

Fighting Alternative Facts with Fiction: Immigration and Islamic Fundamentalism in the Narratives of Tabish Khair and Sunjeev Sahota

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In our post-truth world, dependable and impartial evidence is no longer relevant: people are entitled to select their own version of reality, based on perceptions, opinions, and deeply-ingrained biases and stereotypes. In this frightening context, literature seems to be entrusted with a significant social function: by voicing uncommon (even unpopular) views, by contemplating different options, by uncovering what is often overlooked, it prompts readers to think critically, while unmasking the mechanisms of propaganda. Paradoxically, therefore, fiction may be effectively employed to fight alternative facts and avoid oversimplifications, thus defending the truth, in its complexity.

This paper sets out to explore the way Tabish Khair and Sunjeev Sahota, two authors whose origins lie in India (Khair lives in Denmark, while Sahota in the UK), have tackled sensitive subjects such as the global migration crisis, illegal immigration, fundamentalisms and terrorism, often exploited and manipulated by political leaders and the media to serve their purposes. Four of their novels will be taken into consideration: *How to Fight Islamist Terror from the Missionary Position* (2012) and *Just Another Jihadi Jane* (2016) by Tabish Khair; *Ours are the Streets* (2011) and *The Year of the Runaways* (2015) by Sunjeev Sahota. As will be shown, albeit in different ways, these texts set out to heal the peculiar kind of 'selective blindness' that affects post-truth societies.