

This article was downloaded by: 10.3.98.93

On: 16 Jan 2019

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Companion to  
Pakistani Anglophone Writing



Edited by Aroosa Kanwal and Saiyma Aslam

## The Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing

Aroosa Kanwal, Saiyma Aslam

### Committed and communist

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315180618-25>

Miquel Pomar-Amer

**Published online on: 04 Sep 2018**

**How to cite :-** Miquel Pomar-Amer. 04 Sep 2018, *Committed and communist from: The Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing* Routledge

Accessed on: 16 Jan 2019

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315180618-25>

**PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT**

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

## 24

# COMMITTED AND COMMUNIST

## Negotiating political allegiances in the diaspora

*Miquel Pomar-Amer*

Pakistani migrants in Britain are often associated with low levels of cultural and economic capital and this narrative of economic and intellectual precariousness is also extensively applied to their offspring, diasporic subjects who may not have experienced any migratory process but whose physical appearance or family name still mark a history of migration. In response to this stagnating situation, typical experiences of diasporic subjects have been reinterpreted in cultural products which aim 'to encourage solidarity among those with a group affinity, and a sense of political agency in making justice claims to the wider society' (Young 2000: 103).

This chapter will focus on the development of two characters, namely Shamas in Nadeem Aslam's novel *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004) and Syed Samsamul Hai (hereafter Mr Hai) in Yasmin Hai's memoir *The Making of Mr Hai's Daughter* (2008). The aim is to see how their characterisation engages with this 'identity politics' to reveal and subvert the narrative of precariousness which is indiscriminately assigned to diasporic subjects. The evolution of these characters will be used to show how the initial adversities associated with migration are overcome and a higher social position is eventually consolidated. This raises the paradox of an author taking a counter-hegemonic stance through characters who exert themselves in order to occupy positions closer to hegemony. Despite this exercise of mimicry, these characters become the object of a 'repetition that will not return as the same' (Bhabha 1994: 162) because their possession of a similar economic or cultural capital does not guarantee their inclusion in the hegemonic group.

Even though the decision to migrate is often ingrained in the pursuit of social mobility (Appadurai 2006: 589), the political instability of Pakistan throughout the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s was another good reason for which many decided to migrate. Aslam had to leave Pakistan with his family and move to Huddersfield in 1980 because President Zia's regime persecuted his father, a communist film-maker and poet writing under the pen-name of Wamaq Saleem. This personal experience certainly inspired Shamas in *Maps for Lost Lovers* – he migrates after Ayub Khan's coup. Mr Hai in *The Making of Mr Hai's Daughter* also leaves Pakistan after General Zia's coup and his escape is portrayed like a James Bond film as he fools the Pakistani secret services that try to arrest him.

Regardless of the reason behind migration, Tariq Modood notes that, in the case of Asian migrants, 'their occupational levels were depressed by migration effects and discrimination in the labour market' and, as a consequence, they 'often suffered a downward social mobility on entry into Britain' (2004: 93). This association is not arbitrary because it serves the interests of

the hegemonic group. As Michel Foucault states, 'Every relationship of power puts into operation differentiations which are at the same time its conditions and its results' (1982: 792). Hegemonic discourses operate precisely on this principle of differentiation which is materialised in 'subtle everyday discriminatory practices sustained by socially shared representations' (van Dijk 2000: 48). Hence, the initial economic fallout experienced by migrants is used to construct and sustain a narrative of precariousness that is applied indiscriminately across generations so that the existing social structure remains unaffected.

Even though hegemonic discourse has the capacity to overcome hermetic conceptions of social class because it operates on what Antonio Gramsci calls a 'historical bloc' (1971: 263), this does not imply that hegemonic discourses dissolve social stratification in any way as their aim is precisely to preserve the social order and ensure that it is unaffected. For instance, the leading classes may appeal to aspects such as ethnicity or religion with a double aim. On the one hand, a common ethnic/religious background is often used to establish bonds with sections of the subaltern classes; on the other, the association of diasporic subjects with precariousness has effects on conviviality because they may be perceived as direct competitors by other members of the subaltern class, not just in the labour and housing markets but also in the allocation of social services such as health or benefits. Worryingly, in Britain these attitudes are not just engaged by overtly anti-migration parties such as the National Front, British National Party, or UK Independence Party, they also appear in statements by mainstream politicians and media.

Hence, the development of a subaltern class consciousness beyond ethnic and religious affiliations is prevented by representing diasporic subjects as a competing and homogeneous social body suffering from different forms of deprivation. This situation has been contested by diasporic authors like Aslam or Hai, who have attempted to dismantle the tenets of this pervasive logic in their texts. They have endorsed their cultural difference to write 'from the perspective of the signifying position of the minority that resists totalization' (Bhabha 1994: 162) and to propose alternatives to the dominant narrative of precariousness.

Migrants often have menial jobs because of the negative effects of migration. By extension, diasporic subjects are often imagined as unskilled workers with little chance of prospering. This disadvantaged situation is justified by claims of allegedly low levels of education and an absence of qualifications that, at the same time, slip all too easily into assertions of ignorance and/or laziness without considering that these qualifications are often not 'recognised' in the immigration country (Modood et al. 1997: 141–2; Collett and Zuleeg 2008: 5). The assumption of this cultural capital deficit, amplified by the media portrayal of migrants as 'underachievers' and a 'burden' on the educational system (Lipsett 2008: n.p.; BBC 2011b: n.p.), explains the reluctance of local parents to school their children in institutions with high numbers of diasporic students. Sometimes, this discourse transcends political correctness and is replicated by public personalities such as the former Chichester councillor John Cherry (Conservative), who suggested that Pakistanis would not 'rise to the top' as 'There are certain nationalities where they are uncertain what this hard work is all about' (Hughes 2013: n.p.). Thus, the hegemonic discourse operates as a 'reciprocally confirming' practice (Williams 1977: 110) when it appeals to academic results to argue that the alleged economically precarious situation of the diasporic subject is a direct consequence of his/her ignorance and/or laziness.

Certainly, economic and cultural capitals are interrelated and the possession of the former usually implies a greater amount of free time that can be invested in the acquisition of cultural capital. For this reason, we should not submit to the illusion that meritocracy blurs all inequalities because those with a more advantageous economic situation have usually had more opportunities to increase their cultural capital as well. Considering this, I will use Pierre Bourdieu's distinction between the embodied and institutionalised states to discuss the characters analysed

in this chapter. Bourdieu describes the embodied state as that existing ‘in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body’ (1997: 47), which refers to the skills and knowledge acquired by a person. When these skills and knowledge are objectified and turned into an academic qualification, Bourdieu argues that we are dealing with an institutionalised state so that ‘a certificate of cultural competence [...] confers on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture’ (1997: 50). Hence, the main difference between these two states of cultural capital lies in the fact that those who do not possess a valid academic qualification are not backed by the state and are more vulnerable to the fluctuations of the labour market.

According to Mike O’Donnell and Sue Sharpe, many young ethnic minority men in Britain must cling to their ‘own cultural resources against the grain of a still significantly prejudiced and discriminatory society’ to survive (2000: 131). These cultural resources are an example of what Bourdieu would call the embodied state of cultural capital and it is precisely this experience as a diasporic subject that the characters discussed in this chapter exploit. Shamas and Mr Hai use their cultural and social capital to cope with the social downgrading that migration often entails. Their aim is not to become rich but to act as mediating agents between their respective diasporic communities and society as a whole. For this purpose, they appeal to their cultural background and their position as diasporic subjects to improve their social position and become a kind of organic intellectual. My analysis will look at their trajectories in terms of social position taking into account two important features shared by both. First, their cultural capital turns them into referents within the diasporic space as their assistance is requested when someone needs to deal with bureaucratic issues, a position as facilitators of knowledge which appears in other texts by British-Pakistani authors such as Mr Manzoor in Sarfraz Manzoor’s memoir *Greetings from Bury Park* (2007: 37) or Mr Shah in Almas Khan’s novel *Poppadom Preach* (2010: 31).

Second, their political commitment signals their advantageous position in terms of cultural capital because ‘it is not sufficient to consider the capacity to understand, reproduce, and even produce political discourse, which is guaranteed by educational qualifications’ since ‘the (socially authorized and encouraged) sense of being entitled to be concerned with politics, authorized to talk politics’ must also be considered (Bourdieu 1984: 409). In addition, the characterisation of these politically committed diasporic subjects also aims to question the two predominant images of migrants in relation to politics: either they are not supposed to show an interest in ‘local’ politics or, if they do, their interest is perceived with suspicion and accusations of corruption are too easily made (Laville and Muir 2006: n.p.; Quinn 2013: n.p.; Liddle 2013: n.p.; Malnick 2013: n.p.). Lower levels of electoral participation among British ethnic minorities have been reported but ‘The key barrier to participations is [...] registration not turnout’ (Heath and Khan 2012: n.p.). As Parveen Akhtar highlights, the reasons for not registering include ‘doubts over eligibility criteria, language difficulties, general alienation from politics, fear of racial harassment and racial attacks from extreme right-wing groups who identified Asian names on the register, concerns over anonymity, [...] and doubts about residence status’ (2014: 18).

Moreover, the left-wing inclinations of the two characters discussed here comply with the dominant voting pattern among minorities. In Britain, more than two-thirds of ethnic minority voters (68 per cent) voted Labour in 2010 and Anthony Heath and Omar Khan’s data show that migrants ‘have high levels of political involvement in terms of identification with a political party (primarily Labour), high levels of turnout and participation in conventional politics, and they feel that Labour represents their interests reasonably well’ (2012). In a more recent study on the 2015 elections, Khan states that even though around 60 per cent of black and minority ethnic voters still support Labour, Conservatives have increased their ethnic minority vote to 25–30 per cent (Khan 2015). The political allegiances exhibited by Shamas and Mr Hai also

suggest a challenge to an economic structure based on inequality. Therefore, their involvement with politics proposes an alternative discourse based on equality, emphasising the importance of the public over the private and, ultimately, blurring the differences among individuals within and beyond the diasporic space.

According to John Hutnyk, this left-wing political involvement among some British-Asian subjects is concealed in the dominant ethnographical approach and that is why he aims to 'reconstruct this absent history' by resorting to published biographies, living memory accounts, and selected historiographical works (2005: 348). The portrayal of the selected characters is intended to overcome these limitations by stressing their political allegiances and representing alternative models of politics of difference. Indeed, it is their politically motivated decision to migrate that poses a challenge to the hegemonic discourse, by not fitting in with the picture of the migrant whose migratory project is motivated by economic precariousness and whose main aim is to overcome it. Instead, emphasis is placed on the negotiation of their left-wing allegiance with a particular position regarding the politics of difference and which always places cultural capital in a predominant position.

First, Mr Hai's involvement with communism is a result of a class consciousness awakening after his experience of poverty in early life. His increasing notoriety in the first years after Pakistani independence forced him to go underground when the Party was banned, and he eventually migrated to England in 1964 (Hai 2008: 10–11). Second, Shamas was a promising poet involved in political discussion groups before migrating and his decision to leave is presented as a way of escaping political persecution after Ayub Khan's coup in 1958 (Aslam 2004: 80). In this regard, Amina Yaqin's discussion stresses the parallelisms between Shamas' characterisation as an organic intellectual, a poet, and an activist and Faiz Ahmed Faiz's biography (2013: 69).

The case of Mr Hai is probably the most paradigmatic example because his cultural capital resisted the financial constraints he faced even though his life trajectory shows a series of ups and downs in terms of social position. Mr Hai was born into one of the richest families in colonial India, but they wasted their fortune and Syed needed to study hard to win a scholarship that allowed him to attend university (Hai 2008: 9). Even though 'to delay entry into the labor market through prolonged schooling [is] a credit which pays off, if at all, only in the very long term' (Bourdieu 1997: 54), this investment in cultural capital is only possible when supported by economic capital. Mr Hai thus had to apply for alternative funding to pursue his university education. However, his elders might have converted a part of their former fortune 'into an integral part of the person' (Bourdieu 1997: 48), thus bestowing certain cultural capital that can be transmitted in the domestic sphere, such as manners or a determinate way of thinking, for example. Consequently, one could infer that family status is still an important aspect that raises expectations to follow predictable occupational routes (Savage 2002: 63)

In the absence of economic capital, Mr Hai's brother developed his religious capital and became a 'prominent religious figure in Pakistan', while Mr Hai became 'Professor of English at the prestigious S. M. Law College in Karachi' (Hai 2008: 98, 10). Nevertheless, it is his political activism that granted him recognition. Appointed as Chairman of the Pakistan Peace Committee and summoned to China for talks with the communist leaders, Mr Hai seemed to excel in this political role. However, political changes in Pakistan eventually forced him to go into hiding because communism was persecuted, and then to England afterwards when he was almost caught by the Pakistani Secret Service. Mr Hai's process of adaptation and the description of his first years in England provide an unusual representation of the migratory experience. He was already in his late forties and shared a house with men of a similar profile to his own: they were all South Asian diasporic subjects belonging to the elites of their respective

countries and faced impoverished conditions in England as a side effect of defending their left-wing ideas (Hai 2008: 12).

Their crusade against 'the shackles of the British Empire and the dark forces of religion, poverty and feudalism' seems to be impaired by the romantic idea of England that they still hold (Hai 2008: 10, 9, 15, 31). This image is doubtless linked to the introduction of English literature in the curricula of the former colonies, which 'marks the effacement of a sordid history of colonialist expropriation, material exploitation, and class and race oppression behind European world dominance' (Viswanathan 1989: 20). Nevertheless, Mr Hai does not seem to be aware of the imperial connotations of the hegemonic values he endorses and supports through a politics of assimilation. In this case, 'the rôle of literature in the production of cultural representation should not be ignored' (Spivak 1999: 113) because, as an operation of colonial discourse, 'it interpellates colonial subjects by incorporating them in a system of representation' (Tiffin and Lawson 1994: 3). Despite his political ideas, Mr Hai was brought up in a rather conservative family and it should not come as a surprise that he feels more comfortable with the values of 'modesty and reserve' (Hai 2008: 129) which he presumably associates with Victorian literature. In fact, he disapproves of many aspects of the contemporary British lifestyle as the result of 'westernization' (Hai 2008: 77), a broad term used by Mr Hai that is often tied to notions of sexual permissiveness and rebelliousness.

Yasmin Hai depicts her father as a man who mimics the white English by focusing on the assimilatory efforts he enacts in an old picture of himself: 'He looks the picture of a model English gentleman. Or is it more like the picture of a foreigner playing at being English – dressing more English than the English?' (Hai 2008: 11). It is this excess that places him in a space of difference he did not intend to inhabit but cannot avoid because, 'as one who has just arrived from the outside, he is, by definition, not admissible at all' (Guha 1998: 157). His liminal position in relation to Englishness is visible in the reaction of the 'blurred faces [that] peer curiously out of an Austin Minor in the direction of the brown-faced man leaning against the railing' (Hai 2008: 11). Mr Hai plays with what Bhabha refers to as 'a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both "normalized" knowledges and disciplinary powers' (1994: 86). It is in order to efface this difference that the embodied state of cultural capital intervenes as a source of respectability and a tool for upward social mobility. Devoid of the volatility of economic capital, Yasmin Hai's description of the picture also refers to her father's cultural capital when she notes the pen that 'casually juts out of my father's left breast pocket, a signal to the world that he is also a man of books' (2008: 11).

However, Mr Hai's approach to cultural capital is particularly biased and he privileges whatever he considers to epitomise Britain. Consequently, he negotiates his communism and his praise of British values by endorsing what Young calls the socialist critique of the politics of difference (2000: 85–86): Mr Hai discourages any position alluding to multiculturalism or ethnic pride because they undermine class solidarity and 'only perpetuate the ghetto mentality and hold minorities back' (Hai 2008: 175). Instead, he promotes the acquisition and domestic transmission of cultural capital by demanding a good command of English and an interest in politics from his future wife (Hai 2008: 20). Extending the James Bond-like anecdote which opens *The Making*, Hai entitles the chapters describing Mr Hai's settling down 'Operation X', and 'Operation Wife' is just one of many others he undertakes to come closer to the hegemonic position that he covets in Britain.

For this purpose, Mr Hai highlights any feat of his family as a cultural capital generator and leaves the economic capital or status that such action could produce in a secondary position. Geographic mobility is presented as a chance 'to become something better' (Hai 2008: 37) but

this desire is frustrated by the lack of appropriate English role models in the area (Hai 2008: 43). For this reason, Aunt Hilda, an Englishwoman married to Mr Hai's best friend, is a crucial influence in the fulfilment of this narrative of becoming because she is 'a guide to life in England' (Hai 2008: 135). She embodies the 'authentic' English, the 'connoisseur' who has 'an unconscious mastery of the instruments of appropriation which derives from slow familiarization and [...] a practical mastery which [...] cannot be transmitted solely by precept or prescription' (Bourdieu 1984: 66). At the same time, she is free of Mr Hai and his former housemates' idealised view of Britain and her opinions are highly considered whenever it comes to the improvement of cultural capital and the routes that must be taken to achieve it. Indeed, the investment in cultural capital as a way to disavow, or at least elude, the negative typifications associated with Pakistani diasporic subjects is clearly portrayed during a meal, when Yasmin is scolded by Aunt Hilda for taking some food with her hands, because 'only Pakis eat with their hands' (Hai 2008: 51). The use of the abusive term 'Paki' unleashes a series of synonyms involving a lack of cultural capital that young Yasmin identifies with 'being uncivilised, primitive, savage, ignorant, backwards, uneducated, illiterate and uncultured' (Hai 2008: 51). Therefore, table manners is a basic principle in the acquisition of the 'legitimate culture' – the English, in this case – 'to dispense with the labour of deculturation, correction and retraining that is needed to undo the effects of inappropriate learning' (Bourdieu 1984: 71) and to come closer to the aim of the becoming narrative: "'this" thing you had to become [...] was called "English"' (Hai 2008: 37).

This aspiration makes Mr Hai put aside his political commitment for the sake of his daughter's education and approve of Yasmin's new school because of its 'middle classness', which he perceives as the epitome of Britishness and, consequently, cultivated – '[middle class girls] spent all their spare time reading Shakespeare or playing the flute' (Hai 2008: 128). In fact, Mr Hai's decision responds to his own experience: the stability of embodied cultural capital and its eventual convertibility into economic capital makes it useful to go through difficult situations. Mr Hai thus encourages this choice because he conceives cultural capital as the best path towards a hegemonic position, whose legitimacy is independent from ethnicity and religion (Hai 2008: 333). In fact, this stability is traceable in his professional career in England. After working in a factory for a while, he progressed thanks to his knowledge and taught basic literacy to immigrant children (Hai 2008: 47). Mr Hai's job as a teacher was relatively better than the manual jobs of his neighbours. However, the social position of an individual is relational and Mr Hai's position is not so highly valued when his neighbours start 'running their own small business ventures, supported by the expanding Asian network' (Hai 2008: 161). The other diasporic families show their economic capital by refurbishing their houses but Mr Hai rejects such things: 'It's all about showing off' (Hai 2008: 163). As with the pen in the photograph discussed above, the characterisation of Mr Hai challenges the image of the migrant as ignorant and only interested in either economic or symbolic capital because the only innovation he allows in his house is the purchase of more bookshelves (Hai 2008: 163).

Unlike Mr Hai, Shamas is reluctant to move to better-off areas despite his financial capacity to do so, because moving away from a neighbourhood described as a 'sink area' (Aslam 2004: 210) would imply a betrayal of his political ideas. Even though Kaukab blames her husband for the limitations that such geographical immobility might have imposed on their children's social mobility (Aslam 2004: 328–329), Shamas perceives his decision as an unavoidable effect of his integrity. In this sense, Ujala accuses both his parents of neglecting their responsibilities to their children, because Kaukab was 'too busy longing for the world and the time [her] grandparents came from' and Shamas 'was too busy daydreaming about the world and the time his grandchildren were to inherit' (Aslam 2004: 324). Ujala's accusation appeals to the 'temporal dilemma' that a migrant may face in his/her attempt to participate in the host

society: 'whatever is anticipatory and futural about it is liable to make him appear as an alien, and whatever is past will perhaps be mistaken for nostalgia' (Guha 1998: 159). For this reason, although Shamas looks to a utopian future, this future becomes 'a space of intervention in the here and now' (Bhabha 1994: 7) and this requirement of immediacy cannot leave notions of difference and alienation aside. In fact, Shamas' communist ideas are imbricated in the anti-colonial struggle, as is shown by his unwillingness to be granted an OBE (Aslam 2004: 328). This perspective may encourage an interlocked view of ethnicity and class since some of the racial prejudices of colonial discourse are still recurrent in the hegemonic discourse. For this reason, whenever interethnic conflicts arise, Shamas brings forward a shared history of exploitation for all diasporic subjects, be it under a colonial regime in the past or under a neoliberal mode of production in the present.

The urban space of Dasht-e-Tanhaai, translated as 'The Wilderness of Solitude' or 'The Desert of Loneliness' (Aslam 2004: 29), is represented as a place where 'strangers are thrown together' (Young 2004: 198) so that distress, alienation, and isolation become chronic features of the city because the complex divisions of labour determine that:

social life is structured by vast networks of temporal and spatial mediation among persons, so that nearly everyone depends on the activities of seen and unseen strangers who mediate between oneself and one's associates, between oneself and one's objects of desire.

(Young 1990: 237)

In his positions as the director of the Community Relations Council and a member of the Commission for Racial Equality, Shamas is a mediator who is 'the person the neighbourhood turns to when unable to negotiate the white world on its own' (Aslam 2004: 15). However, he rejects any privilege that may come from such a position because his communist ideals prevent him from pursuing the convertibility of cultural capital into economic capital (Bourdieu 1997: 47) and he is not interested in enhancing his status. This disinterested attitude is not understood by many of his neighbours because migration is only considered worthwhile when it is in the pursuit of better economic prospects. Yet Shamas does not conceive of his migratory project as such but as a temporary exile, since his desire to return is still alive (Aslam 2004: 60) because, ultimately, 'His aim is to change conditions in Pakistan, for which he was expelled, and not to settle in Britain simply for financial reasons' (Lemke 2008: 181). Thus, the political is more important than the economic in Shamas' scale of priorities although his political ideas are based on the idea of a new economic order.

Unlike Mr Hai's assimilatory approach, Shamas advocates a multiculturalism that he understands as a competition between the hegemonic and the subaltern groups so that bonds of solidarity are established with other diasporic subjects who may face racist and class confrontation on an everyday basis. Consequently, an oppositional view of society is eventually suggested by conceiving the white English and the Asian as configuring two different social spaces (Lemke 2008: 181), especially when interethnic conflict arises. Thus, Shamas is involved in what Pnina Werbner calls ethnic politics, 'a field in which the primacy of the social, cultural, symbolic, or political is asserted over the purely economic; in which the economic is culturally and politically constituted' (1991: 34). This does not necessarily imply underestimating the importance of the economic as the requirement for the establishment and reproduction of a group's hegemony (Gramsci 1971: 269).

Indeed, as Gramsci anticipates, the intellectual's relationship with 'the world of production is not as direct as it is with the fundamental social groups, but is, in varying degrees, "mediated" by



the whole fabric of society and by the complex of superstructures, of which the intellectuals are, precisely, the “functionaries” (1971: 12). In other words, Shamas’ attempt to subvert the existing hegemony is engaged with the actual state apparatus in which he is employed and which has been promoted by the cosmopolitanist turn that, paradoxically, Timothy Brennan attributes to the fall of communism (2006: 213). The problematic that this situation may involve for Shamas’ long-term political project is not acknowledged, however, as he regrets the break-up of the Soviet Union (Aslam 2004: 156), while he frames his empathetic relationship with other diasporic subjects within the institutionalised delegation formations that he recognises. For instance, he encourages a bus driver who is racially harassed to report it to his superiors and to start a record of racial abuse of bus drivers (Aslam 2004: 179), and he also thinks of ways to bring Suraya’s son to England by resorting either to the legal (Aslam 2004: 244–245) or religious fields (Aslam 2004: 234). In other words, Shamas relies on the state’s superstructure and frames his mediating position in the field of bureaucratic consultancy but he often neglects interpersonal relations when these imply a compromise of his political ideas.

Consequently, Shamas is depicted as a dreamer who embodies ‘a position of hope’ but ‘also suggests immaturity and a failure to engage with the reality of the world’ (Gunning 2010: 89). However, Shamas’ sense of reality should be considered excessively optimistic rather than defective. Although his political ideas function as a lens through which he makes sense of the world, he fails to reconcile them with some of the functions that his family expects from him. For instance, Kaukab accuses him of being irresponsible because he said that saving money for his first child’s future was not necessary as ‘by the time this child grows up the whole world would have become Communist, and things like education, healthcare and housing would be free’ (Aslam 2004: 324). This quote shows that there is a mismatch between what each of the spouses sees as the appropriate depository of social capital and provider of economic capital: Kaukab considers that her husband must perform his role as head of the family, but Shamas delegates this duty to the communist state, which he perceives as having ultimate responsibility for the welfare of its citizens. Positioning the state thus reveals Shamas’ universalist demand for the eradication of any form of social stratification and his rejection of those measures that contribute to it. In other words, a common well-being is preferable over an exclusive well-being, even when this minority is his own family as he ‘neither seek[s] honour among men nor kingship over them’ (Aslam 2004: 328). Shamas thus insists on denying that his cultural capital works as a source of distinction (Aslam 2004: 225; Bourdieu 1984: 63) but in vain because, despite his wishes, he is considered ‘someone quite prominent and respected’ (Aslam 2004: 368), even posthumously.

The two characters analysed in this chapter excel and are able to turn their knowledge of the bureaucratic maze into economic and/or symbolic capital. In fact, their position as intellectuals is certainly affected by, and cannot exist without, acknowledging their mediating position between their diasporic status and certain hegemonic demands: ‘Without that turn [to the West,] we would not in fact have been able to make out a life ourselves as intellectuals’ (Spivak 1990: 8). The representations of these characters place cultural capital in the foreground but also highlight how problematic their positions are despite their attempts to balance them with different social models and politics of difference (i.e. assimilation, multiculturalism, interculturality), hence emphasising the complexity of the notion of precariousness. The dominant narrative of precariousness does not simply encompass a limited economic status but also refers to alleged social, legal, and even intellectual deficits that are uncritically assigned to diasporic subjects. Rather than categorically denying the statements that characterise these diasporic subjects as ignorant and backwards (Aslam 2004: 312; Hai 2008: 51), the representations analysed here construct the figure of the Pakistani migrant in Britain as an intellectual, with a much more productive and engaging outlook that supplements the hegemonic discourse and exposes its reductiveness.

## Bibliography

- Akhtar, P. (2014) *British Muslim Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Appadurai, A. (2006) 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy'. In *Media and Cultural Studies: Key Works*. Ed. by Durham, M.G. and Kellner, D.M. Oxford: Blackwell, 584–603.
- Aslam, N. (2004) *Maps for Lost Lovers*. London: Faber and Faber.
- BBC (2011a) 'Immigrants Have Children for Benefits, Says Asian Peer'. *BBC News* [online]. Available from <[www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-14909062](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-14909062)> [22 May 2013].
- BBC (2011b) 'Pakistanis and Bangladeshis Underachieving?'. *BBC Asian Network* [online]. Available from <[www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01179w9](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01179w9)> [28 May 2013].
- Bhabha, H.K. (1994) *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Trans. by Nice, R. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1997) 'The Forms of Social Capital'. In *Education, Culture, Economy, Society*. Ed. by Halsey, A.H., Brown, P., and Wells, A.S. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 46–58.
- Brennan, T. (2006) *Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Collett, E. and Zuleeg, F. (2008) *Soft, Scarce, and Super Skills: Sourcing the Next Generation of Migrant Workers in Europe*. Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute.
- Foucault, M. (1982) 'The Subject and Power'. *Critical Inquiry* 8(4), 777–795.
- Gramsci, A. (1971) *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Ed. and trans. by Quintin, H. and Smith, G.N. New York: International Publishers.
- Guha, R. (1998) 'The Migrant's Time'. *Postcolonial Studies* 1(2), 155–160.
- Gunning, D. (2010) *Race and Antiracism in Black British and British Asian Literature*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.
- Hai, Y. (2008) *The Making of Mr Hai's Daughter: Memoirs of his Daughter*. London: Virago.
- Heath, A. and Khan, O. (2012) *Ethnic Minority British Election Study – Key Findings*. London: Runnymede Trust [online]. Available from <[www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/EMBESbriefingFINALx.pdf](http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/EMBESbriefingFINALx.pdf)> [6 October 2013].
- Hughes, D. (2013) 'Tory Councillor John Cherry Resigns over "Openly Racist Language" after Saying "there are Certain Nationalities where they are Uncertain what this Hard Work is all About"'. *Independent* [online]. Available from <[www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tory-councillor-john-cherry-resigns-over-openly-racist-language-after-saying-there-are-certain-8581755.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/tory-councillor-john-cherry-resigns-over-openly-racist-language-after-saying-there-are-certain-8581755.html)> [12 February 2018].
- Hutnyk, J. (2005) 'The Dialectic of Here and There: Anthropology "at Home" and British Asian Communism'. *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* 11(4), 345–361.
- Khan, A. (2010) *Poppadom Preach*. London: Simon & Schuster.
- Khan, O. (2015) 'Diversity and Democracy: Race and the 2015 General Election'. London: Runnymede Trust [online]. Available from <[www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/GE2015.pdf](http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/GE2015.pdf)> [8 July 2015].
- Laville, S. and Muir, H. (2006) 'Secret Report Brands Muslim Police Corrupt' [online]. Available from <[www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/jun/10/race.topstories3](http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2006/jun/10/race.topstories3)> [12 February 2018].
- Lemke, C. (2008) 'Racism in the Diaspora: Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers* (2004)'. In *Multi-Ethnic Britain 2000+*. *New Perspectives in Literature, Films and the Arts*. Ed. by Lars, E., Korte, B., Pirker, U., and Reinfandt, C. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 171–183.
- Liddle, R. (2013) 'Rod Liddle: The Truths You Can't Tell in Today's Britain'. *Spectator* [online]. Available from <[www.spectator.co.uk/2013/11/you-cant-say-that/](http://www.spectator.co.uk/2013/11/you-cant-say-that/)> [12 February 2018].
- Lipsett, A. (2008) 'Ethnic Minority Students "Still Underachieving"'. *Guardian* [online]. Available from <[www.theguardian.com/education/2008/jan/22/highereducation.uk3](http://www.theguardian.com/education/2008/jan/22/highereducation.uk3)> [28 May 2013].
- Malnick, E. (2013) 'Minister Apologises for Pakistani "Corruption" Remarks'. *Telegraph* [online]. Available from <[www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10470450/Minister-apologises-for-Pakistani-corruption-remarks.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/10470450/Minister-apologises-for-Pakistani-corruption-remarks.html)> [21 February 2014].
- Manzoor, S. (2007) *Greetings from Bury Park: Race, Religion and Rock 'n' Roll*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Modood, T. (2004) 'Capitals, Ethnic Identity and Educational Qualifications'. *Cultural Trends* 13(2), 50, 87–105.
- Modood, T., Berthoud, R., Lakey, J., Nazroo, J., Smith, P., Virdee, S., and Beishon, S. (1997) *Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage*. London: Policy Studies Institute.
- O'Donnell, M. and Sharpe, S. (2000) *Uncertain Masculinities: Youth, Ethnicity and Class in Contemporary Britain*. London and New York: Routledge.

- Quinn, B. (2013) 'Politicians Need to "Wake Up" to Corruption in Minority Communities'. *Guardian* [online]. Available from <[www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/nov/23/dominic-grieve-electoral-corruption-pakistani-community](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/nov/23/dominic-grieve-electoral-corruption-pakistani-community)> [21 February 2014].
- Savage, M. (2002) 'Class and Labour History'. In *Class and Other Identities: Gender, Religion and Ethnicity in the Writing of European Labour History*. Ed. by Voss, V., Heerma, L., and Linden, M.M. New York: Berghahn Books, 55–72.
- Spivak, G.C. (1990) *The Post-colonial Critic. Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. ed. by Harasym, S. New York: Routledge.
- Spivak, G.C. (1999) *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Tiffin, C. and Lawson, A. (1994) 'The Textuality of Empire'. In *De-Scribing Empire. Post-colonialism and Textuality*. Ed. by Tiffin, C. and Lawson, A. London: Routledge, 1–11.
- Van Dijk, T.A. (2000) 'New(s) Racism: A Discourse Analytical Approach'. In *Ethnic Minorities and the Media*. Ed. by Simon, C. Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 33–49.
- Viswanathan, G. (1989) *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Webster, C. (2003) 'Race, Space and Fear: Imagined Geographies of Racism, Crime, Violence and Disorder in Northern England'. *Capital & Class* 27, 95–122.
- Werbner, P. (1991): 'Black and Ethnic Leaderships in Britain. A Theoretical Overview'. In *Black and Ethnic Leaderships: The Cultural Dimensions of Political Action*. Ed. by Werbner, P. and Anwar, M. London: Routledge, 15–37.
- Williams, R. (1977) *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yaqin, A. (2013) 'Cosmopolitan Ventures during Times of Crisis: A Postcolonial Reading of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's "Dasht-e-tanhai" and Nadeem Aslam's *Maps for Lost Lovers*'. *Pakistaniaat: A Journal of Pakistan Studies* 5(1), 62–78.
- Young, I.M. (1990) *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Young, I.M. (2000) *Inclusion and Democracy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Young, I.M. (2004) 'The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference'. In *Contemporary Political Theory: A Reader*. Ed. by Farrelly, C. London: SAGE, 195–204.