

Raghuvendra Tanwar, *Politics of Sharing Power: The Punjab Unionist Party, 1923-1947* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 215 pp. (hb) Rs.425. ISBN 91-7304-272-1.

From its origins as the 'rural block' organized by Fazl-i Husain in the wake of the Montague-Chelmsford reforms to its eventual demise on the eve of the partitioning of India, the Punjab National Unionist Party was the dominant political organization in Punjab. An analysis of the origins, rise and demise of the Unionist Party will invariably provide important insights into the key social and political-economic forces at play in colonial Punjab. In its style of politics and coalition formation, the Party reflected not only the salience of tribal, caste and *biradari* (kinship) links and patron-client relations in Punjabi politics, but also the attempts to form a consensus amongst representatives of different religious communities along the lines of these criteria. Raghuvendra Tanwar's major contribution to the history of the Unionist Party, as well as Punjab studies in general, lies in his attempts to locate the rise of the Party within the context of tribal, caste and *biradari* links, viewing its economic and social policies in the light of the attempts by its leaders to shape a rural constituency on the basis of a common cultural ethos, and understanding its demise in the light of its inability to sustain itself in an increasingly communalized environment.

While acknowledging the formative influence colonial policies had on the rise of the Unionist Party, Tanwar emphasizes the need to understand how the leaders of the Unionist Party groomed the Party on shared cultural ethos and social attitudes such as the significance of landownership and *izzat* (self-respect) as a way of life. This he argues was important not only in diffusing communal differences in the rural areas but also in developing amongst the peasantry of Punjab a sense of belonging to a 'common stock' (p. 32). Tanwar, thus, calls for a more objective evaluation of the Unionist Party's economic policies, one that is not stifled by the use of terms such as 'collaborationist' and 'feudalist' (p. 9). Tanwar devotes much space towards a reassessment of the economic programs of the Party, viewing its pro-rural policies as an attempt to promote itself as the spokesman of rural interests at large. Tanwar rightly asserts that this was a crucial factor in ensuring that, while the Unionist Party emerged as a party of the big landowners, it differed from other such parties in India on the grounds that it could cut across class and communities to represent rural areas as a whole (p. 28).

Tanwar asserts that the political philosophy of the Unionist Party offers important lessons for plural societies such as India and Pakistan, namely that the pursuit of intercommunal political accommodation can be fruitful. In the case of the Punjab, the emphasis on shared cultural ethos coupled with the promotion of economic programs targeted to benefit the 'rural' population across communal divides resulted in the reduction of communal differences. Drawing from Ian Talbot's work, Tanwar asserts that the Unionist Party's alliances, policies and its very approach to politics be viewed in the light of Arend Lijphart's theories of consociational democracy (p. 10). Tanwar has aptly detailed the attempts by

leaders of the Party to shape cross-communal understanding along the lines of tribe, economics, caste and *biradari*, thus, shaping a coalition across religious divides. In fact, Tanwar has traced the demise of the party to the inability of its leaders to maintain the coalition in the new communally charged environment, which resulted from the Muslim League's successful foray into the Punjabi political scene.

In his analysis of the origins and rise of the Unionist Party, Tanwar aptly notes that the leaders of the party were clear that politics in the Punjab was controlled and influenced by factors such as caste, religion and regionalism. Hence, they strove to reconcile people on a platform where no single ideology was important (p. 94). This lack of a clearly enunciated ideological stance was a crucial factor in the development of alliances upon which the Party drew for support.

One aspect which has, however, been largely ignored by Tanwar is the relationship between the Unionist Party and its leaders with political parties and politics at the national level. An exploration of the position of the Unionist Party and its leaders with regard to the Muslims in India, and their insistence on maintaining regional autonomy as opposed to the Congress' visions of a union with a strong centre will be particularly interesting. Tanwar sees the Unionist Party as being isolated from the national mainstream, thus, he provides little information in this regard. Leaders of the party had been keen to promote the party and themselves as the spokesmen for the Muslims of India. Fazl-i Husain, for instance, had been the chief architect of the All-India Muslim Conference in 1928. An analysis of their position vis-à-vis Indian Muslims will shed important light on the role of the Unionist Party in shaping a cross-communal alliance in Punjab while striving to be the spokesman for Muslim interests at the centre. Securing decentralization and provincial autonomy had long been promoted as goals of the party, bringing it into direct conflict with the Congress' vision of the Indian union. Members of the party had, for instance, attacked the centralization tendencies of the Nehru Report. It is important to study the Unionist Party's attempts to champion provincial autonomy as a safeguard both for the Muslims and Punjab to truly appreciate the role and political philosophy of the Punjab Unionist Party.

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Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia* (London: Routledge, 2000). 322 pp. (hb). \$129.95. ISBN: 0-415-17297-7.

In the aftermath of the Second World War, the powers of erstwhile empires were thoroughly challenged by processes of decolonization all over the globe. A time of dizzying freedom and possibility, newly independent nations attempted to concretize and realize the ideals of democracy, equality, and dignity that

governed nationalist movements from Africa to Asia. However, over a half a century later, many postcolonial promises have yet to be redeemed in full measure or even substantially. In his speech to the Constituent Assembly on the eve of Indian Independence, Nehru expressed his hope that, “the service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and the inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.” As we move into the 21st century, given the plagues and promises that power brings, the fundamental question remains of whether or not governments and their citizenry have exercised their power and freedom in a responsible manner.

In *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia*, the authors, Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya, attempt to answer the aforementioned question by examining the still unfolding story of Partition. Written 50 years after the Independence of India, the creation of Pakistan, and the Partition, this important work presents a history of the subcontinent that is not held hostage to the imperatives of the nation state. Quite simply, this work veers away from an over reliance on either elite historiographical accounts or subaltern perspectives by focusing on the peoples, places, and institutions of governance affected by the events of 1947. Rather than focus on the Partition as an epiphenomenal event, as a rupture, this book approaches the Partition of the subcontinent as an event linked temporally in its past, present, and future. In regards to this endeavor the authors write, “The overarching frame around which this study has been constructed highlights two key motifs: first, the dislocations and disruptions caused by partition and the manner in which these were addressed, and second, some of the long term effects of partition on state and society in South Asia.” (23) While this book does not necessarily offer new theoretical perspectives into identity and difference, history and memory, or violence and the state, it is an invaluable addition to the corpus of existing scholarship on the Partition because it brings to light historical facts, events, and processes that have otherwise been obscured by the cobwebs of time, selective presentation, or willful amnesia. *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia* is a unique and insightful presentation of the multiple histories, celebrations, displacements, rehabilitations, communities, and legacies of the Partition, an event that is both an arrival and a departure for understanding the history of the subcontinent.

This book is divided into nine chapters. The first Chapter provides an excellent overview of academic literature and expressions of popular culture that have attempted to make sense of Independence (*azadi*) and the Partition (*batvara*) over the past 50 years. Chapter two describes how the events of August 14th and 15th were officially celebrated in the new national capitals of Delhi and Karachi; how these events were celebrated in cities beyond the capitals, e.g. Bombay, Dhaka, Benaras; the protests of certain communities (nationalist Muslims and Hindu nationalists) against the triumphant celebrations of independence; and the backdrop of violence that marred the celebrations.

Starting with the premise that the events of August 14th and 15th were not uniformly experienced throughout the subcontinent, this fascinating chapter examines “the profound ambiguities” that surrounded the consecration rituals of Independence and the Partition.

Opening with a poem about Sir Cyril Radcliff entitled ‘Partition’ by W.H. Auden, Chapter three analyzes the tortuous intricacies and anxieties that informed the Boundary Commissions’ attempt to give cartographic expression to the new nation states of India and Pakistan. Chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe, the Boundary Commissions for the Punjab and Bengal were given less than six weeks to announce their “Awards.” With severe, and sometimes deadly, ramifications, the newly created boundaries were traversed by millions of refugees, and created problems that continue to plague the subcontinent, e.g. resettlement for religious minorities and refugees, riparian disputes, economic dislocations, etc. This discussion of the Radcliffe Awards calls into question the logic of decisions based upon notions of ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ and whose effects de-localized individuals and communities and communalized sacred sites, villages, waterways (e.g. rivers and canals), and memory itself. While millions were uprooted and displaced during the Partition, Chapter four focuses on the profound effects that the Partition had on one religious community in particular, the Sikhs. Starting with the Sikh response to the 1940 Lahore Resolution, this chapter focuses on the struggle for safeguards that have driven the politics of the Sikh community up until the present day. Using the Sikh response to Partition as a case study, this chapter raises important questions for religious minorities living in sectarian majority areas throughout the subcontinent.

Chapter five addresses in great detail the rehabilitation schemas that were enacted in the East Punjab after the Partition. By focusing on land reforms, agricultural technology, and irrigation schemes, this chapter examines how in less than two decades the East Punjab was poised on the brink of prosperity heralded by the Green Revolution. The largely successful rehabilitation of refugees and implementation of economic and social development programs in the East Punjab is briefly contrasted with the relative failure in the West Punjab to achieve comparable agrarian performance and development.

Generally, most literature on the Partition tends to focus on the Punjab, but throughout this work the authors make a conscientious effort to include the experiences of West Bengal and East Pakistan/Bangladesh. In terms of total number the greatest number of refugees poured over the border into West Bengal, but for a number of reasons this experience has largely been shadowed by a greater emphasis on the Partition of the Punjab. Chapter six provides an invaluable perspective into the directives and dilemmas that informed refugee rehabilitation in West Bengal. Starting with a discussion of the ill fated 1958 Dandakaranya scheme to resettle refugees, this chapter contrasts the remarkable success of the East Punjab with the dismal failure of West Bengal to address the many consequences of Partition. Most importantly, this chapter challenges the

“‘ethnic’ stereotyping” that has derided the Bengali refugee and valorized Punjabi refugees.

In addition to the effects that Partition had on entire populations, it also had an impact on the lives of cities. Chapter seven addresses “the imprint of Partition” on several South Asian cities: Dhaka, Calcutta, Lahore, Karachi, Islamabad, Chandigarh, and Delhi. Given the importance of politics as an organizing factor in the life of the city, this chapter examines how these capital cities were transformed physically, socio-culturally, and metaphysically. Despite important differences, these capital cities shared many commonalities: changing political configurations, demographic trends, economic dislocations, and the emergence of particular urban forms such as mass housing. This chapter initiates an important conversation on the political lives of cities in South Asia by focusing on the transformations of place wrought by the Partition.

While discontinuity is a theme emphasized in studies of the Partition, there are also important continuities between certain aspects of colonial and postcolonial societies. Chapter eight examines the continuity of power arrangements in the Punjab, both during the colonial period and in post colonial Pakistan, in an attempt to explain the divergent political fortunes of India and Pakistan post 1947. This chapter argues that the triadic structure of power between the landed elite, the civil service, and the military that existed in the colonial period was well placed to address the economic, political, and social chaos that followed in the wake of Pakistan’s creation. Addressing the dislocations of Partition, the analysis describes the relative failure of representative institutions to take root in Pakistan as a structural imbalance rather than ascribing it to a religious disposition.

Finally, Chapter nine presents the legacies of Partition that continue to haunt contemporary South Asia, e.g. nuclearization, Kashmir, status of religious and ethnic minorities, etc. Given the contentious security and environmental issues in South Asia, the specter of nuclear war, and the displacement and alienation of refugees, the vitriolic legacies of Partition continue to cast a dark shadow over life in the subcontinent. While there have been significant moves towards rapprochement and cooperation, these initiatives are often impeded by political posturing, opportunist politics, and empty rhetoric. Looking back on the legacies of the Partition, the book closes with an earnest question, “Will concerned citizens rise to this challenge of overcoming narrowness and prejudice and strive towards a genuine South Asian identity.” (243)

The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia is an invaluable contribution to the existing scholarly literature on the Partition and the history of the subcontinent post 1947. From its presentation of previously obscured historical data to its analytic of multiple histories and perspectives, it provides information and analysis hitherto unavailable in any one source. It is a well written and well researched book that will interest students of South Asian history, politics, and religions; scholars interested in the experience of post colonial nation states; and any individual deeply concerned about the innumerable partitions that continue

to divide our common humanity as we move into an increasingly contested global future.

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Birinder Pal Singh, *Violence as Political Discourse: Sikh Militancy Confronts the Indian State*. (Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2002). 244pp. Rs. 350 (hb). ISBN 81-7986-006-X

This book is an account of the circumstances, which led some Sikhs to conduct a campaign for national sovereignty in the Punjab in the years 1984-1992. It relies heavily on secondary sources. In chapter one the status of violence in Sikh religion and philosophy is discussed with the author arguing that Sikh traditions legitimized a violent political movement. Quoting from Sardar Kapur Singh's *Prasaraprnsa* and Guru Gobind Singh's *Chandi di Var* he emphasizes that Sikhism allows its followers to take to arms to achieve social justice. The Gurus prepared Sikhs to die for their values and the Ardas commemorated their sacrifice. The second chapter deals with the various militant groupings and quotes extensively from their written pronouncements. He notes that the movement was corrupted at a very early stage by looters and informers. Nevertheless according to the author all militants were fighting for an independent state and their violence was a means to combat 'a degenerated... centralized state' to which they resorted only under compelling constraint. Their endeavor was to achieve a society where pain and evil would not be contained within the socio- economic processes and where evil doers and evil would not reign. The third chapter describes the nature of the Indian state. In this connection he quotes three authors: Dipkankar Gupta who stresses that the Central government of India has converted regional and secular demands into ethnic and cultural ones; Rajni Kothari who asserts that the main problem is with the decline in authority of institutions; and Pranab Bardhan who says that the Indian state has a monopoly of the means of repression which it combines with a substantial ownership of the means of production. Chapter four relates what happened when militants and the state engaged each other from April 1978 to the end of 1992. Chapter five mentions the material factors that were at the heart of the insurgency, namely the destabilization of rural society in the years following the green revolution, and the police and paramilitary attacks during the insurgency on the young and able bodied within the farming community.

My first criticism concerns an inconsistency in argument that runs throughout the book. On the one hand in chapter one the author tells us that militant violence was sanctioned by religion. On the other he states there were many disparate sources for such violence. For example he writes '...that the policies, programs of action and strategies adopted by the state determined the nature and course of the violent discourse' (p.94). Then later we learn that what

was at the heart of the violence were economic issues (pp.181-191). There were many production risks and price uncertainties for the farmer. There was also a large sector of educated, unemployed youth in rural areas. Overall there was an export of Punjab's resources: bank capital, food grains and men to India. The strained relations of Punjab's economy with the Indian state were not resolved politically but 'suppressed forcefully with a well-developed state apparatus' (p.191). He is correct in this as well as in pointing out that Punjab's economic difficulties were translated into law and order problems. These in turn were portrayed as threatening India as well as the Hindus of Punjab. However, nowhere is the uninformed reader given a guide as to which of these variables he considers to be the most significant in the developing situation of violence. It is confusing not to have the variables weighted. The fact that the author begins his discussion on violence by stressing its legitimation in the Sikh faith would suggest that he thinks that faith to be in some way involved in violence. Such a starting point is at odds with the last three chapters of his book in which features of the economy and the social structure of the rural areas are cited as explaining the rise of violence. This is a major inconsistency of the book. No doubt historians and theologians will wish to debate whether the Sikh religion encourages violence. The words of the Gurus inspire a moral attitude towards tyranny that is fearless to the point of sacrifice. One must carry forward the struggle against evil in optimistic spirit. However, it would be a non sequitur to presume from this that the religion promotes violence. Additionally, the lines quoted by the author 'Sovereignty is subject to arms. Without sovereignty religion does not flourish. Without sovereignty all are to dust pulverized' are not considered by some authorities to be scriptural.

A second criticism relates to the statements by the militants in chapter two. At the time when these statements were being issued, corruption of the sort he himself relates on page 144 had already entered the militant movement and many of the new recruits were not influenced by any religious teaching. He says the pronouncements of all militant organizations were similar. Even if this were so, one has to look at the changing situation on the ground and in the different districts. Certainly one has to question the origin of statements such as the following: 'legitimate/just violence in its fine form is grand poetry, an immortal music of life.' For one has to ask who among this rural-based movement spoke like this. Could these young men, with the level of education that they had, have composed statements of the kind quoted in this chapter? For the language contained in some of the statements is highly sanskritized and even where not, it is still sophisticated. One could also question how these groups are depicted. According to the author they were doing terrible things for pure motives. But it is well known that some times also they were doing terrible things for impure motives. The author acknowledges this but fails to integrate it in to his analysis. This is important as it affected how the resistance was perceived - as legitimate or illegitimate.

Further to the above I have several specific points of disagreement of which I shall mention three. Firstly, the comfortable notion that all militant groups

sought the same end cannot be accepted. The author neglects to mention the very deep seated difference between the Babbars and Sant Bhindranwale, which indeed caused the Sant to move from his premises in Guru Nanak Nivas to the Akal Takhat during the night of 15-16 December 1983. Was not thus the stage set for the June 1984 confrontation? An editorial in *Tribune* of 17th December 1983 regarding these happenings says '...it is obvious the Babbar Khalsa and Sant Bhindranwale are not on the same wavelength.' Secondly, he asserts that the militant movement's ascent continued until the summer of 1992. I would disagree. The movement was derailed at a much earlier date by the effects of counterinsurgency and by the obsession on the part of some militant groups with codes of conduct. These were unrepresentative of the concerns of farmers who had been the movement's mainstay. Thirdly, I would challenge the author's view that militants did not use violence for sheer terror, but for the establishment of an alternative societal order. He himself, using much of my own work, cites the multiplication of militant groups describing how they wasted much of their energy on in-fighting and killing each other.

Sikhism is a progressive religion with its own distinctive vision of the world, one in which the concept of the person, his responsibilities to society and his rights are radically different than in the Muslim lands to the west or in Hindu civilization. To safeguard this special area of value, the cultural and religious tradition has been that one must be prepared to sacrifice one's life when confronted with social injustice and evil. Yet in my view other factors aside from religion have to be brought in to understand happenings in Punjab in the period under review. To make sense of the violence that occurred one would have to return to the atomistic social world of the rural Punjab and to the economically unequal society that was developing there during the 1970s. Moreover, to explain the behavior of entire sections of the rural community the author would have to consider what is status in this society and how it is gained.

In conclusion let me say that chapter two which gives sample narratives of militant viewpoints is the most informative and telling chapter of the book. It is good to have these on record in a publication. I do wish, however, that these narratives had been more robustly connected to their social and political setting. Additionally, I feel that the author could have given more space to those who were caused to suffer by the power controlling the destiny of this region.

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Smitu Kothari and Zia Mian (eds), *Out of the Nuclear Shadow*, (Delhi and London: Lokayan, Rainbow Publishers and Zed Books, 2001), 525 pp (pb), No price mentioned. ISBN 1 84277 059 4.

On 11 and 13 May 1998 India detonated altogether five nuclear devices. Pakistan followed suit by its own series of six test explosions on 28 and 30 May.

A perverse euphoria was exuded by both governments, which induced people to start dancing in the streets and distribute sweets to celebrate the perceived greatness attained by them. Suddenly the self-fulfilling prophecy of the forces of fear, hate and aggression on both sides had been confirmed for the fifth time (bloody division in 1947, wars in 1948, 1965 and 1971 and the blasts of 1998) in just over fifty years: that those on the Other Side are inveterate enemies who pose a lethal threat to the survival and identity of those on This Side.

At the bottom of the hectic and escalating efforts of the two states to acquire the capacity to hit first and hit hard was the fundamental problem of security. However, it can be wondered if security is enhanced by acquiring new and better weapons and weapon systems; rather what occurs is that each acquisition of destructive capacity and capability begets a response from the other side which seeks to balance and even exceed the other side's ability to attack. In the process the stockpile of weapons multiplies and the sense of insecurity is actually exacerbated. The development of nuclear weapons is a chain in this perverse concern for security.

In any case, when the nuclear blasts took place the nationalist lobbies came into action instantaneously in support of the official stances of their states. The well-established and affluent Hindu revivalist movements in the diaspora such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Bajrang Dal, RSS and BJP prematurely celebrated the blasts. A few days later the Pakistani explosions were a cause of jubilation for the Pakistani mainstream. Many felt that an Islamic bomb was necessary to frustrate Indian designs to finish off Pakistan. For some it was an achievement, which put the Islamic civilization at a par with the other rival civilizations. The nationalist diasporas at that time acted as bastions of patriotism and funds began to be collected both by Indian and Pakistani lobbies to help their mother-states in the face of sanctions imposed by the United States, Japan and many other countries.

It was in these circumstances that a counter-narrative also emerged put forth by concerned citizens, writers, scientists, retired military and civil servants and various human rights, women's rights and peace-oriented NGOs both within South Asia and in the diaspora. Through hectic internet activities, especially exchange of emails, the animated intellectuals from both sides established new networks. The present book includes a selection of essays, statements and poems written during that period. The editors have undertaken their task with a sense of mission and the result is truly a labor of love and devotion to peace and denuclearization in South Asia.

The book is organized into six parts: Voices of Conscience; The Nuclear Burden; Living the Nuclear Live; Statements; Poem; and resources. We hear the voices of Mahatma Gandhi (already raised in 1946 against the nuclear menace), Eqbal Ahmad, Rajni Kothari, I. A. Rehman, Arundhati Roy, Pervez Hoodbhoy, A. H. Nayyar, Lalita Ramdas, J. Sri Raman and many other writers and debaters. The moral arguments are augmented by authoritative essays written by experts who present hard facts to work out scenarios of the destruction that would follow if a war involving nuclear weapons breaks out between India and

Pakistan. The articles are of high quality and dispel convincingly any idea that nuclear weapons can be conducive to peace in the region. Although mention is made of the fact that genuine denuclearization would require all nuclear powers to destroy their weapons the consensus that comes across is that India and Pakistan should not make that a condition and should go ahead with reversing the policy of nuclearization.

Among the poems is the English translation of the most famous antiwar poem written in Urdu by Sahir Ludhianvi 'Aye Sharif Insaano' (Dear Civilized People). Written at the time of the 1965 India-Pakistan war its message of peace becomes all the more relevant when both states have acquired an overkill capacity. The statements issued by different Indian, Pakistani and international organizations are further testimony of the role the democratic parts of the civil society played during those several months of activism.

The most positive change from the nuclear blasts has been the emergence and consolidation of regular exchange of views and information between Indians and Pakistanis networks across South Asia and globally. However, it is worth noting that all such efforts unfortunately did not bring about a change of heart and mind amongst the Indian and Pakistani establishments. Even the world seems to have acquiesced in these two countries having crossed the threshold and thus entered the exclusive club of nuclear powers, albeit in a de facto manner. Perhaps it is time to revive the South Asian peace movement but this time it should aim at mobilizing peace-loving people all over the world against the possession of nuclear weapons by any state. Quite honestly the curse of nuclear war can only be removed through global networking and coordinated efforts, but it was most important to point out what great folly India and Pakistan had committed by escalating their conflict to the nuclear level. This has been very well documented in the present book.

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Eleanor Nesbitt, *Intercultural Education: Ethnographic and Religious Approaches* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2004) viii + 204 pp. (pb) £13.95. ISBN 1-84519-034-3; (hb) £25.00 ISBN 1-84519-033-5.

Eleanor Nesbitt is known as an outstanding and gifted interpreter of South Asian and Christian religious traditions whose meticulous scholarship bridges several disciplines, notably South Asian Studies, Religious Education and Religious Studies. Her latest book is a powerful argument for a transparently reflexive ethnographic approach to the understanding of religions and cultures. She urges us to share and activate the insights provided by in-depth, nuanced studies, which draw on the ethnographic skills of participant observation and listening. Addressed to teachers, teacher trainers and their students, and others working with children and young people, this irenic and grounded book is an invaluable

resource. Based on a quarter of a century's field work (much of it among British Punjabis) into the experiences of Hindu, Sikh and Christian children in the British Midlands, it challenges educators to present faith communities in ways that are both truthful and true to the diverse experiences of their members.

Eleanor Nesbitt, and her colleague Robert Jackson, are among those academics who critique the 'world religions paradigm'. This paradigm, which presents 'religions', without any discussion, as strictly separate entities (rather than as fluid and interacting traditions), still today defines school-based religious education in the UK and much of the religious studies syllabus in higher education. Analyzing the ever-widening gap between the simple world religions categories of much religious education and the experience of individuals, she concludes that educationalists and other professionals share a responsibility to move society from stereotyping to active receptivity. The religious paradigm *can* be used, but cautiously, with awareness of diversity, and sensitivity to the multiple interacting influences upon young people's religious aspirations and practice. One of the great strengths of the book is the refusal to reduce behavior to a family's 'religion', 'culture' or 'ethnicity' without considering the possible interplay of influences at work in society as a whole.

Intercultural Education includes revised versions of material that has already appeared in journals and edited books from 1992 onwards. This allows readers to evaluate the singular contribution the author has made over the years to the study of religious nurture and education, providing us with a wealth of detail – 'the fine grain of human diversity'. She balances empathy with discernment, querying established representations and boundaries, alerting us to the complexity of religious identities and making insightful interconnections between ethnographic studies, pastoral care, the curriculum and international events. A recurring theme is the textbook tendency for religions to be represented as more monolithic and exclusive than they are. There are numerous telling examples of the multiple slippages between the preacher's (and the religious education textbook's) norm and individuals' actual practice.

The book is divided into ten chapters. The first chapter deconstructs the assumption that birthday celebrations are cross-cultural by introducing examples of a range of parental attitudes and children's experiences. A particularly fascinating section describes the evolution of party norms among Punjabi Sikh families. In chapter 2 the common notion that all Hindus are vegetarian is critically examined. Research data are used to demonstrate that in matters of diet as elsewhere stereotyping is out and no group should be looked at in isolation. Young Hindus are exposed to the same influences as their peers. Food nevertheless provides a medium and metaphor for exploring young Hindus' understanding of Hinduism. Chapter 3 begins with the statement that in most schools in Europe and North America more pupils and staff identify themselves with Christianity than any other faith but that the diversity of that Christian belonging remains largely invisible. Differences within faiths risk being submerged by perceptions of differences between faiths. Chapter 4 considers the three festivals of Christmas, Diwali and Vaisakhi demonstrating that

festivals have multiple meanings for participants. It also argues that UK schools play a major part in acknowledging, perpetuating and fashioning tradition. Chapter 5 also deals with the important issue of the representation of traditions. Eleanor Nesbitt explores Sikhs' broad spectrum of understanding of the word 'God' and use of holy water (*amrit*) to illustrate her contention that Sikh 'beliefs' and 'practices' are far more complex and variegated than insider or outsider accounts suggest. Chapter 6 analyses how far young British Hindus actually *choose* their beliefs and why certain views are dignified as 'beliefs' and others as 'superstitions'. Chapter 7 problematizes the relation of belief and practice in relationship to caste. The author observes that caste is part of the lived experience of many millions of Hindus and Sikhs in India and elsewhere, and as such it is a subject that concerns not only religious educationalists but everyone interested in the welfare of South Asian pupils. She offers more nuanced models of caste, challenging the distinctions in caste-consciousness between Hindus and Sikhs commonly made by teachers and curriculum writers.

Chapter 8 returns to the question of the multiple identities of young British Hindus. The author rejects the idiom of culture conflict and culture clash to paint a more complex picture, arguing that identity is an ongoing, complex and affective process. Chapter 9 is one of the most important and significant sections of the book. Eleanor Nesbitt argues that 'religion' expresses individuals' spirituality and illustrates the distinctiveness and commonality of spirituality within and across faith communities. She emphasizes the significance of young Christians', Hindus' and Sikhs' experience of God, of Spirit, of inner peace and the ways in which such experience challenges schools' provision for 'spiritual development'. Returning the spiritual to religion means, for example, ensuring that Sikhism in school curricula is not only presented in terms of externals like the 'five Ks'. Chapter 10 reflects anew on ways in which ethnography can be of value to teachers in schools. Ethnographic studies can make us look afresh at what 'religion' and 'culture' are. The school's role in the perpetuation, as well as the representation, of religion and culture comes under scrutiny. Process becomes a key word, both in relation to the way in which individual identity forms and in relation to ethnography itself. Finally, the Appendix contains the excellent Guide for Teachers which offers practical advice relevant to both primary and further stages of education and a magnificent glossary which explains and distinguishes words with Arabic, Gujarati, Hindi, Hebrew, Punjabi, Sanskrit and Ukrainian origins.

Eleanor Nesbitt succeeds in vividly bringing to life the traditional plurality (ethnic, cultural and linguistic, etc.) of different communities of faith, and the modern plurality related to the intellectual climate of late modernity or post modernity. She also makes absolutely explicit the gap between the rhetoric and reality of religions, and the urgent need for a religious and cultural literacy that takes us beyond, on the one hand, multiculturalism and, on the other, antiracism. She offers a set of educational ideals which are inspiring. At a time when religion is often deeply politicized and the integrity of scholars challenged as

never before this book on intercultural education is timely, accessible and immensely rewarding.

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Parminder Bhachu, *Dangerous Designs: Asian Women Fashion the Diaspora Economies* (London: Routledge, 2004), 196pp. (pb) £20.99. (hb) £65. ISBN 0 415 07221 2 (pb) 0 415 07220 4 (hb).

Thus far, main narratives of ‘Asian Cool’ have been dominated by studies of Asian music, mainly *bhangra*, comedy and gastronomic delights. More recently we have also been exposed to the more varied and imaginative forms of Asian diasporic experience in art and theatre, clothing, fashion and wedding shows, film, media and in literary forms. But the scholarly interest in understanding the phenomenal growth in these creative and cultural industries has been rather limited. The book under review fills an important and timely gap and provides a model work for other research scholars to emulate.

Parminder Bhachu’s new book, *Dangerous Designs* has 10 chapters but conveniently it is divided into four parts. Part I of the book provides a narrative on the history and transformation of *salwaar-kameez*, the ‘Punjabi suit’, from its humble and negative beginning in the 1960s as a ‘*pendu*’ (read ‘inner-city’ in the British context) or ‘ethnic’ garment to a high fashion garment which many public celebrities, such as Princess Diana, Jemima Khan and Cherie Booth were proud to wear. In Part II she provides personal narratives of her chosen cultural or fashion entrepreneurs such as Gita Sarin and Bubby Mahil. She forcefully argues that the relative business success of Gita Sarin and Bubby Mahil (over very successful sub-continental as well as global designers such as Ritu Kumar and Sehyr Saigol) is very much due to their *embeddedness* – their informal social networks and social capital – in their localized communities. Part III of the book has a focus on the suit marketers – Damini Mahendra, Komal Singh and Mala Rastogi and provides case histories of their successful transnational marketing and networking creations, Daminis (in East London), Bombay Connections and Creations Boutique (in West London). The remarkable success of these fashion entrepreneurs and marketers and retailers is very much facilitated by transformations in global communications which have made it possible for them to operate from multiple sites and enabled them to engage ‘in importing, distributing, and redistributing clothes in localized global markets’ (p. 129). These were the pioneers of what later emerged into booming micro-businesses in micro-markets catering for all facets of the wedding economy in many South Asian localities.

The last section of the book - Part IV – on Sewing Cultures, is particularly fascinating and this contribution clearly demarcates Bhachu’s work from other narratives on diaspora communities. In this she emphasizes the significance of

culture of *sina-prona* (Punjabi vernacular literally meaning sewing/stitching/beading) among ex-East African Sikh families and its transmission over generations and its subsequent influence in producing successful cultural entrepreneurs. These are highly original and largely undocumented insights and connections, which should inspire further research into deeper explanations of success of British Asian (or other ethnic) enterprise in different spheres. We have very limited documented knowledge on how migrant groups successfully utilize their inherited cultural and social capital and skills in new diasporic locations.

The book has a clear structure and message. The narrative on the Punjabi suit's transition from being a garment of deprecation to a garment worn by global fashion icons is a fascinating story told through identifying rapid changes in underlying structural conditions (both economic and technological) and through case studies of some of the main actors in this process. These are the innovators and designers, the producers, marketers, wholesalers and retailers – in fact all the actors involved in the *salwaar-kameez* production and value chain. Their narratives are conveyed in a clear writing style and presented in an interesting way, based on material collected through a long period of ethnographic research. Use of photographs and illustrations of impromptu sketches of bespoke fashion designs gives the work added authenticity. Powerful and original insights emerge, only because Parminder Bhachu is also an insider and has empathy with their diasporic experiences. If there is a gap in this rich narrative, it is in not providing more details on the sub-continental production sites and producers which would have completed our understanding of the transnationalised yet localized production and consumption processes. The real significance of this path-breaking narrative lies in demonstrating how marginalized, hybridized diasporic actors have the ability to influence, re-engineer and recode cultural commodities and maximize personal benefits from the constrained opportunity structures in their adopted countries. It represents a classic study of globalization from below. Further, Bhachu's work provides a well-developed theoretical formulation, in fact extending the prevailing theories of ethnic entrepreneurship, which can be equally applied to other cultural commodities such as bhangra music and food. Just as her earlier work on *Twice Migrants* inspired research (especially among younger scholars) on other multiply migrants of South Asian origin and on Asian marriages and wedding economies, *Dangerous Designs* too will act as a catalyst for further research on varied forms of cultural production and consumption among Diaspora communities.

There is another dimension of this work which also needs to be highlighted. Bhachu's main research has tended to focus on a sub-group of migrants or twice migrants - Punjabi Sikh females -and her current work re-emphasizes the important role they play, not only as supportive house makers but more importantly as cultural entrepreneurs who are able to mould, reinvent and rearticulate their own diasporic experiences to thrive in new micro-markets in marginalized micro diasporic spaces. They are adept at using new technologies

to create and participate in globalize production chains *on their own terms*. Her work strongly argues against the fallacy of seeing South Asian diaspora females as some powerless, passive objects of exchange dominated through patriarchal relations (unfortunately still the dominant discourse among writers on Asian women) and demonstrates the importance of these women as having their own agency and transformative powers in innovating new economic and cultural forms. This would be a highly recommended book for courses in Cultural Studies and Globalization as well as for the growing number of courses in Diaspora Studies.

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Constance Waeber Elsberg, *Graceful Women: Gender and Identity in an American Sikh Community* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003) xxi+380 pp. (hb) \$35.00. ISBN: 1-57233-214-X.

Elsberg's book is an ethnographic study of women's experiences in the 3HO - the Healthy, Happy, Holy Organization. Harbhajan Singh Puri, a Sikh immigrant, had been teaching Kundalini yoga in Los Angeles, when he founded the 3HO in 1969. The Organization soon developed into a formal religion with ashrams across the USA and abroad. Under Yogiji's guidance, the 3HO adapted the philosophical and spiritual tenets of the Sikh religion to the needs of counterculture and New Age sensibilities, and reproduced a unique American Sikh community. Elsberg gives us an interesting perspective on how Vietnam era mistrust towards social and political institutions were here rechannelled towards trust in the inner self, and in the leader of the 3HO. She analyzes the movement as a dramatic synthesis of Tantric Yoga, Sikhism, New Age spirituality, and counterculture thought. She provides an especially useful discussion of its Sikh background.

Of course Elsberg's focus is on the women who enter the community and adopt Sikhism. They receive Sikh names, wear the 5 Sikh symbols, and recite Sikh hymns. But they go beyond Sikhism by giving up meat and caffeine, wearing white outfits, donning the turban, adopting yogic practices as an essential part of their spirituality, and devoting themselves to Yogiji - even entering marriages arranged by him. Her work draws upon interviews with members and ex-members, individual narratives of admirers and critics, her own experience at workshops, women's camp, and Tantric Yoga classes sponsored by 3HO, and textual sources from a range of disciplines. She follows 3HO women members from the early period in the 1970s through the 1990s and she follows the reintegration process of former members back into society. In nine accessible chapters, the social scientist offers us a balanced understanding of women's identity and role both in and out of this American Sikh community. It is fascinating to see how utterly simple events can construct long-lasting

traditions. The pivotal custom of 3HO women donning the turban, for instance, started out most casually. It was Premka, Yogiji's secretary, who one day tried on the turban 'for fun'. 'He saw it, liked it, and praised it, and so other women began to imitate her' (p. 172).

The title of the book *Graceful Women* replays Yogiji's old mantra for female members, 'I am grace of God' (p. 104). We even hear in it his maxim, 'woman is the highest incarnation of planet earth' (p. 105). His expression imparted dignity and respect to women in strong contrast to the misogynistic hip terms 'chick' and 'old lady'. According to Elsberg, 'It implied a rejection of both the sexual freedoms of the counterculture and androgynous models of gender relations' (p. 177). In order to bring out their innate strength and spirituality, women associates are mandated to attend to their clothing and demeanor. Intense yoga and strict dietary regime, Sikh *bana* (the five external symbols) and *bani* (sacred verse) are all means for women to become 'graceful'. Societal pathogenic programming must be flushed out so that they get to feel their intrinsic female spirituality. The social convention of marriage is transformed into a religious discipline, for Yogiji, who judges the spiritual compatibility of a couple by their auras, may arrange marriages. Overall then, many women affiliates experienced empowerment. They were enriched by the beauty of Sikh sacred poetry, and in the ashrams they had the opportunity to replace any dependence on drugs with yoga and meditation; isolation and individualism with collective living that was financially and psychologically supportive; insecure relationships with marriage and family. Even those who left the organization, continued to find Sikh sacred music inspiring, and Golden Temple (Sikh sacred shrine), the perfect spiritual home.

But Elsberg's narrative also discloses the double standards, and the constant subordination, oppression, and exploitation that women experienced in 3HO's tightly run hierarchical organization. Unlike their male counterparts, women never became leaders of ashrams. Indeed we get a very complex and contradictory picture. Some female residents reported severe anxiety attacks and depression, which go entirely against its healthy, happy and holy motto (p. 270). Some felt that in the process of giving them a new spiritual identity, the organization tore them away from their biological family. Not only did they give up their former lifestyles, families, and religious traditions, but they were also parted from their young children who were sent far away to Indian boarding schools. The separation between mothers and daughters came out poignantly in chapter 5 - with both sides scarred for the rest of their lives.

The 3HO ideals of spiritual liberation were in fact quite constraining for women. Yogiji's instruction to women that 'you should relate to your husband as a god' (p.187) or his warning that 'a "bitchy", tense or angry mother can inhibit her daughter's breast development' (p. 191) sound frightening! They are totally contrary to Sikh scripture, which the 3HO claims as its religious framework. Yogiji taught that a good wife should resolve a disagreement with her husband by saying 'you're right; I'm sorry; it's the will of God'" (p. 188). He claimed that this lesson came from Guru Ram Das, but in fact it is a grave

distortion of the Sikh Guru's person and message. Without making any gender disparities, all the Sikh Gurus from Nanak to Gobind Singh incited both men and women *alike* to discover the infinite One and together accept the Divine Will. There are no separate codes listed for men or women, nor any such lessons for wives, mothers, widows, or daughters anywhere in Sikh scripture! The 3HO tries to train women to be so graceful for their husbands, children, and the community members, that women end up losing touch with their essential self.

Elsberg, however, makes no critical assessments in her text. She remains consistently objective, and conveys all of the women's experiences honestly and respectfully. Her study leaves us reflecting about the future of the organization: how will it relate with the larger Sikh world? She concludes with the proposal that American Sikhs and Asian Sikhs find common ground. Here I would even add that an engagement between the women is absolutely essential. Far too long superficial dualisms like 'east' and 'west' have kept them insulated and divided, and deflected them from their real common enemy: patriarchy. The White and Brown sisters need to share their anxieties and problems so that THEY can directly face andocentric restrictions - either in the 3HO, or in traditional Punjabi culture - and together discover ways of empowering each other. Thus they will live out the liberating message of Sikhism and acquire their true human identity. All in all, Elsberg's book contributes significantly to Gender Studies, Sikhism, and Multiculturalism. I recommend it most strongly.

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P.A.S. Ghuman, *Double Loyalties, South Asian Adolescents in the West* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003) 248pp. (pb) £14.99. ISBN 0-7083-1765-0

The identity construction of South Asian young people living in the West remains an inadequately researched area. An international comparative analysis is even more rare. Paul Ghuman provides a much needed and extremely useful account of the comparative experiences of South Asian young people living in four western countries – Britain, Australia, Canada and the United States.

The book, based on extensive quantitative and qualitative fieldwork, is concerned with the lives of South Asian young people who were either born or had their schooling in the West. Although written largely from a psychological perspective, Ghuman integrates anthropological and sociological dimensions to provide a broader framework for contextualizing the findings.

A wide range of topics is explored including identity formation, dual-socialization, acculturation, bi-culturalism and inter-ethnic relations.

Ghuman begins the book by giving a useful historical account of South Asian immigration to Australia, Canada, the US and the UK. There is also some discussion of the major religions, racial discrimination, and language use and

gender roles. A review of previous research on some key issues and concerns such as acculturation, bi-culturalism, gender equality, collective orientation, dating and arranged marriages, and racial prejudice provides the necessary contextual framework.

A brief profile of the four research sites, and the methodological framework, is given in chapter 3. It is here we learn that the Canadian data is rather dated having been collated over a decade ago in 1990. We are informed that a lack of resources is largely responsible for this, and that contemporary research has been used to supplement this data. The comparative value of this data is nevertheless of concern, and readers are advised to exercise caution in their interpretation of these findings.

Ghuman also introduces us to his key instrument of measurement for identity, bi-culturalism and acculturation – his ‘Aberystwyth biculturalism scale’. This 32 item Likert scale has been used by Ghuman himself in his previous research but does suffer from a lack of use by other researchers. This prevents any form of comparative analysis. It should be noted that Ghuman demonstrates an awareness of the lack of social and political context in many of the acculturation studies, and has compensated for this exploring it in his qualitative interviews.

In chapters 4 and 5, the reader is introduced to research evidence on the educational attainment and vocational aspirations of South Asian young people; and a discussion of the key areas of exploration – identity, bi-culturalism and acculturation. Ghuman also presents findings from his own qualitative research with teachers and parents to discuss a range of issues such as the teaching of community languages, religious education, school discipline, home-school links and homework. These chapters provide a good context to understand the research findings presented in the rest of the book.

Chapter 6 moves to the crux of the book to discuss the findings from the Aberystwyth biculturalism scale. The statistical findings and tables are probably only of relevance to other researchers, and may not be particularly useful for the ordinary reader. Some of the statistical Tables are inadequately discussed. Ghuman is clearly aware of the disconcerting nature of chapter 6, and invites readers to omit this in favor of chapter 7 where the qualitative findings are used to make sense of the statistical data.

Chapter 8 concerns itself with gender issues to focus on the mental health of South Asian girls. Ghuman’s own research findings are rather limited to explore this area, so he makes use of other studies. The reader needs to be aware of the differential aims and methodologies of these various studies and to exercise caution in interpreting these findings.

In chapter 9, Ghuman offers reflections and recommendations, and provides a useful account where he brings together the findings of his own painstakingly carried out research and that of other scholars. Some insight is also provided on policy implications.

Ghuman’s book, in spite of some methodological limitations, provides an excellent international perspective on the South Asian diaspora. The book

provides a comprehensive account on a range of key issues and should be read by teachers, counselors, South Asian parents and young people, social workers, psychologists, policy makers and others working in the area of young people, education, and welfare.

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Rehan Hyder, *Brimful of Asia: Negotiating Ethnicity on the UK Music Scene* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 224pp. (hb) £47.50 ISBN 0-7546-0677-5; (pb) £17.99 -ISBN 0-7546-4064-7.

Rehan Hyder's *Brimful of Asia* is a welcome addition to the growing body of literature on the 'Kooolest' sound emerging from 'cool Britannia' in the 90s, namely British Asian Music. Compared to race, gender, and class, ethnicity has been a neglected area in the study of popular music. Hyder steps in to fill in that gap by examining the link between ethnicity and identity on the UK Music Scene. Hyder's main argument seems to be that while ethnic particularity and cultural continuity have a positive impact on British self-definitions, contemporary expressive identities reveal equally dynamic and syncretic processes at work.

Though Hyder takes great pains to differentiate syncreticity from hybridity, his use of the term syncretic to describe British Asian groups' transformation of various inherited traditions comes close to the meaning of hybridity as suggested in post-colonial theories of hybridity. And while Hyder is right in drawing attention to the limits of essentialism in examining new ethnicities, his hybridity bias prevents him from perceiving the limits of hybridity in altering the lived realities of British Asian minorities.

Slicing through political, popular and academic hype surrounding the arrival of 'Asian Kool' in Britain, Hyder's study breaks with subcultural theories in their emphasis on style and class by focusing on the use and interpretation of music in the performance and transformation of identities. While music may definitely act as a channel where 'identities can be asserted, consolidated and negotiated' to challenge rigid notions of identity, Hyder's privileging of the views of the musicians over the texts makes him slip into the intentional fallacy. In his attempt to uncover an explicit motivation in the music, he seems to confuse musical authenticity and impact with musicians' stated views. While the majority of British Asian music does consciously participate in black cultural politics, its resistivity has not always worked with a direct engagement with gender, racial or ethnic issues. As much as ideologically grounded bands like Fun[^]Da[^]Mental, Asian Dub Foundation, Cornershop and Voodoo Queens, those implicated in the field of sonic commerce have made an equally significant contribution to dismantling racial and ethnic stereotypes. Similarly, if use and appropriation be the yardstick for determining musical

negotiation with identity, Bally Sagoo's remixes and Punjabi MCs original and rapped numbers have not only mainstreamed British Asian music but have also been appropriated by diverse groups in the reinvention of British Asian identity. When dealing with their reaction to the burden of representation, Hyder's interviews with the musicians, on the other hand, yield the complexities of perspectives that refute the claims of essentializing and totalizing narratives of ethnic and cultural perspective.

Hyder embeds contemporary exotic politics in the orientaling tradition of white appropriations of Asian musical traditions and links the Asian visibility gained thereby with the perpetuation of stereotypes that obstruct the reception and mainstreaming of Asian Kool. Hyder's examination of 'the exotic politics' attached to Asian music takes a line different from that adopted by John Hutnyk in his book *Critique of Exotica: Music, Politics and the Culture Industry*. Unlike Hutnyk, who berates the commoditization of ethnicity in the marketing of Asian music, Hyder defines exotic politics as 'the reification of ethnicity as an authentic marker of progressive political resistance', which is exploited in the marketing of these musics. Hyder's exploration of the nexus between the media and the industry in the construction of the cult of the authentic is interesting as is his discussion of autoexoticization by musical bands. While Hyder is critical of 'the marketable sense of authenticity' conferred on Asian Bands through an ascription of an overt political agenda denied by the groups, he also objects to their ghettoization as purely political representatives of some fixed notion of purity in academic and media debates. Yet one wonders if Hyder's own subscription to 'the uses and gratifications' approach does not detract from the musical originality and aesthetic quality of British Asian music.

Hyder observation about the establishment of dialogues between disparate groups based on common musical and political experiences as a positive outcome of the global flow of musical and cultural capital is a novel way of looking at sonic globalization. Similarly, his analysis of the British Asian utilization of available cultural resources to create new musical textures that transform both British and Asian cultural traditions provides a concrete illustration of Stuart Hall's new ethnicities. His investigation into the complex articulations of self in the new Asian music unsettles absolute and unified ethnic notions of identity. His findings about the syncretic processes at work in the changing sense of Asianness can be relevant in pointing the way to a future understanding of multi-ethnic society, sensitive to the importance of cultural heritage but also celebrating syncretic and multi-accented identities. Hyder's unraveling of the link between ethnicity and identity in new Asian musics is an important contribution to the theory of music and belonging.

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Raman Mundair, *Lovers, Liars, Conjurers, & Thieves*, (Leeds: Peepal Tree Press, 2003), 96pp. ISBN 1-900715-80-5 (pb) £7.99.

Lovers, Liars, Conjurers, & Thieves is a collection of poetry by young British Punjabi poet, Raman Mundair. An intelligent, highly physical and vivid poet, she captures the journey of first generation migrants' experiences, both in their new world, and subsequently around the world. Mundair's collection addresses migration, destructive family relationships, the partition of the sub-continent, love in its many forms and, most successfully, the barbaric deaths of Ricky Reel and Stephen Lawrence. Individually not all the poems impress, however as a collection her poetry reveals a strong central voice that refuses to be controlled. This resistance is made evident in the very cover, where the reader is faced with a naked Asian woman, the title scrawled strategically on her body to lend some modesty. A powerful and vulnerable image, the woman's refusal to return the viewer's gaze, and reveal her own face (she is looking behind her) lends a heightened sense of resistance to the poetry as well.

In the first quarter of the collection, *Lovers*, we get some snapshots of life in Punjab before English has invaded Mundair's tongue. The figure of her mother, personifying home comforts and, in the act common to all Punjabi mothers, kneading dough and making *parathas* for her child, is juxtaposed with an innocent child's on the edge of sexual awakening, as described in 'Osmosis'.

The second section, *Liars*, moves into the youthful folly of love and its attendant disappointments and joys. The poems that deal with the differences in the philosophical traditions of Sikhism and Ismaili Islam are charming, and yet simplistically highlight the egalitarian essence of the former, versus the closed nature of the latter. The speaker is a young female faced with a lover who disappoints at almost every turn, so that one wonders what she saw in him in the first place. The answer may be found in 'Three Photographs of You', as there the woman - faced with her lover - is suddenly reminded of her father.

Less successful, too, is Mundair's *ghazal*: despite the compactness of her poem, 'Asu Tears', the English - with the Hindi side by side - does little to capture the restrained and yet passionate emotions that are central to the *ghazal* form.

Mundair's humor and sly wit is evident in a piece such as 'The Catch': this moves from love poem to warning—the speaker initially embraces her lover's arrival—celebrating it with 'her light on' and showing 'tiny droplets of lavender to soothe [you] to sleep' (p.58). The poem retains a jagged edge, a message of warning, as the lover calypso like will punish her lover who has 'use[d]' her as 'idly as a seashell whose captured, ecstatic waves delight you awhile, to later toss[it] back into the sea from whence it came.' As she says fetchingly, 'there are plenty more fish in the sea.' Perhaps, like Gloria Steinem's famous 'A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle', Mundair's speaker can make do without her lover.

Mundair's compassion and anger are given voice, and forcefully so. In 'An Elegy for Two Boys' she renders poignant the last moments of two black

youths, victims of hate crimes in what is Blair's avowedly multicultural England. Poise and a command of her language come to the fore in this poem on the terror that both Stephen Lawrence and Ricky Reel may have felt when faced with their killers. Mundair collapses both their identities into one-conveying the horror of their last minutes as well as that of the torturous dance of waiting not for their sons, but for the justice denied them, which their parents must now endure.

She ends her collection on a note that places the poet and poetry securely at the centre of existence, in 'Last Night a Poet Saved My Life', a jaunty and exhilarating tribute to the power of the words of the poet and of the poet herself. Poet and poetry merge to give life and to arouse all of the reader's five senses, becoming the 'beloved' found both in courtly poetry and in Punjabi and Urdu poetry. Minor false notes notwithstanding, Mundair possesses a promising and uncompromising voice that deserves to be widely read.

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