, it is a "Glasgow-based romance" ("Now" 23), and Thomas Quinn of *The Mirror* found it "surprising that it offers such an attractive view of Glasgow" (15). This suggests that as images of contemporary Scotland on screen increase, so too does the familiarity with these images. For both some London-based and American critics, accent was key to the Scottishness of the film: Lee Marshall writing in *Screen International* notes that "the broad Glaswegian accents … may cause problems for those who have not spent much time on Clydeside" ("Ae"); while *Variety*'s Leslie Felperin, suggests that, with the Glaswegian dialect difficult for even English audiences to understand, the film might fare better subtitled (38).

However, reviewers use elements like genre to identify *Ae Fond Kiss…* outside of a Scottish context. In both Scottish and London papers, the film is labelled a romance: McGill describes it as a "post-9/11 take on Romeo and Juliet" ("Stage" 8), whereas *Time Out*'s reviewer calls it a "Glaswegian update of the 'Romeo and Juliet' theme" (69). Furthermore, some London and American papers also label *Ae Fond Kiss…* as British, and notably one way in which they both do so is by comparing it to other representations of Asians in British media. Christopher Tookey writes in the *Daily Mail* that, "This scenario has been played out in many a TV soap opera and in hit movies such as *East Is East* and *Bend It Like Beckham*" (54). Felperin also compares it to similar films and television programmes (38). Some

London-based critics, however, preferred to see the film in terms of working out questions of race in British society. *The Guardian*'s Peter Bradshaw sees it as "a reminder that racial and cultural differences in Britain, so far from dying out with the older generations, is in some communities stronger and fiercer than ever" (14–15).

While critics do not seem to reflect the film's pluralistic approach to Scots-Asian identities, they nevertheless understand *Ae Fond Kiss…*'s Scottishness in complex ways. In all markets, they identified it as simultaneously Scottish and not-Scottish. In Scotland, issues of race were handled differently than in London-based reviews; for them, the Glasgow constructed in the film is one in which cultures blend. For example, Dougan argues that it "evokes a picture of a Glasgow which is slowly coming to terms with its melting pot culture" ("Film" 19).

Unsurprisingly, in all three markets *Ae Fond Kiss* is discussed as a Ken Loach film. Indeed, many critics' chief concern seems to be identifying where the film fits into the Loach canon as it is seen as somewhat of a departure from his usual realist fare. For example, McGill asks, "You'd expect an uncompromising message from Loach—and you get one—but who would have thought he'd deliver it with such lightness and charm?" ("Stage" 15). Loach's reputation as the chief proponent of British realism who has lately taken to producing film in Scotland complicates the way those films are labelled with a national identity, and this tension is reflected in the way critics responded to *Ae Fond Kiss….* Some critics, particularly London-based and American ones, use Loach to locate *Ae Fond Kiss…* as a British film. For Mark Kermode, for example, the film "reaffirms his [Loach's] reputation as one of Britain's most reliably honest, insightful and entertaining film-makers" ("Mark").

However, there was also a significant tendency for reviewers to identify the film as Scottish. Quinn describes Loach and Laverty as "Scotland's most successful directing and writing team" (15). Scottish critics like *The Herald*'s James Mottram Berlin and Alam Macdermid (7) and the *Sunday Herald*'s Barry Didcock (6) also identify the film as the third in a trilogy of Loach films set in Glasgow. Alastair Mckay of *The Scotsman* goes further in labelling it Scottish; he says, "Loach is not a Scot, but he has made a significant contribution to our culture" (12). Mckay here makes Loach and *Ae Fond Kiss…* honorarily Scottish. Likewise, other critics see no contradiction in regarding *Ae Fond Kiss…* as both Scottish *and* British. Colin Fox of *The Mirror* first calls Loach "a British national institution" and then "a Scottish treasure given his enduring work with Glaswegian screenwriter Paul Laverty" (17). This strengthens the argument that critics are beginning to understand film in a more transnational way in ascribing national identity.

Whereas *Ae Fond Kiss…* exposes the problems of a racially divided Scotland, *Nina's Heavenly Delights* seeks to celebrate contemporary Scottish diversity. The film is somewhat more explicit about the connections among gender, race and Scottish identity in the way it features a variety of characters representing different ethnicities, genders, sexualities and ages. The eponymous protagonist, Nina (Shelley Conn), a Scots-Indian lesbian, has just returned home to Glasgow from England for her father's funeral. She discovers that, due to her father's gambling debts, the family restaurant is now part owned by the father of her former classmate Lisa (Laura Fraser), who plans to sell to Raj, her ex-fiancé's father. In order to make her own father proud (and raise the selling price of the restaurant), Nina enters in a curry cooking competition. As they prepare for the televised final, attraction between Nina and Lisa grows. However, Nina worries about her family finding out, as only Bobbi (Ronnie Jhutti), her gay transvestite friend who leads a mixed-race troupe of male dancers called the

Chutney Queens, knows she is a lesbian. It transpires, though, that other members of her family are also keeping secrets: her sister Priya (Zoe Henretty) competes at traditional Scottish dancing, her brother Kary (Atta Yaqub) has married a white woman, and even Nina's mother has long harboured affection for Raj. These various revelations embolden Nina to come out and, at their moment of triumph, Nina and Lisa kiss on national television.

Written by Scottish screenwriter Andrea Gibb, and directed by Kenyan-English documentarian Pratibha Parmar, *Nina's Heavenly Delights* received financing from Scottish Screen. According to Tasmin Whitehead, Parmar's experiences as a lesbian of colour have shaped her interest in exploring destabilised identities (59). With Scottish and hyphenated English identities involved, the film's production therefore reflects its fundamental attitude toward diversity. Furthermore, the film was produced at time when LGBTQ rights issues came to more prominence in Scotland: in its first fifteen years, the Scottish Parliament passed legislation regarding legal gender change, joint adoption rights for same-sex couples and same-sex marriage, among other things.

The film also reflects a hybrid sense of identity in the way it plays with genres. The primary influence here is the romantic comedy, one associated with many internationally successful British films such as *Four Weddings and a Funeral* (Mike Newell, 1993) and *Notting Hill* (Roger Michell, 1999). Furthermore, film critics such as *Sight & Sound*'s Geoffrey MacNab connect the film to Bill Forsyth's Glasgow-set films like *That Sinking Feeling* (1979) and *Comfort and Joy* (74, 76), which suggests they perceive it as part of the tradition of Scottish comedy films. And although the film adheres to the structure of the romantic comedy, there are nevertheless also direct references to Bollywood: Bobbi performs a well-known musical number for a group of children, and Nina's mother watches a Bollywood film as she ponders the nature of her daughter and Lisa's relationship. This associates *Nina's Heavenly Delights* with a distinctive mode of Indian cinema whose audience spans the globe, but it also places the film within the tradition of other British-Asian, female-centred films such as Gurinder Chadha's *Bride & Prejudice* (2004), which also makes frequent references to Bollywood.

Nina's Heavenly Delights takes a much more positive view of race in Scotland than *Ae Fond Kiss…* does. According to Martin-Jones, the film "constructs a fantasy Glasgow in which all cross- or intercultural desires are not only permitted, but also provide the recipe for financial success" (80). Likewise, for Jonathan Murray, it represents Scotland as a space of positive cultural exchange: "*Nina's…* utopian worldview involves the film's celebratory depiction of Glasgow/Scotland as an increasingly multicultural society. Immigrant India influences are understood to have augmented the native culture into which they have settled" (122). Moreover, the film's "untrammelled multicultural optimism also leads the film to argue that Indian characters and culture have benefitted from the influence of the Scottish social sphere which they have relocated themselves within" (Murray 122). While Murray argues that the alternatives to patriarchal structures the film offers ultimately fail, we can still see the diversity on offer as the formation of a positive hybrid Scottish identity. For example, all of the three couples formed during the film—one gay male, one lesbian, one heterosexual—are racially mixed. There are various other instances of cross-cultural adaptation. By wearing a sari to the curry competition, Kary's wife appropriates her husband's culture, and in her Highland dancing, complete with tartan and bagpipes, Priya has embraced a traditional construction of Scottish identity. The Chutney Queens dancing troupe is perhaps the best example of the way the cultures merge in the film. The dancers are both white and Asian; they dance Bollywood-style to Western pop music in rehearsal, and in

performance they wear kilts made out of either Indian material or, in Bobbi's case, leather (Figure 3). At the film's end, they all perform in traditional Indian garments against a Highland backdrop. The Chutney Queens therefore offer a striking hybrid of not only Indian and Scottish culture, but also drag culture, tying racial, national and gender identities together. However, Churnjeet Mahn argues "that the mobilization of stereotypes about Scotland and a vision of Scottish national identity is used to erase the traces of friction between traditional, or normative, and non-normative sexualities" (326). For Mahn, although *Nina's Heavenly Delights*'s inclusivity glosses over the potential disruptiveness of Nina's sexuality (324), the film ultimately "lay[s] foundations for a productive subject identity that marks the film out against the prevailing trends in contemporary films and critical discussions of female same-sex desire in the South Asian diaspora" (326).



Figure 3: The Chutney Queens performing drag on many levels.
***Nina's Heavenly Delights*. Kali Films, 2006. Screenshot.**

On the surface, it appears that with so many identities on offer, *Nina's Heavenly Delights* undermines any veracity of an overarching Scottishness. However, all of these identities—post-colonial, gender, sexual orientation—are understood in the framework of the national. For Daniela Berghahn,

> the theme of "coming out" in the diasporic family articulates a critique of fantasies of purity, which simultaneously underpin certain traditional models of the family (based on bloodline and descent, gender hierarchies and heteronormativity) and nationalist ideologies (based on ethnic absolutism and other essentializing concepts). (130)

Nina's acceptance by her family represents the acceptance of other races into a Scottish national identity (Berghahn 141). Therefore, we can understand *Nina's* sexual identities not as fragmenting Scottish identity, but as supporting the inclusive Scottish national identity the film tries to construct.

Furthermore, the film also uses a rather obvious—and familiar—cooking metaphor to underline its approach to identity. With much of the action set in a curry restaurant and culminating in a nationally televised—to Scotland and India, we are told—curry competition, food holds much symbolic value in this film. As Nina prepares for the competition, there are cooking montages in which the printed recipes dissolve to the simmering dishes, the written names of ingredients lingering over the pot (Figure 4). Like the curries Nina serves—made of distinct ingredients that are blended to make a dish—the Scotland *Nina's Heavenly Delights* constructs is made up of a variety of identities which may be divided by race, gender, sexuality, etc., but that, when they come together, are what make up the nation.

As with *Ae Fond Kiss…*, critics in both Scotland and London compare *Nina's Heavenly Delights* to other British-Asian films and filmmakers, particularly to Gurinder Chadha, whose films focus on the experiences of British-Asian women. Geoffrey Macnab makes such a comparison: "like Gurinder Chadha, Parma [sic] has a flair for making an embroiled family drama both cheery and accessible" (74, 76). In fact, academics have also drawn parallels between *Nina's Heavenly Delights* and Chadha's work. For Ellen Dengel-Janic and Lars Eckstein, although films like *Bend It Like Beckham* (Gurinder Chadha, 2002) and *Bride & Prejudice* (Chadha, 2004) purport to offer a progressive view of Asian identities, they are conservative in their approach to gender to appeal to their broader transnational audiences (54). And while *Nina's Heavenly Delights* is more progressive with its gender roles, it "proposes a … simplistic solution—namely the effortless transcendence of all social obstacles through the power of love" (Dengel-Janic and Eckstein 58). Therefore, critics like Macnab identify *Nina's Heavenly Delights* as British by placing it within a tradition of populist British-Asian filmmaking. Of course, this construction of the film's British identity is one also complicated by its Asian identity. This can equally apply to *Ae Fond Kiss…*, but the hyphenation of British identity is much stronger in the reviews of *Nina's Heavenly Delights* with the emphasis on the film's Bollywood elements suggesting a greater understanding of the film as part of the culture of the Asian diaspora.

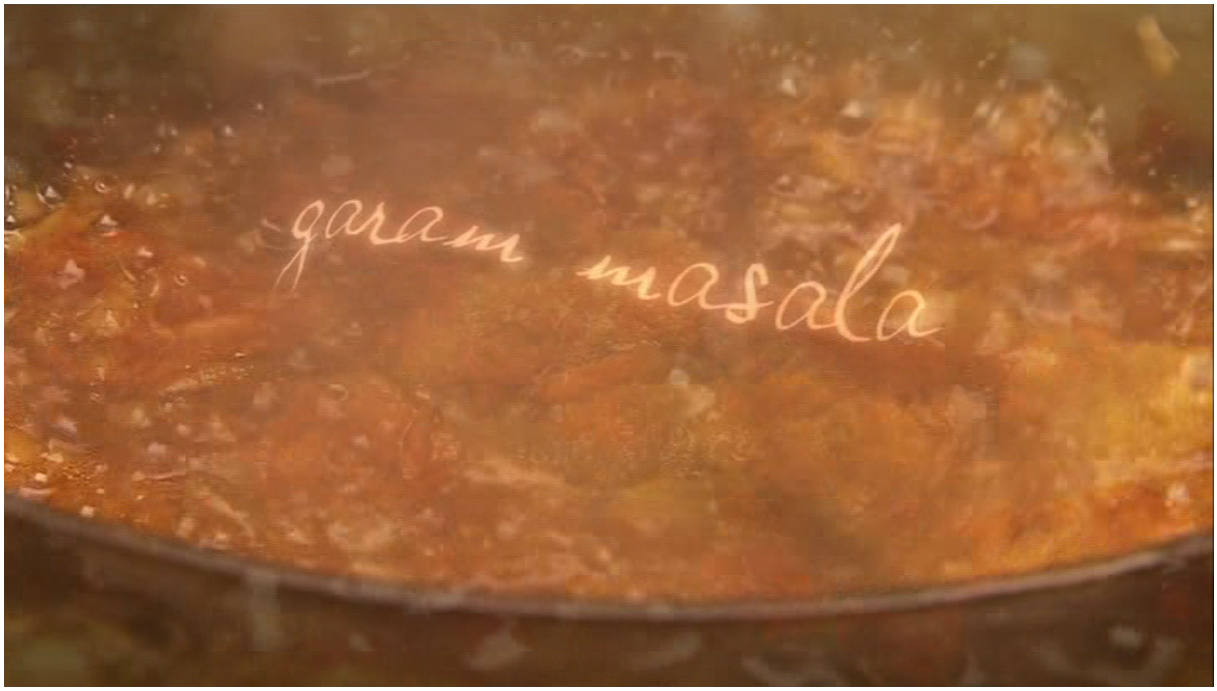


Figure 4: Written ingredients dissolving into the curry.
Nina's Heavenly Delights. **Kali Films, 2006. Screenshot.**

Though less prominent than with *Ae Fond Kiss…*, the identification of *Nina's Heavenly Delights* as projecting a hybridised culture reinforces a more diverse sense of identity in Scotland. Nesselson, for example, describes Nina as "Indo-Scottish" ("Nina's"). Unsurprisingly, most of the critics who describe the film in terms of both its Scottish and Asian identities are from Scottish papers. Alison Rowat suggests it has affinities with both British-Asian cinema and a tradition of Scottish comedy films (2). Others note that the multiculturalism the film promotes is representative of a diverse Glasgow: the *Daily Record*'s Alan Morrison writes that, "Everyone with taste buds knows Glasgow is home to the best curries in the country" (51), suggesting this particular bit of Asian culture has been adopted as part of the Glaswegian identity. What this suggests is that, for a diverse city like Glasgow, Scottish identity is increasingly understood to be a multifaceted or hybrid identity. For these critics, the Asian identities in the film are part of what makes *Nina's Heavenly Delights* Scottish.

Considering the reception of these films together, two main issues become clear. In the 2000s, there seems to have been a strong sense of a distinctively Scottish film industry, with many reviews picking up on the Scottish talent involved in production and with the contemporary representations of the nation they appeared to offer. What this also suggests is that new constructions of Scotland were becoming familiar to more audiences, and therefore had a wider recognition as Scottish. Moreover, we see a greater recognition of national identities as hybrid. On the one hand, this may be due to a greater understanding of the transnational realities of contemporary cinema. On the other hand, critics could be seeing Scotland as a more diverse or hybrid place or culture because of the wider availability of contemporary Scottish representations. In this sense, the films may also be reflecting the changing reality of life in a Scotland whose population is defined and defines itself in relation to a variety of identities. Thus, Scotland is constructed as a place of intercultural exchange. *Ae Fond Kiss…* suggests that, rather than identifying as either Scottish or Asian, postcolonial subjects have come to inhabit and understand national identity in a variety of ways. For *Nina's Heavenly Delights*, national identities are already hybrid identities: one is always Scottish and something else, and nation is what binds all these separate identities together. Furthermore, both films offer insight into the relationships among gender, race and national identity. In the latter, they are closely linked; for the former, those who identify as female find it easier to negotiate identities hybridised by race and nation.

This construction of Scottish cinema as hybrid might suggest a shift away from the understanding of a defining national context to a more transnational view. *Nina's Heavenly Delights* is a commercial film in a domestic context. It has nationally specific content, but because of its use of genre and focus on entertainment, it is accessible to audiences across borders. *Ae Fond Kiss…*, however, is located more firmly in the art cinema category due to Loach's auteurist credentials and socially realist associations. The designation "art cinema" may be diverse, but it is still fundamentally international in the way it circulates and in "an appeal to the 'universal' values of culture and art" (Neale 35); however: "Art films tend nearly always to retain a mark which serves simultaneously as a sign of their cultural status and a sign of their national origin" (Neale 35). *Ae Fond Kiss…* retains something culturally specific to Scotland while appealing to an international audience.

Conversely, we can also see this as a reaffirmation of the national in the way it redefines the concept of Scotland as a nation to make it more inclusive of "other" identities. Cinema that engages with ethnic and racial Others can challenge and destabilise understandings of national identity as a homogenising category. For Isaac Julien and Kobena

Mercer, the breakdown of the binary relationships between centre and margin, black and white, etc., deconstructs the idea that ethnicity belongs to the Other; whiteness, too, is made up of various ethnic identities (5–6). Therefore, rather than merely locating Scotland along interconnected lines of transnational identities, the presence of racial and ethnic minority identities in early twenty-first century Scottish films reveals "Scottish" to be an already plural identity, which accords with David McCrone's assertion that Scotland exists in multiple, competing versions (51).

Notes

[1] Figures have been rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent.

[2] Loach, who has been a mainstay of British realism since his film and television works of the 1960s, first worked with Laverty in 1996 on *Carla's Song*, and has since made several films set in Scotland and/or with Scottish funding.

[3] The idea of a range of ways in which British Asians relate to the nation has been explored previously in films such as *Bhaji on the Beach* (Gurinder Chadha, 1993).

[4] The liminality of British Asians has long been explored by filmmakers like Hanif Kureshi, Gurinder Chadha, and Isaac Julien; *Ae Fond Kiss…* is the first film to do so in a Scottish context.

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