



British Muslim fictions: interviews with contemporary writers

Humaira Saeed

To cite this article: Humaira Saeed (2013) British Muslim fictions: interviews with contemporary writers , Journal of Postcolonial Writing, 49:1, 123-123, DOI: [10.1080/17449855.2012.752555](https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2012.752555)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2012.752555>



Published online: 12 Dec 2012.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 250



View related articles [↗](#)

British Muslim fictions: interviews with contemporary writers, by Claire Chambers, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011, 351 pp., £18.99 (paperback), ISBN 978 0 2303 0878 7

Claire Chambers's timely work is the first of a two-book set, which begins with a collection of interviews and will be followed by a monograph on artistic representations of British Muslims. The 13 writers interviewed in this first volume are all "writers of Muslim heritage", a designation Chambers deploys to reflect the diverse ways in which the writers are connected to Islam. The interviewees range from self-identified religious Muslims to atheist Muslims whose identification is in terms of Islamic culture and influence. The category of British is also applied broadly, and Chambers is keen to emphasize the diversity of the Britain in which she situates her study. All the writers are placed under the umbrella term of British, whether born in Britain or not, and regardless of how long they may have lived there. This politicized move is reflected in the play of the title, *British Muslim Fictions*, which highlights the book's focus on fiction created by British Muslims, and also points to how singular understandings of British Muslims as an identity category are themselves fictions. Chambers's collection of interviews sets out to challenge any preconceptions that British Muslims exist as a homogenous entity and places Muslims as *producers* of culture, a creativity not often attributed within popular representations.

Writers interviewed in this volume are Leila Aboulela, Tariq Ali, Tahmima Anam, Nadeem Aslam, Fadia Faqir, Abdulrazak Gurnah, Mohsin Hamid, Zahid Hussain, Aamer Hussein, Hanif Kureishi, Kamila Shamsie, Adhaf Soueif and Robin Yassin-Kassab. Framing each exchange is a detailed biography and list of the author's works. The interviews demonstrate a range of cultural contexts and feature intertextual moments of dialogue, with writers referring to other interviewees, especially those of similar national backgrounds. In addition, the span of writers enables those who have recently become visible in the public eye to overlap with more established figures and voices.

Although the juxtaposition of the themes of Islam with literature invariably raises questions about *The Satanic Verses* affair, Salman Rushdie himself refused to be interviewed for the volume. He does, however, haunt the pages of the text, with several writers referring to Rushdie as a writer or icon. Other recurring themes are 9/11 and the war on terror, Muslim Spain, and women in Islam. Although there are significant overlaps, the divergent views of the interviewees on many topics contribute to a collection full of varied and nuanced opinions.

The consistently engaging interviews within this collection will create a valuable reading list of some of the most acclaimed postcolonial novels of recent years. Chambers's dialogues with these writers offer a contextual basis for their texts in both politics and creative practice, and raise expectations for her next study.

Humaira Saeed

University of Manchester, UK

Email: Saeed@manchester.ac.uk

© 2013 Humaira Saeed

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17449855.2012.752555>