

social circumstances as diverse as life in Jaffna in the early twentieth century, the JVP (Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna or “People’s Liberation Front”) insurrections, the Indian Peace Keeping Force, the repatriation of Indian Tamil estate workers, or the national passion for cricket. The fact that Sri Lankan literature is far from a solitary or homogenous affair becomes all the more apparent in the anthology’s arrangement into four thematic sections that tie the texts together, no matter their ethnic, linguistic, or generic origins. For instance, the first section, “The Chariot and the Moon,” includes works that deal with issues of class, caste, and with reference to the JVP, class conflict. The feeling of alienation specific to those pieces that explore how issues of class could turn into full-blown conflict—most notably an extract from Nihal de Silva’s *The Ginirālla Conspiracy*—continues well into the second section. In “No State, No Dog,” the theme of displacement dominates, be it at home, abroad, or upon return, which, in most cases, is either impossible or a particularly painful experience as Vijita Fernando’s “The Homecoming,” a short story about a maid returning from the Middle East, makes unmistakably clear. The third section, “Love in the Tsunami,” opens on a light-hearted note with pieces on passion and pleasure, and most prominently features an extract from Shehan Karunatilaka’s *Chinaman*. In the course of the section, however, feelings of passion turn into pain in the prose and poetry that respond to the war. Texts such as Thamarachelvi’s short story “It Could Happen Anywhere, Anytime” become a prelude to the final section, “Healing the Forest,” which exclusively focuses on war poetry. In an attempt “to end on a note of grace,”³ the anthology closes with a poem of renewal—Ramya Chamalie Jirasinghe’s “The Moon at Seenukgala — which may be read as a signpost for postwar Sri Lankan literary production and the many roads ahead.

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Writing British Muslims: Religion, Class and Multiculturalism

By REHANA AHMED

Manchester University Press, 2015, 256 pp.

doi:10.1017/pli.2017.53

Rehana Ahmed’s *Writing British Muslims: Religion, Class and Multiculturalism* offers an excellent analysis of the Muslim minority in Britain, connecting literary representations of this faith group with the material conditions of working-class Muslims. In this way, rather than studying religion in isolation, the author takes the wider view that class and religion are “not mutually exclusive but intersected and overlapped” (35), linking class consciousness with religious solidarity. Ahmed’s introduction traces the history of the displaced Muslim back to the 1930s; this reach

3 Selvadurai, *Many Roads Through Paradise*, 444.

helps her contextualize a series of social and economic policies that have impeded Muslim integration, impelling them to form monocultural and often highly conservative ghettos. Ahmed argues that these segregated neighborhoods generated a type of postracial cohesion based on Islam, which was gradually transformed into pseudopolitical action—as seen in a series of mass protests around the nation in the ensuing years (the Rushdie affair, the Bradford riots, etc.).

Chapter 2 follows up on that assertion, arguing that far from being a direct response to literary creativity, the Rushdie demonstrations articulated a much deeper sense of victimization based on an exclusion from a “secular-liberal anti-racist politics.” Chapter 3 concentrates on a series of works penned by Hanif Kureishi; Ahmed contends that Kureishi’s subtle allusions to Islamic identity—and, often, the absence of religious identity—problematize the normalization of whiteness in enunciating a “new way of being British” while also reinforcing an artificial binary between private religion and public secularism. Chapter 4 contextualizes the reception of *Brick Lane* by the inhabitants of the same area; echoing her earlier sentiments about Muslim mobilization, Ahmed insists that protests against Ali’s novel were less about censorship and more about inequality and prejudice fostered by top-down multiculturalism. Chapter 5 further investigates the juxtaposition of creativity with religious belief in Nadeem Aslam’s *Maps for Lost Lovers*, which promotes Muslim inclusion as a form of humanism (exemplified in this case by Qawwali aesthetics). The book ends with an analysis of a series of memoirs that function as “double agents,” in that they both advocate dialogue between different constituents and also obfuscate the behaviors and power structures that allow for cultural exchange.

What Ahmed does best is to relate literary representation to the social conditions that shape Muslim consciousness by materially contextualizing the texts: she divulges local histories (providing a localized reading of Brickhall in *The Satanic Verses*), links news clips with plot development (explaining the court case of Heshnu Yones as inspiration for *Maps for Lost Lovers*), and informs readers about the reception of these works by the Muslim public, specifically the working-class Muslim community (i.e., focusing on the reaction of the Sylheti Bangladeshis in London). She successfully presents the texts as “sites of struggle” that exhibit Muslim life beyond a simplistic binary of religious dogmatism and secular liberalism. At the same time, she offers a compelling critique of the limits of liberalism, suggesting that its valorization of individualism can fail to account for collective movements.

A possible weakness in this study is Ahmed’s eagerness to idealize the protestors she describes, which can cast a shadow over other (and stronger) arguments in the book. Although one can agree that parochial media coverage was too quick to label the protestors as thugs and dismiss them as a simple-minded minority within a minority, Ahmed’s portrait of the marchers as a politically cohesive group unified by a desire for social justice comes across as a stretch. Furthermore, while Ahmed recognizes that faith-based communities were instrumental in providing support and dignity for various minority groups, she seems reluctant to spend time on repressive collective norms present in those communities that occasionally sabotage integration. An implied argument in the book is the failure of hybridity—a condition resisted by both class and religion. But it remains implied: Ahmed, despite her subversive problematizing of Nazneen’s hybridity in *Brick Lane*, says very little on the subject. In

sum, Ahmed's emphasis on material conditions on occasion feels like an overextended justification of conservative Islamist activism, which ultimately disregards individual agency for the sake of religious solidarity. Yet these shortcomings do not get in the way of Ahmed's serious engagement with social justice for minority culture. This is a useful book, one which scholars in the field will find informative and rewarding.

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Literary Land Claims: The "Indian Land Question" from Pontiac's War to Attawapiskat

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Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015, 326 pp.

doi:10.1017/pli.2017.54

In 2009, Stephen Harper, then prime minister of Canada, surprised many when he declared that Canada had "no history of colonialism." Canadian critic Margery Fee's recent study, *Literary Land Claims: The "Indian Land Question" from Pontiac's War to Attawapiskat*, offers a compelling rejoinder to the prime minister's claim. Not only does Fee's account of roughly 250 years of indigenous dispossession in what has come to be known as Canada thoroughly dispel Mr. Harper's misrepresentation of the country's history, but it also serves to illustrate the complex ways in which Canada's ongoing colonial project has been alternatively contested and facilitated by the pages of its national literature.

Literary Land Claims is an examination of the ways that Romanic ideals of literary nationalism—the lingering belief, established in the eighteenth century, that in expressing a country's "soul" a national literature establishes a claim to the land—has functioned within the settler-colonial state of Canada. In addition to two introductory chapters framing the study's primary questions and a conclusion addressing contemporary concerns, the study includes two chapters on the novelist John Richardson, and one chapter each on Louis Riel, E. Pauline Johnson/Tekahionwake, Archibald Belaney/Grey Owl, and Harry Robinson.

With the possible exception of Robinson, these are familiar—and contested—figures in the study of indigenous and Canadian literatures. It is notable, then, that *Literary Land Claims* is a recuperative project: Fee suggests that Riel's reputed insanity is better read as the audience's inability to comprehend his indigenous/Catholic rhetoric, for example, and argues that Richardson's superficial portrayals of "savage Indians" mask a nuanced critique of British policies toward indigenous peoples. Similarly, she suggests Johnson's allegedly opportunistic embrace of her Mohawk ancestry is best understood as an exploitation of the performative nature of identity that enabled the poet to critique colonial injustices directly to White audiences and that the Englishman Archibald Belaney's bestselling books and international tours as the indigenous "Grey Owl" was not a case of simple appropriation but a process of