

Dr Kavita Bhanot

University of Leicester

THIRD WORLD THEMATICS: A TWQ JOURNAL

From the special issue: Border Thinking Gender in South Asia

Received 26 April 2019

Accepted 26 November 2019

Abstract

This reading focuses on the mother figure in recent novels and memoirs by Punjabi-origin male writers. These texts can be seen as forms of translation into modernity, of subjects that are rarely represented in English-language literature, that cannot be recognised by the text, that exist at its margins. These texts are founded in the idea of the nation; which is unable to contain or represent these mother figures. Where is the nation for the non-English speaking Sikh and Muslim mothers in the texts if it is neither India nor Britain (where acceptance is conditional on being ‘modern’, speaking English, secular)? The ‘difference’ of these mother figures means that they don’t fit into the idea of Britain; their identities are tied up with the immediate communities in which they live and the regions from whence they hail. There is little connection to the British citizen-making project and ‘multiculturalism’. Decolonial readings of these texts through regional (Punjabi) lens can help to read the mother figures better, reading her ‘difference’. Meanwhile, resilience can be seen as a form of resistance to British hegemony - connected to rural Punjabi female resistance (resilience) to British and Indian elite hegemony under British colonialism.

Keywords: decolonial, postcolonial, multicultural, British Asian, Punjabi, literature, assimilation, integration, resistance, feminism.

Article Word Count: 8860

A Decolonial Reading of the Punjabi (M)other in British Asian Literature

Introduction

British Asian Literature, written and read through the lens of the nation and multiculturalism, is assumed to broaden Britishness while revealing the ‘difference’ of minority communities. A decolonial reading of British Asian literature can unpack the

modernity and colonialism at the heart of these texts and criticism, helping us to see the limitations of the multicultural framework and of literature itself. Through a decolonial analysis of five post-2008 British Asian literary texts by working-class and Punjabi origin male writers, this article attempts to ‘see’ first-generation Punjabi immigrant women, (m)others in these texts, who are otherwise not ‘seen’ in the literature or its criticism. These women are referred to as (m)others, not to fix them as such, but to capture the way in which they are Othered in the texts, as well as the fact that in all the texts, the primary role and identification of these women is as mother.

The texts being discussed; Daljit Nagra’s poetry collection *Look We Have Coming to Dover*, Sathnam Sanghera’s memoir *The Boy with the Topknot*, Sarfraz Manzoor’s *Greetings from Bury Park*, Nirpal Dhaliwal’s *Tourism* and Sunjeev Sahota’s novel *Ours are the Streets*, are amongst the more well-known contemporary texts by South Asians in Britain. They epitomise, in their narratives and representation, in their Punjabi and working-class framing, British Asianness – what it is assumed to constitute (Bhanot 2011, ix). The male writers are all from Punjabi dominated regions of Britain; meanwhile there is a sense that they now write from outside these locations and communities. They are invested instead, in ‘Britain’ or Britishness, along with the idea of freedom that they associate Britishness with; the freedom to listen to western music or to date British/white women. These narratives, usually presented as a culture clash, as if between equal categories, are founded on ideas of integration or assimilation into Britishness as the necessary path of progress. The ‘self’ in the texts, the ‘normative’ perspective of the second-generation narrators reflect an internalised white gaze. From this perspective, the (m)others of the male narrators are presented as suffocating and stifling, oppressive or invisible - an obstacle in the narrators’ journey towards assimilation, towards Britishness.

However, perhaps because the writers are drawing on their own mothers, these representations are complex; the texts/narrators simultaneously identify with and Other these (m)others – expressing a connection, through love and/or guilt, but also distinguishing themselves, their positionality, their perspective. A working-class background, marginal origin/location can make a writer all the more vulnerable to internalisation of Fanonian self-loathing, racism and dominant ideologies, as well as to exploitation by a powerful commodifying literature industry. The racism underlying the representations of the (m)other in these texts is exacerbated in the face of a lack of mainstream recognition of these (m)others’ specific, perhaps non-modern, non-elite, cultural, linguistic, religious identities. This lack of recognition by the British centre,

but also the irrelevance of this centre, of ‘Britishness’ to these women’s lives, reveals the limitations of the national multicultural framework. Meanwhile, although these texts cannot contain or represent the (m)other’, they are heralded as signifying difference; multiculturalism or diversity. A decolonial reading can help us to see the limitations of these approaches, as well as to ‘see’ the (m)other.

1. Punjabi, Non-elite, First Generation Immigrant Women

The non-elite, Punjabi, first generation female immigrants being discussed here are from East or West Punjab; they travelled to Britain as part of the 1960s or 70s migration wave, as the men initially came to work in the factories, and later returned with, or called over, their wives. (Wilson 1978, 2018, 20-21) Mostly from villages, but also from small towns and cities, they were often, but not of course always, unable to speak, read, write or understand English, and were sometimes also unlettered in Hindi and Punjabi. They moved to areas of Britain such as Bradford, Birmingham, Derby, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Southall – where there were factories and mills in which they and their husbands worked. Later many worked in family-owned shops or other businesses. This also includes women who came to Britain later – in the 1980s and 90s, through marriage or through other routes, such as via East Africa.

There are few literary representations in the English language, of these Punjabi, first-generation female immigrant voices, and those that exist are not by those women. In her contribution to *The History of British Women’s Writing 1970 - Present*, Ruvina Ranasinha (2015) outlines a contemporary history of literary output by South Asian female writers in Britain. It is significant that every female writer touched upon in this overview, first or second-generation immigrant, is middle-class.

The paucity of these voices in English language literature is not only due to language (the fact that this generation might be more comfortable in South Asian languages such as Hindi, Punjabi, Bengali, Mirpuri) but other factors too. For example, the fact that the difficult lives of first-generation immigrants may have left little time for producing literature, that their literature and cultural production has not taken such an individualised form, being communally and orally produced as songs or poetry, storytelling; forms of literary expression that are not recognised by the western mainstream.

Meanwhile, female working-class origin voices have been writing recently (primarily, with the exception of Sharon Duggal’s novel *Handsworth Times*, these have been memoirs such as *Shamed* by Sarbjit Kaur Athwal, *Disgraced* by Saira Ahmed and

Shame by Jasvinder Sanghera.) However, these remain second-generation immigrant voices; the first-generation women in these works are oppressive mothers or mothers-in-law - the texts articulate a critique of the internalised patriarchy perpetuated by these older female characters.

The texts being analysed here are by the sons of these first generation female immigrants – all the writers are of working-class origin, although there has been social mobility. Because the writers are depicting (their?) mothers, the representations are complex - not simply a perpetuation of inherited Orientalism; a white gaze. They reflect a combination of attachment, internalised racism and trauma. (Drawing on the project of decolonising trauma studies, it can be useful here to think about trauma, not as a single catastrophic event, but in terms of the ‘normative, quotidian, and persistent nature of racialised trauma.’ (Andermahr 2015, 501). In this way, the depictions of the (m)other in these texts both ‘other’ and idealise them; they simultaneously marginalise, erase and elevate. Through decolonial counter readings of the texts, the nuances and implications of these representations can be unpacked.

2. Reading British Asian Literature

The fact that thus far literary criticism of British Asian literature is unable to ‘see’ the mother in British Asian literature reflects the location, blindness and prejudice of the critical/political structures upon which ‘multicultural’ criticism is founded, including colonialism and modernity. As a figure, the ‘mother’ disrupts two assumptions at the heart of the literary criticism of British Asian literature (as with marginal literature in most national contexts): that it is authentic, ‘revealing’ the truth of the community being depicted. Secondly, that it contributes to the broadening of Britishness.

Yasmin Hussain (2005), in her comprehensive study of writing by British South Asian women, declares that ‘what has been written and read for pleasure is a fair index of the interests and attitudes widely shared among British South Asian women. She views the literature that she analyses as ‘evidence of the shared preoccupations of whole generations of South Asian women, within South Asian diasporic communities.’(4)

Although Hussain does touch on class and generational differences, (26) inherent within such statements is an assumption that South Asian women form a monolithic group. For Hussain, as for many critics who analyse minority literature by minority writers, this literature becomes a form of sociological evidence;

in a **real** sense eyewitness accounts...They deal with **authentic** concerns about individual and group identity, framed largely by social relations.... we can uncover some of the major issues in the **real** lives of British Asian women.(3)

The repeated reference to terms such as real and authentic (highlighting mine) emphasises that Hussain's reading rests on assumptions that this literature reveals the truth – about the writers, about South Asian women generally. This is often how texts are packaged and marketed – as revealing a community otherwise 'hidden' to the white mainstream. This marker of authenticity is one of the ways in which literature becomes a consumable product. The desire for authenticity is also an aspect of the colonial framework, which seeks to manage, sell and 'know' the 'other'; situating the knower in a position of power in relation to the 'subject', always with a sense of already knowing. The assumption that a text is true is usually founded in its assumptions and ideology being shared by the reader. (Bhanot, 2018)

Literature is, as Williams (1977, 1997, 197) argues 'always aligned...it variously expresses...specifically selected experience from a specific point of view...such a recognition is crucial, against the claims to "objectivity", "neutrality", "simple fidelity to the truth", which we must recognise as the ratifying formulas of those who offer their own senses and procedures as universal.' (199) As such, literature cannot reveal places or groups of people - only perspectives (often dominant) and interpretations. The writer, language, form of the text, and the context in which the work is published and marketed are all ideological; forming the framework into which people, experiences, stories, ideas are fitted. In the case of the literature being discussed the (m)other is represented through a Eurocentric framework, although there are always cracks in the text, 'revealing' more.

The second assumption at the heart of the literary criticism of British Asian literature is that it broadens Britishness, what it means to be British. The assumption that subversive British Asian writers, as Other, are writing themselves into the idea of the nation has tended to dominate literary criticism around the genre of 'British Asian' literature. The idea of nation is not radically questioned; rather, its black and Asian citizens are absorbed into its fold, their literature brought into the British canon in the assumption that this disrupts the idea of a homogenous white nation and of homogenous British literature. For example, according to Neil Murphy and Wai-chew Sim (2008), British Asian texts 'participate in an elaboration of "new ethnicities," in an ongoing recasting of national identity..' (22). Ravasinha (2015), in her outline of British Asian

literature by British Asian women, states at the outset that ‘British Asian women’s fiction does not stem from a solely ghettoized presence, nor from a separate, segregated history...Rather, this body of writing tends to redefine notions of “Britishness” as well as what constitutes feminism.’ Such arguments, wherein texts are seen as inserting themselves into Britishness and feminism; broadening what they constitute, are pervasive across the literary criticism of British Asian literature.

This analysis can be seen to function as an extension of state narratives about immigrants, albeit taking a position of defence against common assumptions regarding ‘ghettoization’ and ‘segregation’ – terms which come to carry the same judgment that they hold in state and mainstream media discourse. Such an argument is founded in assumptions about citizenship as fundamental to identity. The preoccupation is with the need to unify, contain, manage literature in order to feed discourse around integration. Thus, Dave Gunning (2010) is concerned with finding, in British diasporic literature, the articulation of a new kind of multiculturalism that shifts the focus from ‘ethnic communities’ to ‘communally determined but autonomous individual’ agents. For, he argues, a truly valid ethnicity politics ‘must remember that the key task of the political is to find solutions to the problems of unifying diverse people to common goals.’ (48)

Multiculturalism ultimately, as Sneja Gunew (1997) writes, ‘deals with the management (often compromised) of contemporary geo-political diversity in former imperial centres and their ex-colonies alike.’(22) It seeks to control or capture working-class, racialized subjectivities; absorbing, containing resistance. A critique is being made here of such ‘multicultural’ analysis: its focus on citizenship, its ‘top-down’ approach, its preoccupation with the interaction between minorities and the centre, and the need to manage these minorities, or their literature.

In all the texts being analysed, first-generation immigrant women are viewed/presented through the frame of Britishness/multiculturalism, translated, into a national framework; for identity is assumed to be connected to national affiliation. However, the (m)other reveals the conditional nature of multiculturalism/Britishness – the fact that it is not available to everyone - confounding assumptions that citizenship is natural, fundamentally connected to identity. Britishness cannot accommodate or even comprehend her.

The (m)other’s relationship is not with any nation, but with the specific (predominantly Punjabi) region and community in Britain in which she lives, and the region/community she connects with ‘back home’, perhaps in Punjab. The (m)other’s very existence can be seen as a challenge for multicultural or diversity discourse, for the

idea of an 'inclusive' Britain. She doesn't fit into multicultural Britishness or British Asianness – the categories under which these texts are marketed.

She exists outside Britishness, but also outside the texts, which are unable to articulate the specificity of her world-view, practice, history as well as her resistance. It is not only in the publishing and marketing, or the form and language in which the texts are written, that she is erased, distorted, simplified. The writers too, through a personal and political disconnect, through colonisation and associated migration, are unable to see her. She is seen and represented through recognizable signifiers of bracketable otherness; insistence that her son has an arranged marriage, unreasonable emotional blackmail, dress, language, 'bizarre' religious practices, or through perceived commonalities from the 'British' perspective; an aspiration, through hard work, to earn money, to buy a bigger house, to educate her children etc. A decolonial reading of the texts can help us to unpack ways in which the texts and their ideology marginalise and invisibilise the (m)other.

3.'Self' and 'Other' in British Asian Literature

It is part of the Anglo imagination that we can keep our culture and assimilate, a position that would be contradictory if both cultures were understood as informing the "real" fabric of everyday life. But in thinking of a Mexican-American, the Anglo imagination construes "Mexican" as the name for a super-exploitable being who is a practitioner of a superfluous, ornamental, culture. Being "American" is what supposedly gives us (dubious) membership in that "real" culture, the culture of the ideally culturally-unified-through-assimilation is illegitimately called "America." (Lugones 1992, 35)

Lugones touches here on what is at the heart of dual, hybrid, multicultural, national identities. This is the complex way in which liberalism functions; fetishising difference, while giving space in the mainstream to those who demonstrate integration and loyalty to Britishness as whiteness. British Asian literature, the 'self-representation' of South Asians who have lived all or most of their lives in Britain through a culture-clash from the perspective of second generation 'British' protagonists, reveals a similar 'contradiction.' While the literature is assumed to represent internal or external conflict between two apparently equal categories, it connects only to a superficial notion of 'Asianness' while assuming, at its core, the need to assimilate into Britishness -

revealing the Britishness of British Asian literature. One of the ways in which British Asian texts simultaneously signify sameness or familiarity for white readers, as well as apparent difference, is through a separation in the texts between ‘self’ and ‘other’; between the assimilated narrator ‘self’ as ‘good’ immigrant/citizen and the ‘bad’ non-integrated immigrant, such as the (m)other.

‘Difference’ is fetishized in these texts, not only through the figure of the (m)other but also through the titles, marketing, subject matter - and the younger narrator selves, whom the adult narrator selves separate themselves from. For example, the title *The Boy with the Topknot* and the image on the cover, of a younger Sanghera with a topknot, perform and Other the ‘difference’ of Sanghera’s younger self (Bhanot 2018). The reference to Bury Park in the title of Manzoor’s memoir plays a similar role. This is where Manzoor lived as a child, it is also an area of Luton known for its large Muslim population, which became especially significant post 7/7, since the bombers took the train into London from Luton. Meanwhile, more than any of the texts being discussed, Nagra’s collection performs and fetishizes ‘difference’, in particular through Punglish; English inflected with Punjabi (of which the title is an example) which resembles the speech of racist caricatures such as Peter Sellers or in ‘Mind your Language’, or through a colourful cast of Punjabi characters who speak this dialect, and through centring Punjabi traditions, customs, foods; the karela, ladoos, arranged marriage, Sikhism, Bollywood films.

Although all the texts being discussed are marketed through ‘Asianness’ or ‘Muslimness’, at their heart there is a post-race assumption that the narrator ‘self’ is distinct from such an identity. While attributing ‘difference’ to others (such as the (m)other), the narrator selves present themselves as having to perform ‘identity’ due to the pressures of the market. This is articulated in Nagra’s poem ‘Booking Khan Singh Kumar’:

Must I wear only masks that don’t sit for a Brit
Would you blush if I dropped from my native skin.
Should I beat on my chest I’m a ghetto poet....
Should I foot it featly as a Punjab in Punglish...
Did you make me for a gap in the market?
Did I make me for the gap in the market? (2007, 6)

A cynical awareness of the market’s need for this performance is overt in this poem.

However, Nagra's collection articulates only a performative version of Indianness or Punjabiness. This poem, but also, virtually all the texts being discussed, carry the assumption that identity is primarily a performance. A question arises however regarding what is considered 'identity' (affiliation to non-white race, religion and ethnicity) and what is not (whiteness). And what, it can be asked, is assumed to be behind the performance of identity? Behind the notion of colour-blindness, post-race/ethnicity is the framing of whiteness as normative, simultaneously invisible and universal - veiling historical and continuing power relations and denying very real attachments to cultural-religious-linguistic affiliations – while denying, as Lugones asserts, that these have any substance. We see a similar sentiment in a comment from Sanghera in a *Telegraph* article in which he is asked to name five defining British Asian novels. While selling himself, his work through British Asianness, he identifies himself simply as a British writer:

I despise the term 'British-Asian writer'... Frankly, I see myself as a British writer. Or maybe just 'writer'. I'd rather be mentioned in the same breath as Catherine O'Flynn or, in my dreams, Jonathan Coe, than alongside the names of the authors on this list.
(2013)

Being British, being a writer are assumed to be neutral or universal categories - the fact that the writers he identifies with are white writers makes clear what these 'neutral' categories constitute. The assumption that he is British, that he can be absorbed into Britishness emerges from the New Labour context in which Sanghera was writing – wherein it was made clear that some minorities – second generation or non-Muslim, could be absorbed into Britishness, as good immigrants or citizens. As Sivamohan Valluvan (2019) writes:

While conservative visions of the nation posit a more deeply marked and unbridgeable cultural gulf between national subject and minority, immigrant Other, the liberal version remains more nimble and duplicitous. By presenting the liberal repertoire as something that can be ably acquired, many minorities are presented as perfectly credible, indeed commendable denizens of the nation.
(75)

In this way, the assumptions of 'multiculturalism' become apparent; a belief in a linear

teleological version of history as progress and modernity, which has formed a justification for colonialism. The assumption of 'progress', of the need to assimilate, the investment in upward class mobility through capitalism, and the possibility thus, of becoming 'British,' is at the heart of these texts by male British Asian writers. Such a narrative, steeped in the New Labour ideology of aspiration, 'integration', consumerism, suggests that if the writer has managed, from great hardship, to lift himself up and out, anyone who is sufficiently motivated, worthy and hard-working, can do the same. The shift in British domestic rule, in how its minorities are managed, in the public discourse was therefore one from naturalist racism to historicist or progressivist racism. Goldberg describes such a movement as bringing the 'other' into history, into time, thus allowing the 'other' the possibility of becoming fully (or more fully) human. Historicist racism is:

the (re)admission of those deemed not white into a history not simply naturalistic. It represents the elevation of those who had been considered objects of nature to subjects of history, of being placed not before time but in time even if as inhabiting a time not yet modern. (Goldberg, 93)

Such an understanding of the relationship between apparently oppositional categories such as east/west, other/self, black/white casts them as related vertically rather than horizontally. They form a trajectory, wherein the assimilated self is nearer the top while the 'other' is located lower down. The assimilationist aspiration is to the peak.

This distinction between good and bad citizen became exacerbated after 9/11 and 7/7; after this the contradictory commercial and political imperative to both perform 'difference' and demonstrate affiliation to Britishness as whiteness became all the greater. This also manifested through a good and bad Muslim binary. 'Authentic' Muslim voices were sought after while writers were also expected to demonstrate that they were integrated, 'normal' 'British' Muslims.

All the texts under discussion were written in this post 2001 context in which a new 'other' - the radicalised Muslim, emerged in mainstream discourse. 9/11, 7/7, the 'riots' in Northern towns in the summer of 2001, had an impact not only on the literature/cultural production of Muslims, but on contemporary British Asian literature/culture more generally, through changing government policies and media representation regarding immigration, belonging, citizenship. After 2001 there was a crackdown on 'forced' marriages and genital mutilation, which were seen to have been allowed to fester due to the notions of cultural

difference' and moral relativism. David Blunkett (home secretary at the time) argued that if Asians spoke English at home, it would help them to overcome the schizophrenia they experienced. The focus was on community cohesion, on creating a 'national culture.' (Kundnani 2007, 131) In this context – there was an increased pressure on all British Asian writers– whether Muslim or not, to demonstrate integration/loyalty to Britishness, distinguishing themselves from the 'extremist'.

Manzoor is fervent in condemning (and distinguishing himself) from extremist' Muslims who:

lurked outside the central mosque handing out leaflets...who grabbed the headlines with their anger and their hatred...When I heard those young British Muslims speak so contemptuously about living in this country, my reaction was one of anger, confusion and betrayal. What they felt and what they preached was not in my name. (264)

Similarly, most of these texts highlight the importance of learning English, mocking those who speak no English, 'imperfect' English or accented English. 'You're in England now, make some kind of effort to learn the language of your country,' (6) writes Sanghera - addressing, in his head, the taxi driver who insists on speaking Punjabi with him. Harmonious multiculturalism and hybridity are only possible in subsuming to the norms of Britishness; letting go of all but the surface remnants of 'difference.'

These are the ways in which the perspective of the narrator 'self' is established in the texts. In both Sanghera's and Manzoor's memoirs their childhoods are depicted as oppressive, primarily because of the ethnic, religious and class context in which the writers grew up. Both texts identify the markers of assimilation that transformed their lives for the better; Sanghera cutting his hair/top-knot and Manzoor discovering the music of Bruce Springsteen. These texts are the embodiment of a white/British gaze.

In some of the texts, for example, Dhaliwal's *Tourism*, and Sahota's *Ours are the Streets*, we see cracks in the narrator's white gaze. The narrator of *Tourism*, Puppy, starts wanting to reconnect with his family, with India, with his 'roots', however, this is idealised; the normative gaze remains white. Meanwhile, the narrator of *Ours Are the Streets* - Imtiaz Rana, a 'normal' westernised Muslim boy becomes 'radicalised'. In this way, he starts to question a western perspective, but this process is linked to a psychological breakdown rather than a political context; for this reason the perspective of the narrator is revealed to be unreliable. This narrative, along with Manzoor's

memoir, contributes to the creation of a new Other alongside unassimilated parent figures. In fact, (as discussed later) there is a sense in the texts that, in contrast to the extremist muslims, the parents are an evolving ‘other’ who might be drawn into Britishness.

4. (M)other

Through a decolonial reading of these texts, via the cracks in them, we see glimpses of what is outside of them, their ideology - including the trauma of racism, the colonial foundation of ‘multiculturalism, the epistemological violence of British citizen making,’ wherein second generation narrators internalize a shame regarding where they come from, their families, their mothers.

“The Antillian,” writes Fanon of the psychological impact that colonisation has on the black man, “has therefore to choose between his family and European society; in other words, the individual who climbs up into society – white and civilised – tends to reject his family – black and savage – on the plane of imagination....”(115). The ‘uncivilised’ ‘backward’ family has to be rejected, left behind in order for these author-character narrators to become ‘selves’. Internalising a discourse that stereotypes the ‘other,’ casting it as inferior and strange leads the authors to ridicule their parents, or the parent characters in these works. Puppy’s mother in *Tourism* is described thus:

Behold! My mother: matriarch and fulcrum, proud bearer of sons, stately in her new sari, her one eyebrow draped across her forehead like a trophy pelt, her moustache downy like an adult boy’s...we suffered a mother who looked like an animal. Walking with her through streets, down supermarket aisles, we felt ashamed, revolted, and guilty for feeling so. And there was the weight: a stone gained when each of us came of age not meeting her expectations. She was five feet tall, weighed as much as a man and sported a beard; her bulky plait trailed down her arse...Religion played its part... Some idiot told her the truly devout did not pluck or trim a hair on their body; it was her calling. She took Amrit, then observed every tenet. The beard, the thick adjoining eyebrows, became bullish assertions of faith, admired, even coveted by her peers. (34)

The male narrator of *In a White Town* (Nagra 2007,18) describes his mother similarly, through shame:

the pink kameez and ballo'n'd bottoms,
Mustard oil trail of hair, brocaded pink
sandals and the smell of curry...
that illiterate body, bumping noisily into women
at the market, bulging into its drama'd gossip. (18)

While there is a sense that this is the narrator's reflection as an adult on his childhood perception of his mother, this representation remains in a sense, fixed; there is little engagement with where the perception came from. Such an acknowledgement might instigate anger towards the British context, which contributes – through the normalized white supremacy of schools, curriculum, teachers, media, literature - to such a racist gaze towards the mother – a form of epistemological violence.

Ours are the Streets (Sahota 2011) mocks, stereotypes and invisibilises the Muslim (m)other, while appearing sympathetic. For example, in virtually every scene in which the narrator Imtiaz's mother appears it is unexpectedly and pointedly mentioned that you can only see her eyes: “Your mum's got gorgeous eyes” says Rebekah, Imtiaz's white girlfriend, looking at a photograph as she visits his family home for the first time. “That's lucky,” Imtiaz replies, “Seeing as that's the only bit of her you can see.” (25). This is usually in instances where it is unlikely that his mother would be wearing the niqab (a full covering), such as a family photograph, or in the home with only her family. We are told, when she meets Rebekah for the first time, in her home: “the way Ammi's cheeks plumped up around the eyes told me that she were smiling hard under her niqab too.”(41) There is a scene when she is at home with her son and husband, where he is telling his parents that Beckah is pregnant, and it is mentioned, unexpectedly; “Tears under Ammi's eyes, smudging her kohl. I could tell by the way her niqab were fluttering in and out of her mouth that she were breathing hard.” (35) These descriptions and the situations in which his mother is shown to be wearing the niqab seem intended to give a sense of its apparent ludicrousness. The (m)other appears in the novel, even through her own son's eyes, as a blank, emotionless, faceless walking niqab. Reproducing a white gaze, this serves to confirm a media generated public perception of Muslim women.

All these estranging, othering, ridiculing references dehumanise the (m)other - feeding the orientalist racist gaze, revealing the direction that the text faces, the intended readership; whiteness.

Such representations, the fact that they are published and marketed, reflects the

perspective of the state, but also a publishing industry that is unable to recognise the particularity, specificity and difference of the 'other' beyond a commodified, consumable, stereotyped, ridiculed version. This 'otherness' is filtered through the dominant British, white, western perspective, which becomes normative and neutral. Connection is created through stereotypes, or through shared signifiers of 'neutrality' or 'normality'; through 'recognizable differences between those deemed the same, or more succinctly between those recognized at all.' (Goldberg, 5). Whilst it is true that this literature plays a role of Othering, of self-orientalising - a literary phenomenon that has been articulated in reference to other texts by Debashi (2011) and Lau (2009) - missing from such analysis, and all the more pertinent in the work of 'British Asian' writers, since they are writing about their mothers, is a psychological, psychoanalytical understanding, which leads to the internalisation of racist ideologies and stereotypes. As Hall writes:

The ways in which black people, black experiences, were positioned and subject-ed in the dominant regimes of representation were the effects of a critical exercise of cultural power and normalisation. Not only, in Said's *Orientalist* sense, were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as 'Other'... this kind of knowledge is internal, not external. It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge', not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, but by the power of inner compulsion and subjective con-formation to the norm. That is the lesson - the sombre majesty - of Fanon's insight into the colonising experience in *Black Skin, White Masks*. (Hall, 226)

The fact that the (m)other' is (literally) close to home for the self/narrators means that the separation and dismissal needs to be all the more sharp, forceful, vociferous even. Even innocent acts of love, such as a mother feeding her son as a child, are presented as violations, forms of abuse by the sons. Thus Sanghera recounts having his long hair combed and being fed by his mother as a child through words and phrases such as: 'execution', 'smothering', 'mercilessly', 'the torture of breakfast.' He is apparently fed a 'plate of gloop'. Eventually, 'Coughing and spluttering, but managing to swallow the concoction somehow, (he) clamp(s) (his) mouth shut" and 'escape(s) Mum's clutches.' Using similar language, Nagra's poem 'Arranged Marriage' starts with the following

lines, as the narrator recounts his wedding:

My mum cramming a globe of ladoo
Against the will of my gob (20)

At the same time, since they are writing about mother figures, these texts also reveal glimpses of shame, guilt and protectiveness towards the (m)others. ‘I thought of how I’d betrayed my mother and siblings, how I’d neglected my responsibilities and let my life drift,’ (Dhaliwal, 151) thinks Puppy at one point. Elsewhere he wakes up ‘thinking I could smell the incense Mum burned throughout our home, and hear the lull of Sikh hymn she played on a tape recorder. I looked at the beams and remembered where I was, and was disappointed. I hadn’t spoken to my mother for over a month; I felt guilty and made a mental note to call her.’ (140) Later he reflects on how difficult her life has been since his father left her; ‘Poor cow, she had such a fucking bullshit life...She came all the way over here, to marry someone she’d never met. She had no family over here, knew absolutely no-one. And my dad was a cunt...such a fucking cunt...he hit her...he’d really knock the shit out of her.’ (187) We see, through these glimpses, love and empathy for the mother who has suffered so much in her life. But her pain and suffering is almost unbearable for Puppy; he cannot be near her. Remembering the past, when his father threw his mother out of the house, he remembers how she ‘slept and ate at the temple each night for a week; during the day, she wandered the streets of Southall, frantic and penniless...her face warped and swollen with bruises, trying to smile when she sneaked into the house to visit her children’ (188).

By the end of the novel, he has a vision of his mother; ‘an honest realization of how much she loved me. I felt her love in its purity, freed from her fear and confusion.’ (243). Through cracks of love in the texts, the narrators of these works are able to see their mothers’ vulnerability, humanity and love. Similarly, there is guilt expressed in the final lines in Nagra’s poem ‘White Town’, quoted above, about his mother, regarding the shame he felt towards her growing up, as well as a recognition of his mother’s love, almost a desire to prostrate before it:

Nowadays, when I visit, when she hovers upward
Hobbling towards me to kiss my forehead
as she once used to, I wish I could fall forward.

We see in these lines, an awareness of how the power dynamic between mother and son has changed, now that the narrator is an adult. This is articulated through the difference in their heights. However, as is clear in the poem, the usual power dynamic of child and mother was always already complicated due to migration, to the power that being 'British', being English speaking, being able to 'fit in', gave the young narrator. This complexity of the power relationship between mother and son can be unpacked in all the texts. It is also apparent in the very act of power of representation of the (m)other – which, as has been seen, ridicules, dismisses, invisibilises, patronizes and idealises – as well as 'explains' her for white readers. We see a remarkably similar sentiment and description to that in Nagra's poem, in Sanghera's memoir; a feeling of affection and protectiveness – articulated through a sense of his mother's vulnerability which is expressed again in her 'smallness,' her old age:

she seemed smaller than ever before. Mum had always complained of being old and tired ... but was beginning to look it. I felt a pang of protectiveness, warm feelings blotted out with the ink of irritation when she defended her overpacking ... I bit my tongue.(2008, 69)

Mixed into these cracks of love and guilt is also an excessive idealization of the (m)other and an uncritical embrace of the (m)other's excessive idealization of her son within a patriarchal Punjabi context, along with an idealization too, of the mother and son relationship – articulated in Punjabi oral literature; folk songs, poetry, proverbs. At one point Sanghera writes: 'the biggest obstacle was not my family but me. I saw myself as the dutiful son...I also worried (about)..the unhappiness caused by any confrontation with my mother, the grief that would overwhelm me if I was disowned.' (2008, 45) This desire to be the ideal son can come into conflict with an internalized white gaze, which includes an inherited hierarchical structure of progress and the fact that there is so little precedent of representation in the British/western context (beyond the comical and grotesque) of such mother figures.

The basis on which the narrators are able to reconcile with their mothers in some way is to draw them into Britishness or to imagine that they are moving towards Britishness. It is in this sphere of Britishness that they can meet their mothers. This attempt to draw the (m)other into Britishness is perhaps also connected to the emergence of a new demonized Other in the post - 9/11 era, in the form of the Muslim 'extremist', and the idea of deserved citizenship, founded in historicist racism, the idea

of progress.

While the writers have apparently travelled upwards in their journey of ‘success’, from the Punjabi community in the regions, into the centre; in London, the parent figures are also seen to have travelled a journey of progress; from the village to the city in the subcontinent, perhaps via East Africa, to the regions of Britain. In a sense the writers are completing an ‘upward’ journey that their parents began. Contemplating the fact that they have all changed, Sanghera writes:

but not as much as my mother – the distance she has travelled, from collecting cow manure in baskets for fuel in the fields of Punjab to my leather sofa in Brixton, is a greater distance than I have travelled from Prosser Street (Wolverhampton) to this restaurant. (318)

The (m)other becomes, in this way, an ‘evolving’ other. The letter that Sanghera writes to his mother declares an intention to help her to ‘evolve’:

I have always sensed a struggle in you between the Punjabi values of your parents and your natural intelligence, a struggle between your izzat and more modern ideas, and the hope is that I can drag you out of your Punjabi world into my own.” (302)

But there is also the awareness that it is also not possible for the (m)other to be British. Although his memoir articulates his frustration that his mother remains ‘stuck in her ways’, Sanghera, in a moment of protectiveness, recognizes on a deeper level, that the Britishness he proclaims, that he wants his mother to move towards, is not available to her. She is vulnerable in the centre, there is no place for her in this centre he inhabits.

I nearly threw up when I saw her arrive at Euston, with the inevitable two carrier bags of food. Mum is such a strong presence in her world, but out of context she always looks vulnerable. I used to hate it when she visited me at college: I’d feel hyper protective to the point of almost physically lashing out at anyone who didn’t open a door quickly enough, or stared a little too long ... I once even found myself shouting at a member of staff at Heathrow Airport who had barked at Mum for not following his English instructions.

This idea of progress and evolution is inherent also in how religion and language are articulated in these texts. The (m)other is the carrier of religious practice and faith, and also language (articulated perhaps in the very idea of a ‘mother tongue’); she departs this knowledge to her son, teaching him, showing him – a sign of her refusal to progress and of holding her son back too on his journey towards assimilation. In *Tourism*, Puppy recounts that:

Every Sunday I sat in the *gurdwara*, cross legged beside my mother, listening to an interminable service that I didn’t understand. Afterwards we ate langar standing up in the communal canteen, our meals served on prison-issue metal trays. Then came two hours of Punjabi lessons...I hated Sundays; all I could think of was that I was missing the televised football and that week’s edition of *The Smurfs*. (137)

This is an example of the white gaze that pervades the narration – for example the suggestion that watching football and the Smurfs is the ‘normal’ thing to do on a Sunday afternoon. Manzoor’s mother was also the one who taught him Arabic and they read the Koran together; a real sense of connecting with his mother is revealed through this process of religious ‘education.’

Every evening I would go to the bathroom and wash myself in the manner that my mother had taught me...My mother loved telling me stories about Islam and the Prophet. When I came home at lunchtimes she would sit with me in the lounge and tell me about the origins of Islamic festivals. In the evenings when she was pickling peppers or preparing to make yoghurt she would tell me about the angel Gabriel who had brought Allah’s words to the Prophet. (Manzoor 217)

Despite this bonding, religion is one of the ways in which the narrator selves distinguish themselves from the (m)others; whilst the (m)other is the bearer of religion, the narrators articulate their own lack of faith. In *Tourism*, Puppy remembers crying for his “desperate, backward and abandoned mother... I was fourteen years old, and I knew then that religion was for suckers.’(138). This sentiment is echoed in Manzoor’s memoir, when he writes: ‘I was comfortably British, occasionally Pakistani, and only technically Muslim. This was the twenty-first century after all. What did religion matter?’ (233). This declaration is followed in the memoir, by the events of 7/7 – as

Manzoor demonstrates that he can't escape religion, even if he wants to, with the blame for this attributed to 'extremists'. Part of Manzoor's fervent disassociation with Islam is an eagerness to distinguish himself from demonized Muslims. Faith is a marker of the 'other', belonging to the past, low down on the ladder of historical progress and civilisation. The normative perspective of the statist 'self' as an ideal British citizen, is secular.

Beyond these articulations of faith through 'mainstream' religious frameworks, and the reproduction of abstract 'Asian' stereotypes via preceding representations we also see, in these texts, rarely represented glimpses of messy, lived, practiced faith that is even lower down on the ladder of progress; complex, specific, pre-modern forms of expressing religiosity, beyond the mainstream tenets of primary religions such as Sikhism and Islam. Due to the background of the writers, the fact that their mothers are not urban, are not part of the national elite in the subcontinent; they carry 'different' rural identities and practices. However, due to the form and language in which these texts are written, prior dominant modes of representation, and the ideological location of the writers, such representations are far from mimetic. All of these limit the possibility of representation, but also of understanding specific 'difference' that is certainly beyond the terrain of multiculturalism.

The proximity of the writers, through family, to what they deem to be 'backward' practices perhaps make these representations all the more scornful and negative. Sanghera (2008) attempts to describe rituals practiced by his mother, rituals that he cannot make sense of:

(Mum) then took me to a sideboard in the kitchen, where she had laid out, waiting for me, a large cauldron full of birdseed, a tin of spinach, a packet of kidney beans, and a tin of plum tomatoes. First, I was instructed to wash my hands and run them through the birdseed. Then I was told to touch, in specific order, the packaged foodstuffs. Finally, she fetched a single large red chilli from the larder, squeezed it between her fingers, and after circling it around my head five times, set it alight on the gas stove. Centuries of superstition have gone into each element of this ritual, none of which I understand fully, but the birdseed would subsequently be scattered in the local park, an act of inter-species charity designed to bring luck; the spinach, kidney beans and plum tomatoes would be donated to the temple – again, to bring luck; while the burning of the chillies was meant to get rid of 'nazar', a concept loosely translating as 'evil eye,' which you can supposedly contract if you are

admired in anyway. (9)

Here, and in the many other references in the memoir to his mother's rituals, faith and beliefs, Sanghera responds with judgment, dismissal, ridicule - demonstrated in the word 'superstition.' Puppy, narrator of *Tourism*, is even more vitriolic in his mocking of his mother as he remembers her 'spiritual fervour' when her husband left her:

She was hysterical and visited a series of mystics who milked a small fortune from her; in return they recited bullshit incantations and gave her tatty little jujus. She had great respect for the Hindu religion; Sikhism is, in essence, an outgrowth of it, and we always kept Hindu pictures in our home. A priest at the *mandhar*, at no expense and in good faith, told her of a ritual that might help her. He wrote down the chants to be spoken and what was to be done on a piece of paper, and gave her an astrologically auspicious date on which to perform it. The ritual consisted of a sequence of prayers, punctuated by the throwing of sanctified coconuts into flowing water. The closest thing to flowing water near our house was the Grand Union Canal....(I was) dejected by the sight of my mother in her *salwar-kameez*, bowing and moaning imprecations, stopping every few minutes to lob a sacred coconut into the water. Each coconut had a holy thread tied around it; I watched them splash into the canal, amid the broken bicycles, the prams and the other junk dumped in there, then rise and bob on the oily surface alongside the empty crisp packets and cigarette ends. (137-138).

Mocking words such as 'lob', 'bullshit' and 'tatty,' are used to underline the perceived ludicrousness, backwardness and irrelevance of these practices in the eyes of both secularists and followers of modern forms of organized religion. However, a form of resistance might be seen in women's refusal to conform to the rigid boundaries of religion emerging from modernism and colonialism. Writing about popular Punjabi religiosity, Harjot Oberoi describes such engagement with the world as an 'enchanted universe':

In order to cure sick cattle, face the vagaries of the weather, or obtain fecundity, the peasantry was willing to bargain with the most powerful sacred resource without bothering with religious labels. Such liberties with the sacred...vexed urban reformers and prompted frequent jibes and moral campaigns against what they

considered the superstition, ignorance and irrationality of common folk. For the peasantry these cultural features became an idiom of resistance. (15)

While they were not of course impervious to local, regional and national power, to the influence of modernity, changing media and technology and resulting cultural and religious formations – these villagers absorbed these changes into their traditions, practices, structures - which remained largely intact. The very continuity of their fluid practices and beliefs in the face of local and state power structures can be seen as a form of resistance, or using Farina Mir's term 'resilience.' The continuity of 'superstitious' practices in Britain might be seen as a form of resistance; making a parallel with this form of resistance under colonialism, with the diasporic condition, wherein such practices continue to be regarded by the racial state, its institutions, and its second generation 'British Asian' spokespersons, as 'the superstition, ignorance and irrationality of common folk.' This interpretation is complicated however, by the fact that Sikhism was founded on a resistance to brahminical Hinduism, including the authority of brahmin pandits; to whom both Sanghera and Dhaliwal articulate the mothers as turning to.

The 'refusal' to speak or learn English is also often used, in the work of these third generation writers, to dismiss characters, casting them as backward. Their mothers' 'refusal' to learn English is seen as a rejection of 'progress' and modernity, it is a matter of shame. 'If you'd agree to taking some English lessons, you'd be able to read the sign and find out for yourself.' (117) Sanghera says to his mother at one point. And later '...as someone who reads constantly... I've long despaired at the consequences of my father's illiteracy and my Mum's lack of English.'(95) Meanwhile the narrator Imtiaz in Sahota's *Ours are the Streets*, recounts in his diary/story, taking his parents out for a meal with Rebekah, the girl that he wants to marry, and remembering that his parents can't read the menu because they don't know English; 'My fingers gripped the menu harder. I didn't hate that you hadn't learnt to read English properly in all the years you've been here...' (42) The continued speaking of Punjabi (dismissed as a dialect in colonial India) in Britain by the parent figures can also be seen as a form of resilience to the hegemony of English (and Britishness), comparable to what Mir interprets as resilience. It was due to this resilience, according to Mir, that the language survived through colonialism in India; it enabled the continuity (partly because the language was not officially recognized by the colonial state) of precolonial Punjabi culture, oral literature and practices.

my approach...emphasizes resilience over resistance by showing that Punjabi literary culture operated at considerable remove from colonial institutions and venues...Punjabi literary culture enjoyed relative independence from the colonial state...this relative independence allowed greater scope for continuity with precolonial practices. (19)

The (m)other is removed from and uninterested in the 'multicultural' centre, in 'Britishness.' While she is not English speaking, cosmopolitan, westernised – she does not particularly aspire towards any of these. It is useful here to reference the work of Audra Simpson (2007). According to her, the refusal to cooperate, to participate by the marginalised, in the context of ethnography, can be seen as resistance to dominant norms, to statist frameworks and expectations, they reveal the boundaries of these. These refusals 'tell us something about the way we cradle or embed our representations and notions of sovereignty and nationhood; and they critique and move us away from statist forms of recognition.' (78).

At the same time however, a language carries within it, structures, hierarchies, oppressions. While the maintenance of a language is a form of resistance to a layer of oppression which tries to devalue and erase it, on the other hand its sustenance also perpetuates other forms of oppression, for example, towards women, Adivasis, Dalits, black people. The romanticizing and idealizing of the pre-colonial, premodern subject can be one of the problems with the decolonial approach. The women are not fixed, rigid; for example, we see glimpses of growing connection to a more assertive Sikh identity in the mother characters in Dhaliwal's *Tourism*, and Sanghera's memoir - a form of modernity, although the texts do not recognise this. We see the (m)others represented as changing – apparently becoming more British. We also see the mothers in the texts as oppressors, perpetrators of casteism and patriarchy – for example, insisting on their children marrying within the Jatt caste. The maintenance of 'tradition' can also be a perpetuation of unjust practices and structures.

'Decoloniality' writes Catherine Walsh, 'denotes ways of thinking, knowing, being, and doing that began with, but also precede, the colonial enterprise and invasion.'(18) 'Seeing' the (m)other reveals the limitations of the colonial/modern perspective - the fact that there are ways of thinking and being that exist beyond its pervasive reach. Representations of the (m)other in these texts, as forms of translation into modernity, of subjects that are rarely represented in English language literature, distort, marginalise, erase. 'Coloniality has

performed this uprooting of the “non-western”, this un-naming, in order to inscribe them in a system of classification as the “other”, the backward, the savage, the primitive “other”. Translation is here revealed as erasure,’ writes Vázquez (32)

Conclusion

It is through decolonial readings of these texts, that the edges of the normalised perspective inherent within these texts becomes apparent. A decolonial reading, which bypasses the Britishness that is fundamental to these texts, which questions borders/the nation, which perhaps focuses on the regional Punjabi context, might better see her resistance. Lugones writes in her interpretation of Anzaldua’s *Borderlands*, that the book indicates for her “an everyday history of oppression and an everyday history of resistance... (Anzaldua’s) culture, though oppressive, also grounds her resistance’ (32) Similarly, in these texts, even if the writers are not able to acknowledge or see such resistance, it can be drawn out from the silences, glimpses, cracks in the texts. The specificity of a decolonial, regional framework, which includes the Punjabi language, can help to read against the assumptions of the texts, highlighting the irrelevance, even oppression of Britishness for these women. ‘Decolonial approaches do not exclusively stem from national traditions,’ write Ramos and Daly ‘...(they) reveal the plurality of spatial relations that shape regional, transregional, or transcontinental patterns and alliances.’ Meanwhile, decolonised feminism, (or a rejection of feminist frameworks that emerge from locations of power) allows us to question oppressive frameworks developed by upper class and upper caste women, revolving around their concerns, and involving a certain degree of abstraction – instead of engaging with, seeing the entangled oppressions and resistances emerging from lived life. It is important, meanwhile, to beware of idealising this figure of the (m)other; one of the possible pitfalls of the decolonial framework.

References

- Andermahr, S., ed. 2015. “‘Introduction’ Decolonising Trauma Studies:.” *Trauma and Postcolonialism Humanities* 4: 500–505. doi:10.3390/h4040500.
- Anzaldua, G. 1987. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Aunt Lute Book Company.
- Bhanot, K., ed. 2011. *Too Asian, Not Asian Enough*. Birmingham: Tindal Street Press.
- Bhanot, K. 2018. “Reading the Whiteness of British Asian Literature: A Reading of Sathnam Sanghera’s ‘the Boy with the Topknot: A Memoir of Love, Secrets and Lies in

Wolverhampton’.” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*: 002198941875974. doi:10.1177/0021989418759741. Bhanot, K. 2019. “No Nation Called Home; Rejecting Britishness.” *The Good Journal*, Issue 3. London. Dabashi, H. 2011. *Brown Skins, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press.

Dhaliwal, N. S. 2006. *Tourism*. London: Vintage Books.

Fanon, F. 2008. *Black Skin, White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann. 1952, 1986. London: Pluto Press.

Goldberg, D. T. 2002. *The Racial State*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing.

Gunew, S. 1997. “Postcolonialism and Multiculturalism: Between Race and Ethnicity.” *The Yearbook of English Studies* 27: 22–39. doi:10.2307/3509130.

Gunew, S. 2004. *Haunted Nations: The Colonial Dimensions of Multiculturalism*. Oxon: Routledge.

Gunning, D. 2010. “Ethnicity Politics in Contemporary Black British and British Asian Literature.” In *Racism, Slavery, and Literature*, edited by W. Zach and U. Pallua, 47–59. Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Hall, S. 1996. “Cultural Identity and Diaspora.” *Framework* 36: 222–237.

Hussain, Y. 2005. *Writing Diaspora: South Asian Women, Culture and Ethnicity*. London: Ashgate Publishing.

Kundnani, A. 2007. *The End of Tolerance: Racism in 21st Century Britain*. London: Pluto Press.

Lau, L. 2009. “Re-Orientalism: The Perpetration and Development of Orientalism by Orientals.” *Modern Asian Studies* 43 (2): 571–590. doi:10.1017/S0026749X07003058.

Lugones, M. 1992. “On Borderlands/La Frontera: An Interpretive Essay.” *Hypatia* 7 (4): 31–37. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.1992.tb00715.x.

Manzoor, S. 2007. *Greetings from Bury Park: Race. Religion. Rock ‘n’ Roll*. London: Bloomsbury.

Mignolo, W. 2005. *The Idea of Latin America*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Mignolo, W. 2018. *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Mir, F. 2010. *The Social Space of Language: Vernacular Culture in British Colonial Punjab*. California: University of California Press.

Murphy, N., and S. Wai-chew. 2008. *British Asian Fiction: Framing the Contemporary*. USA: Cambria Press.

Nagra, D. 2007. *Look We Have Coming to Dover*. London: Faber and Faber Limited.

- Oberoi, H. 1994. *The Construction of Religious Boundaries: Culture, Identity and Diversity in the Sikh Tradition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Ramos, J. G., and T. Daly. 2016. *Decolonial Approaches to Latin American Literatures and Cultures*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ranasinha, R. 2015. "Redefining Britishness: British Asian Fiction." In *The History of British Women's Writing 1970- Present*, edited by M. Eagleton and E. Parker, 229–243. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sahota, S. 2011. *Ours are the Streets*. London: Picador.
- Sanghera, S. 2008. *The Boy with the Topknot: A Memoir of Love, Secrets and Lies in Wolverhampton*. London: Viking. Penguin Books.
- Sanghera, S. 2013. "Sathnam Sanghera on Five Great British-Asian Novels." September 28. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/authorinterviews/10333930/Sathnam-Sanghera-on-five-great-British-Asian-novels>
- Simpson, A. 2007. "On Ethnographic Refusal: Indigeneity, 'voice' and Colonial Citizenship." *Junctures* 9: 67–80.
- Valluvan, S. 2019. *The Clamour of Nationalism*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Vázquez, R. 2011. "Translation as Erasure: Thoughts on Modernity's Epistemic Violence." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 24 (1): 27–44. doi:10.1111/j.1467-6443.2011.01387.x.
- Williams, R. [1977] 1997. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford