POSTCOLONIAL EXCLUSIONS: THE SECURITIZATION OF CITIZENSHIP IN 21st CENTURY BRITISH BLACK AND ASIAN WRITING

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Postcolonial Exclusions: The Securitization of Citizenship in 21st Century British Black and Asian Writing

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Abstract

This thesis will examine the securitization of British citizenship in the 21st century as presented in Levi David Addai’s 2008 play, *Oxford Street*, and in Suhaïymah Manzoor-Khan’s 2019 poetry collection, *Postcolonial Banter*. It builds on 20th century postcolonial literature and scholarship, which critiques the colonial development of British citizenship and the systematic exclusions of citizens born into (former) British colonies across Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. Situated against a backdrop of proliferating detentions, deportations, and citizenship deprivations, my discussion traces the texts’ emphases on pervasive surveillance and disciplinary measures, which are entangling citizenship with state security in the 21st century. In particular, they both highlight the—increasingly quotidian—biopolitical obligations on citizen-subjects to produce themselves as border guards of the state. I analyse how both Addai and Manzoor-Khan expose the racialized, gendered, and classed configurations of citizenship and in/security, which expose Black, Asian, and Muslim postcolonial citizens to scrutiny and exclusion. In doing so, I suggest that these writers challenge the state-defined borders of British citizenship which suspect, and only conditionally admit, their presence. I end by questioning whether these literary challenges offer creative and critical strategies of resistance against the securitization of citizenship in the 21st century.
Lay Summary

This thesis aims to centre questions of citizenship and security in the analyses of 21st century British Black and Asian writing. Drawing upon recent government policies, I hope to emphasise how policing, immigration, and counter-terror legislation—and not simply nationality law—are increasingly reconfiguring and restricting the borders of British citizenship. By focusing on descendants of people born into former British colonies, I intend to trace the postcolonial inheritance of precarity in Black, Asian, and Muslim citizens who are explicitly profiled and targeted by state security measures. I locate my attention to the securitization of British citizenship within a genealogy of transnational feminist scholarship, rethinking citizenship beyond the discourse of il/legality and beyond the nation-state.
Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author Shereen Leanne Wyatt.
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Dedication

for everyone caught in the claws of the hostile environment
Introduction

“You must know, my dear young lady, that in Lagos you may be a million publicity officers for the Americans; you may be earning a million pounds a day; you may have hundreds of servants; you may be living like an élite, but the day you land in England, you are a second-class citizen.”

— Buchi Emecheta, Second-Class Citizen

In an interview with The Guardian, Paulette Wilson describes the moment that she received a Home Office letter declaring her to be an ‘illegal immigrant’ and demanding she leave the UK within six months: ‘When I opened the letter I thought, Am I British? What am I? And I couldn’t even answer that in my head’. Born in Jamaica under British imperial rule, Wilson was sent to live with her grandparents in the UK at the age of ten, following Jamaica’s independence. At the time, citizens of independent Commonwealth countries were granted the right of entry to the UK, and children under 16, like Wilson, could access this right as dependents through their parent’s passports, without needing to present separate documentation. Yet, the fact that Wilson (on entirely legal grounds) did not have a passport of her own in 1968 would contribute to the Home Office declaration of her ‘illegal’ status in 2015 under the British government’s most recent and most ruthless campaign against what it terms ‘illegal immigration’. For the expansion of immigration controls over the past decade has been founded on the crude equation of documentation with ‘legality’, branding Wilson, along with thousands more victims of the Windrush scandal, as an ‘illegal immigrant’.

Despite attending primary and secondary schools, paying taxes for several decades, working in the House of Commons restaurant for a time, and having a daughter and granddaughter in the UK, Wilson could provide none of the specific documentation demanded by the Home Office as evidence of her right of entry as a Commonwealth citizen. Unable to demonstrate her formal status, the pronouncement of her so-called ‘illegality’ immediately left her homeless and ineligible for employment or benefits in the UK. Two years after receiving the letter, immigration officers forcefully detained Wilson in Yarl’s Wood removal centre, drove her to Heathrow airport, and scheduled her place on a deportation flight to Jamaica.

I do not single out Wilson’s experience here to suggest that she has been treated any more or less brutally than anyone else caught up in the Windrush scandal. The violence is ongoing and immeasurable. But the fact that she worked for a time in the House of Commons restaurant is a stark reminder that the architects


2. I make Wilson the active subject of the sentence to emphasise how the onus to provide documentation is on the person accused of ‘illegality’ even when the Home Office has destroyed that evidence, as it did with landing cards in 2010, or lost that evidence, as was the case with Osman Bash Taqi. Diane Taylor, “Home Office lost passport of man battling for decades to remain in UK,” The Guardian, May 14, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/may/14/home-office-lost-passport-osman-bash-taqi-battling-to-remain-in-country.
of immigration legislation, overseeing detention and deportation, are fundamentally sustained by the very people they brand as ‘illegal’. Wilson’s response to opening the Home Office letter, ‘Am I British? What am I?’, captures the dehumanising effect of this branding as her rights to life in the UK are snatched away. It captures the precarity of being made to question herself at the disjoint between her lived experience—that is, being born under the British Empire and living in Britain from the age of ten—and the denial of her very existence by the British state.

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In an interview with *ITV News*, Shamima Begum is handed a copy of the letter, posted to her mother in the UK by the then-Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, depriving the 19-year-old of her British citizenship. Holding her new-born infant in one arm, her eyes move between the letter and the ground as she repeats, ‘I don’t know what to say, I don’t know what to say’. Over the past decade of Conservative governance, the Home Secretaries have exercised their sovereignty to deprive people of British citizenship with unprecedented frequency. They have consistently justified these deprivations on the grounds of national security, as did Javid in the case of Begum, who ran away from her home in the UK to join an IS group in Syria when she was fifteen. Yet, the deprivation of Begum’s citizenship, in particular, has unprecedented implications, because she is the first—known—person born into British citizenship in the UK to be left stateless following deprivation, a move which goes against the UK’s own nationality legislation.

For those of us born into British citizenship, deprivation is currently permitted provided that ‘the Secretary of State has reasonable grounds for believing that the person is able, under the law of a country or territory outside the United Kingdom, to become a national of such a country or territory’. Citing this elastic clause, Javid claimed ‘reasonable grounds for believing’ that Begum could become a national of Bangladesh, where her father was born and holds citizenship, as the Citizen Act 1951 makes her eligible for citizenship through descendancy. However, Bangladesh’s Home Minister, Assaduzzaman Khan Kamal, pointed out that while Begum—who has never been to Bangladesh—was legally eligible, the


5. The Immigration Act 2014 removed protections against statelessness for naturalised citizens but kept them in place, formally, for citizens by descent.


7. Initially the Pakistan Citizen Act 1951 which was incorporated into Bangladesh’s nationality law following independence from Pakistan in 1971.
Bangladesh government would still refuse her application on the same grounds of national security used to justify the deprivation of her British citizenship. Thus, caught between the British Home Secretary’s rejection and the Bangladeshi Home Minister’s refusal to take in the UK government’s discarded citizens, Begum now has no formal nationality. Learning that she has been deprived of British citizenship in the spotlight of the ITV camera, her reiterated response—‘I don’t know what to say’—signals the limits of speech at the point that she is rendered stateless.

***

I begin with these two sketches because they exemplify the securitization of British citizenship in the 21st century. The past decade, in particular, has been characterized by a surge in detentions, deportations and citizenship deprivations as consecutive Tory governments have expanded disciplinary processes to scrutinize immigration statuses and police the conduct of citizens. I also deliberately begin with Wilson’s and Begum’s cases because the British government’s attempts to force a low-income Black woman and a young woman of colour onto two of its former colonies concisely illustrates the racialized, gendered, and classed exclusions from British citizenship which proliferate under ever more restrictive immigration policies and ever more unrestricted policing, deportation, and deprivation laws. Among these measures, the ‘hostile environment’ policies and the ‘Prevent Duty’—the former ostensibly designed to target so-called ‘illegal immigration’, and the latter purporting to prevent extremism—are notoriously engineering the encroachment of police, immigration and counter-terror enforcement upon the public sector. That is to say, under these policies, surveillance and documentation verification have now become legal obligations of British citizenship. The state demands that teachers, nurses, driving instructors, care workers, bank employees, doctors, landlords, council workers (to name a few) double up as border guards, monitoring and reporting the immigration status, speech, and conduct of their students, patients, employees, tenants, colleagues, and customers.

If the landscape of 21st century Britain that I have sketched so far does not appear despairing then I have not adequately conveyed the violence of tightening borders nor the precarity and fear produced under heightened scrutiny. For those of us who are racialized, gendered, and classed as the products of elsewhere, the Windrush examples are reminders of the presumed synonymy between Britishness and


9. The fact that the Conservative government have proudly promoted the phrasing of the ‘hostile environment’ conveys the violence of securitization in the 21st century. When Sajid Javid took over Amber Rudd’s position as Home Secretary in 2018, he attempted to rebrand the ‘hostile environment’ policies into the ‘compliant environment’, however, I do not change the phrasing here because the measures themselves remain unchanged, which is to say, as hostile as ever.
whiteness that renders one’s citizen status, and the rights it ostensibly confers, suspect, while the escalating number of deprivations is a warning that one’s status and rights are increasingly contingent upon performing state-defined ‘British values’. Yet despair is not the only author of this thesis. For though I have outlined some of the violence of the past two decades, I intend, in the pages that follow, to focus on the creative and critical resistance which has continued to grow in 21st century British Black and Asian writing in response to—and in spite of—this violence. As navigating the quotidian becomes ever more of a test of one’s immigration status and conduct, 21st century British Black and Asian writers are exposing and challenging the securitized borders of citizenship which increasingly scrutinize, and only conditionally admit, their presence.

Of course, even as I critique such borders, I have had to impose my own limits to the number of authors and texts that can be discussed in the detail that they deserve. I have chosen to focus on Levi David Addai’s 2008 play, *Oxford Street*, and select poems from Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan’s 2019 collection, *Postcolonial Banter* for the following reasons: firstly, I have chosen texts from different decades in the 21st century, because *Oxford Street* channels the momentum leading up to the implementation of such invasive disciplinary policies as the ‘hostile environment’ and the ‘Prevent Duty’, while *Postcolonial Banter* is written in the midst of their violence. Secondly, Addai’s script and Manzoor-Khan’s poetry reveal different intersectional vulnerabilities to exclusion from citizenship; in particular, ‘Oxford Street’ highlights the criminalization of low-income Black and Asian masculinities, while *Postcolonial Banter*’s first-person poems bear witness to the policing of Muslim communities and, especially, Muslim women of colour. Thirdly I pair these texts because they both gesture to the ways in which policing, immigration, and counter-terror legislation—and not simply nationality law—delineate the borders of British citizenship in the 21st century. And, finally, both Addai and Manzoor-Khan attend to the ways that racialized, gendered, and classed exclusions from the state are rooted in the colonial development of British nationality and immigration legislation throughout the 20th century. As descendants of people born into former British colonies (Ghana and Pakistan respectively), their critique

10. I discuss ‘British values’ in more detail in Suspects, not Citizens.

11. In the words of the Scottish National Party MP, Stuart C. McDonald, ‘People can hardly get out of bed these days without somebody asking to see their passport.’ 639 Parl. Deb. H.C. (2018) col. 35.

12. The phrase ‘counter-terror’ is used in government legislation, including the Prevent Strategy. Along with countless scholars and activists, I see this phrasing as a way for the government to evade accountability for state violence. As someone who grew up watching the invasion of my mother’s motherland in what the British and American governments referred to as the ‘war on terror’, my understanding of terror is informed by, and aligned with, the transnational feminist scholars in Suvendrini Perera and Sherene Razack, eds., *At the Limits of Justice: Women of Colour on Terror* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014).
of the borders of British citizenship not only reveals the intergenerational effects of exclusion but also builds on the foundations laid by earlier postcolonial writers.

Before I map out my thesis in more detail, it is worth reiterating how the securitization of citizenship has come to weigh upon the work of so many postcolonial writers in the UK. The ‘Windrush generation’, born into British colonies and newly-independent Commonwealth countries across Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, moved to the UK after the British Nationality Act 1948 granted both citizens of the UK and colonies (CUKCs) and citizens of independent Commonwealth countries (CICCs) the right of entry, allowing them to live, study and work there. The fact that the right of entry was initially extended so widely is a reminder of the UK’s reliance on these imperial and postcolonial citizens for its post-war reconstruction efforts. Yet when more and more citizens from across the declining Empire began to take up their right to make homes in the UK—the UK they were invited to re-build—the British government responded by introducing various border controls designed to restrict the entry of ‘unskilled coloured immigrants’—in the words of the 1961 Head of the Commonwealth Relations Office—without impacting movement from “white” Commonwealth countries. The Commonwealth Immigrants Acts 1962 and 1968 began by rendering access to the right of entry conditional and hierarchical through the establishment of skills-based work vouchers, a restriction that most impacted low-income Black and Asian women. The Acts also facilitated the deportation from the UK of unwanted CUKCs and CICCs born in (former) colonies across Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean. Subsequently, the Immigration Act (IA) 1971 established the right of abode separately to the right of entry, assigning the former to those citizens with a so-called ‘patrial’ connection to the UK, that is to say, a citizen with at least one parent who was a CUKC born in the UK.

The increasing contingency attached to the rights of citizenship under these Acts made it all the more explicit that rights were not meant to benefit citizens indiscriminately, even as the formal status of

13. Named after the HMT Empire Windrush which sailed from Jamaica to the UK in 1948.


citizen was held by people from Manchester, England to Manchester, Jamaica, from Hastings, India to Hastings, Sierra Leone. In particular, the ‘patrial’ condition in the IA 1971 covertly permitted racialized exclusions by distinguishing between those citizens, mostly of white British descent, who were granted the right of abode and could confer this right upon their descendants, and those citizens who could not inherit the right of abode from their Black and/or Asian parents born into former British colonies and Commonwealth countries outside of the UK. This distinction was to be carried over into British citizenship, established for the first time under the BNA 1981 to replace citizenship of the UK and Colonies. For under this Act, only those CUKCs who had the right of abode under the IA 1971 would become British citizens by descent and, formally, have the most extensive access to rights in the UK to this day.

If the reader can forgive my broad brush-strokes through the 20th century, my intention was to situate the works of those postcolonial writers who moved to the UK as CUKCs or CICCs within the context of tightening border controls and the limiting reach of citizenship rights. Indeed, I opened this thesis with a quotation from Buchi Emecheta’s novel, *Second-Class Citizen*, which, to my mind, aptly theorises the subordination of those people who arrived in the UK after the BNA 1948 as formal citizens, only to be racialized, gendered, and classed as unwanted, unBritish immigrants. Published in 1974, and tracing Emecheta’s own experience of moving to the UK from Nigeria in 1962 through the Lagos-born protagonist, Adah, the novel reveals the increasingly conditional and hierarchical access to the rights of citizenship, which the CIAs and IA 1971 had started to formalize. From the moment Adah lands in the UK with her two children and is subjected to ‘the tedious check by the immigration officers’, scrutiny and rejection begin to shadow her footsteps. Repeatedly confronted with internal border controls as she tries to access services across London, from housing to employment, childcare to healthcare, Adah begins to

17. Government ministers did little to disguise this racialized discrimination between citizens, including MP Norman Pannell who declared of the right of entry in a 1964 parliamentary debate: ‘It was intended primarily to concern those people of British background in the old Dominions of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Certainly, it was never intended to apply to the vast populations of the Indian and Colonial Empires’. British background’ here, of course, disregards the fact that these ‘vast populations’ were British subjects under the British Empire, that they were all subject to British law. Rather, the term betrays a racialized synonymy between British nationality and whiteness, distinguishing ‘people’ from ‘vast populations’, citizens with substantive rights from citizens-in-name-only. The ‘and’ in ‘citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies’ was, therefore, less a conjunction, and more a gulf. 699 Parl. Deb. H.C. (1964) cols. 1627-1628.

18. For a more intricate account see Karatani, *Defining*.

perceive her discriminatory treatment in terms of a disparity between (white) first- and (Black) second-class citizens in the UK.\textsuperscript{20}

However, the racialized, gendered, and classed forms of scrutiny and exclusion that produce second-class citizenship in Emecheta’s novel were neither confined to the last century nor to the ‘Windrush generation’. Subsequent generations of British Black and Asian writers have long dealt with experiences of discrimination when navigating the UK’s internal and external borders in their works, signalling the ‘inheritance’ of second-class citizenship.\textsuperscript{21} May Joseph insightfully documents this ‘inherited’ precarity in her 1998 chapter, ‘Bodies Outside the State: Black British Women Playwrights and the Limits of Citizenship’, which considers the works of Rukhsana Ahmad, born in Pakistan, and Jacqueline Rudet, Winsome Pinnock, and Meera Syal, all born in the UK, within the context of Black and Asian women’s struggles for citizenship. Arguing that the changes to nationality and immigration legislation throughout the 20\textsuperscript{th} century positioned these women as ‘bodies “outside the state”’, Joseph shows how their plays disrupt exclusive concepts of Britishness that determine both cultural belonging and access to legal rights in the UK.\textsuperscript{22} Her attention to the cultural as well as legal aspects of citizenship is especially informative, for it acknowledges informal as well as formal means of delineating the borders of citizenship.\textsuperscript{23} Together, Emecheta’s novel and Joseph’s chapter stand as crucial precursors to the research in this thesis, and I read the exclusions presented in both ‘Oxford Street’ and \textit{Postcolonial Banter} as elaborations on their discussions of second-class citizenship and ‘bodies “outside the state”’ over subsequent postcolonial generations.

And so, to my intended contribution. The first chapter will explore how ‘Oxford Street’ dramatizes the quotidian encroachment of border controls upon life in the UK and the nefarious effects of securitization on low-income Black and Asian men. I will turn to Inderpal Grewal’s discussion of

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\textsuperscript{22} Joseph, “Bodies Outside the State,” 198.

\textsuperscript{23} See the discussion on cultural citizenship in Caldwell et al., \textit{Gendered Citizenships: Transnational Perspectives on Knowledge Production, Political Activism, and Culture} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 6.
‘securitized subjects’ in Saving the Security State to articulate the biopolitical obligations upon Addai’s characters to police the borders of the Total Sports store and simultaneously, I will argue, those of the neoliberal British state.24 I will also draw upon Bridget Anderson’s concept of the ‘Tolerated citizen’ to emphasise how such obligations are compounded for characters in the play’s ‘Loss Prevention Team’, who are tasked with the store’s surveillance, even as they are vulnerable to racialized, gendered, and classed exclusions from British citizenship.25 Both Grewal’s and Anderson’s work will also inform my second chapter, which will focus on three poems from Postcolonial Banter: “We did not bring this darkness upon ourselves”, “The best of the Muslims”, and “British Values”.26 I will explore how Manzoor-Khan presents the rise of surveillance and disciplinary measures which explicitly target Muslims in the UK and the violations of those subjected to constant, intense scrutiny. This will lead on to a discussion of the ways that counter-terror legislation in the 21st century delineates the ethical and moral borders of British citizenship, casting Muslims as suspects with contingent positions in the state. In particular, I will suggest that these poems expose the compounded effects of the securitization of citizenship for Muslim women of colour who are at once subjected to imperial, patriarchal, and neoliberal structures of violence.

Inevitably, there is a great deal which is left unwritten in this thesis. Firstly, in the texts themselves, I cover only three of thirty-seven poems in Manzoor-Khan’s collection, not because the rest are irrelevant to the questions of citizenship by any means, but because a broader selection would have led to little more than superficial glances at each poem. In Oxford Street, I leave aside the small roles of the Citizens, an omission which, I realise, sounds counterproductive to my study; yet, I have done so because my analysis of their roles necessitates a more sustained discussion of consumerism, which strays from my principal focus on the securitization of citizenship here—I intend to address this omission in a future paper. Secondly, I do not address LGBTQ+ exclusions from the state, even as (British) citizenship – or perhaps I should say cis-izenship – has long been a biopolitical means of enforcing cis-heteronormativity.27 Once again, I plan to build on my current study in further research which attends to the significance of sex, gender, and sexuality in constructions of citizenship.


27. See Carol Johnson, “Heteronormative Citizenship and the Politics of Passing,” Sexualities 5, no. 3 (2002): 317-336. I have in mind especially the recent case of a gay man whose asylum application to the UK (to escape persecution in their home country where homosexuality has been outlawed) was rejected because the judge declared
Thirdly, since I have focused on the postcolonial experiences of second-class citizenship in the UK rather than the struggles of becoming a formal citizen, I do not elaborate on the increasingly stringent regulations for naturalisation. However, it is vital to acknowledge that these regulations—especially the ‘good character requirement’—contribute to the production of biopolitical subjects and, therefore, to the delineation of the borders of British citizenship. Readers will also notice that I do not discuss other categories of formal relations with the British state aside from British citizenship, even though five more are legislated under the BNA 1981 (British Overseas Territories citizens, British Overseas citizens, British subjects, British National (Overseas), and British Protected Person). There are certainly racialized, gendered, and classed exclusions to consider in relation to each of these categories, including the cases of Malaysians rendered stateless after being told to renounce their Malaysian citizenships for British Overseas citizen documents. Yet, to address all of these categories in adequate depth would require more texts and far more space than is available in this thesis.

Nevertheless, I hope that the following pages do emphasise the need to challenge the ongoing securitization of British citizenship in the 21st century. This cannot be done without the tools of critique, resistance, and imagination which British Black and Asian writers provide against the encroaching borders.

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29. Karatani elaborates on the establishment of all of these statuses in Defining.

The Borders of *Total Sports*

Introduction

In their 2019 report, co-published by the Runnymede Trust and the Centre for Labour and Social Studies (CLASS), Dhelia Snoussi and Laurie Mompelat demonstrate how recent immigration and counter-terror policies reinforce racialized exclusions from British citizenship. They write that For BME people and Muslim communities, a sense of being policed rather than supported by public services is compounded by hostile-environment policies and the Prevent strategy, which introduce bordering processes in ordinary spaces like health, education and housing. Growing evidence documents overlaps between policing and immigration enforcement practice on the one hand (Bradley, 2018; LAWRS and Step Up Migrant Women, 2018), and essential service provision on the other.31

It is precisely this permeation of surveillance and border control into ‘ordinary spaces’, and the consequences for bodies racialized, gendered, and classed ‘outside the state’, which Levi David Addai stages in his play, *Oxford Street*. Perhaps this is an unexpected claim to make of a play set in a *Total Sports* store and dedicated to ‘all those who toil or have toiled in retail’, particularly when there are many texts which deal explicitly with the violence of British borders and heightened state securitization.32 After all, there are no police or immigration officers cast in *Oxford Street*, like those in Benjamin Zephaniah’s poem, “The Death of Joy Gardner”.33 There are no counter-terror officers making airport arrests as in Tariq Mehmood’s poem, “Mined Memories”,34 or politicians passing legislation to expand police powers as in Suhaïmah Manzoor Khan’s “P P P Prevent”.35 And yet, as I will explore in this chapter, the characters in *Oxford Street* subtly take on all of the above roles within the play. As the *Total Sports* staff monitor the stock, the shoppers, and each other, I suggest that Addai exposes just how quotidian the biopolitical obligations to guard the borders of British citizenship have become. *Oxford Street*, then, stages the encroachment of policing, immigration, and counter-terror enforcement not only upon


‘essential services’, as Snoussi and Mompelat confirm, but also upon such ‘ordinary spaces’ as a sportswear store.

‘Securitized subjects’

From the opening scene description of ‘The Lodge’, serving as a ‘security office’, Addai emphasises the scale of the surveillance in place at Total Sports:

The security office contains a PC, monitor and files where documents and old tapes are kept. There is also a water cooler, Tannoy system and a stack of two-way radios. Along the back wall is a window for the Loss Prevention team to see who is entering and exiting the building through the staff entrance. This exit has a security barrier around it.36

On one level, this panoptism clearly enables the ‘Loss Prevention team’ to monitor the staff and shoppers in the interests of securing the store. Yet the characters in the play, and the cast of its 2008 performance, signal that the rigorous efforts to guard Total Sports simultaneously function to monitor citizens in the interests of securing the British state. Consider Addai’s decision to specify each character’s race and/or ethnicity (describing Kofi Graham, Darrell Obi-Anderson, and Boy One as ‘black Londoners’, Emmanuel Lamptey as ‘black Ghanaian’, Husnad Khaliq as ‘Indian Londoner’, Loraina Marceli as ‘Brazilian Londoner’, Aleksander Rydzewski as ‘Polish’37, Stephanie Hannon as ‘white Essex’, and Boy Two as ‘white Londoner’), and how this translates into the cast list where the majority of actors are, like Addai himself, descendants of people born into former British colonies across Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean.38 Indeed, these character details and casting choices emphasise the ways in which the surveillance of staff and shoppers is bound up with the racialized ‘bordering processes’ of the British state.39 Thus, the ‘Loss Prevention team’, explicitly tasked with securing the store in the scene description above, is also implicitly charged with the disciplinary duties of law enforcement, determining whose status and conduct confirms their right to be in the store and in the state. Under their surveillance, the borders of British citizenship fold into the borders of Total Sports.

36. Addai, Oxford Street, 3.

37. Note how Aleksander, played by the white German actor Kristian Kiehling in the 2008 performance, is not described as ‘white’ in the character list. Addai signals how whiteness is at once a racialized, gendered, and classed construct which marginalizes and excludes even those who are visibly white-passing. I am reminded of the discussion on women, low-income people, and Irish people excluded from whiteness in Radhika Mohanram, Imperial White: Race, Diaspora, and the British Empire (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

38. Addai, Oxford Street, 2

Given this overlap between store and state, I suggest that Addai’s ‘Loss Prevention team’ performs the very construction of ‘citizens as securitized subjects’ that Inderpal Grewal theorises in *Saving the Security State: Exceptional Citizens in Twenty-First Century America*.\(^{40}\) Focusing on the US, though drawing brief parallels with the UK, Grewal examines the effects of securitization on citizenship and subjectivities.\(^{41}\) She argues that the promotion of self-empowerment under neoliberalism combined with the pervasion of disciplinary technologies and practices has produced subjects who are ‘securitized in neoliberal ways’.\(^{42}\) That is to say, they claim the authority to subject those around them to scrutiny and discipline at the same time that the state heightens its own security measures. Grewal terms this relation between these ‘securitized subjects’ and the security state ‘neoliberal citizenship’, through which citizens claim the right to take matters of security into their own hands, declaring their sovereignty from the state while also extending state surveillance, discipline, and necropower.\(^{43}\)

Yet, as Grewal demonstrates, the extent to which subjects are able to enforce discipline or, conversely, the extent to which they are made into objects of scrutiny, is determined by race, gender, and religion through which figures of in/security are constructed.\(^{44}\) She argues that whiteness, patriarchy, and Christianity have structured the US in such a way that racialized and gendered ‘portraits’\(^ {45}\) of illegality, criminality, and terrorism—rooted in settler colonialism, slavery, patriarchy, and orientalism—have long presented threats to state security and ‘nonwhite bodies’ as synonymous.\(^ {46}\) These ‘portraits’ are used to justify the national and transnational surveillance, discipline, and deaths of ‘nonwhite bodies’, whose allegiance to the security state is always suspect, and whose presence within the state is always problematic. On a national scale alone, police, immigration, and counter-terror enforcement allege that it is for security’s sake that Black and Indigenous bodies must be forced into state prisons, Latinx bodies

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41. This thesis does not address Grewal’s discussion of humanitarian citizenship under neoliberalism also in *Security State*.


into ICE detention centres, and Muslim, Arab, and South Asian bodies into Guantanamo.47 It is for security’s sake, they allege, that these bodies must be followed, their homes and workplaces raided, and their neighbourhoods patrolled. Grewal, therefore, concludes that those ‘nonwhite bodies’ living within the declared borders of the US settler state are, in fact, ‘cast out’ from ‘neoliberal citizenship’, as the targets of surveillance and disciplinary measures.48

By contrast, Grewal argues that white American citizens, and ‘males claiming whiteness’ in particular, are cast as the guardians of security who exercise the right to monitor, criminalize, and control ‘nonwhite bodies’.49 Unlike those people ‘cast out’ from ‘neoliberal citizenship’, these ‘securitized subjects’ fiercely guard and publicly perform their sovereignty to accrue violent technologies and to scrutinize, discipline, and kill in the name of security.50 They claim the authority to exercise this violence not through employment as state police, immigration, or counter-terror officers but through citizenship, both detaching them from the US state’s control and aligning themselves with the state’s biopolitical and necropolitical projects. The US security state thus produces both figures of insecurity to whom ‘neoliberal citizenship’ is foreclosed, and what Grewal terms ‘exceptional citizens’, who extend state disciplinary powers and claim the sovereignty to use such violence without state authorization. All of these figures may hold legal citizenship in the US, yet it is ‘neoliberal citizenship’ which increasingly delineates the boundaries of that legal citizenship, determining access to rights, claims to sovereignty, and the in/security of one’s place in the security state.

While the particularities of the US security state in Grewal’s research cannot map exactly onto the UK context that Addai critiques in *Oxford Street*, the concept of ‘neoliberal citizenship’ does reflect the ways in which the roles of British police, immigration, and counter terror-enforcement are


48. Grewal, *Security State*, 13, 92, 104-105. In these pages, Grewal explains that she is elaborating on Sherene Razack’s language of Muslims being ‘cast out’ from citizenship in the US and Canada, to specify their casting out from ‘neoliberal citizenship’.


50. In a recent example of this public performance of sovereignty, this April, armed white citizens, including a group named the Michigan Liberty Militia, entered the Michigan state capitol to demand that Covid-19 lockdown measures be lifted. Senators inside the building wore bullet-proof vests as these citizens brandished their firearms and demanded entry to the legislative chamber. Facing off against Michigan state police defending the capitol, these ‘neoliberal citizens’ thoroughly performed their securitized roles, opposing the state laws which they perceived as compromising their sovereignty, while simultaneously upholding state laws through which they could claim sovereignty (2nd Amendment). Watching these displays of imperial, white masculinity, I could not help but think of twelve-year-old Tamir Rice, murdered by police in Cleveland as he played in the snow with a pellet gun. Lois Beckett, “Armed protesters demonstrate against Covid-19 lockdown at Michigan capitol,” *The Guardian*, April 20, 2020, [https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/30/michigan-protests-coronavirus-lockdown-armed-capitol](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/30/michigan-protests-coronavirus-lockdown-armed-capitol).
increasingly practised through citizenship as well as through state employment. Moreover, the construction of the US neoliberal state through whiteness, patriarchy, and Christianity in Grewal’s discussion closely parallels that of the British state, configuring in/security in similar ways. Certainly, the forms of discipline available to ‘securitized subjects’ in the US and in the UK differ; the authority to check a person’s immigration status under the ‘hostile environment’ policies or report a person for suspected ‘radicalism’ through the ‘Prevent Duty’ does not come with the same claim to sovereignty as Grewal’s ‘exceptional American citizen’ who takes it upon themselves to administer discipline and death.

In other words, British ‘neoliberal citizenship’ is bound up with the state, which has legislated mandatory participation in its securitization, in ways that separate it from its American expression, under which ‘neoliberal citizens’ do not need to directly involve state enforcement in their policing of state borders. Nevertheless, in both the US and the UK, race, gender, and religion (as well as, I would add, class in the British context) largely determine the targets of scrutiny and discipline. As I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, policing, immigration, and counter-terror measures in the UK reproduce racialized, gendered, and classed ‘portraits’ of ‘nonwhite bodies’ as figures of insecurity who cannot be admitted into ‘neoliberal citizenship’. On the other hand, white British citizens who cannot be deported or deprived of legal citizenship are assured of their rights and their place in the security state and can claim the authority to police its borders.

Thus, returning to Oxford Street, it is all the more significant that Addai chooses Emmanuel, Kofi, and Aleksander as the ‘Loss Prevention manager’ and ‘officers’ respectively, for the very characters monitoring the store are also some of the most vulnerable to racialized, gendered, and classed exclusions from British citizenship. Emmanuel, in particular, who oversees surveillance and discipline in the store, and studies for a National Vocational Qualification in Business Management in his spare time, seems to exemplify the very self-empowered neoliberal subject described by Grewal, even though his position in the state as a ‘black Ghanaian’ postcolonial citizen is a precarious one. Indeed, throughout the play, Emmanuel is absorbed with implementing new security measures at Total Sports, and reinforcing existing ones. Addai takes care to spotlight Emmanuel’s efforts to enhance store surveillance in the stage directions, which consistently indicate that he is in the process of fixing the staff security barrier, or, at least, attempting to do so, as he repeatedly rejects both Kofi’s and Alek’s suggestions to ‘get a professional to look at it’. This ongoing endeavour to resolve the lapsed border controls at Total

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Sports, alongside his stubborn refusal to admit an external technician, emphasise how Emmanuel assumes responsibility for the security of the store, in much the same way that Grewal’s ‘neoliberal citizen’ assumes responsibility for the security of the state.

While he struggles to fix the barrier throughout the play, Emmanuel strives in the meantime to compensate for its malfunctions by intensifying his own surveillance of the staff and shoppers. His gaze, in particular, channels this scrutiny; when Stephanie asks whether Emmanuel will be ‘extra vigilant with the staff’ on account of the broken barrier, he replies ‘Of course […] Me…I keep my eyes on everyone’. This assertion is certainly reflected in the stage directions as he ‘stands at the entrance, watching people go by’. Addai’s positioning of Emmanuel ‘at the entrance’ in this particular direction signals how the roles of border guard and ‘Loss Prevention manager’ are folded into one, inviting less a performance of casual observation from the actor than a cautious guarding of the frontier between Total Sports and Oxford Street. After all, this more vigilant performance aligns with Addai’s directions in the final scene where Emmanuel ‘sees a Shopper he doesn’t like the look of… follows the Shopper into the shop’ and ‘escorts the Shopper he was following out the shop’. Emmanuel’s scrutiny, then, combines the functions of the security guard and the immigration officer, controlling who can freely enter the store/state and who must be expelled from it.

The recurring emphasis on his hypervigilance presents him not only as the panopticon guard who could be watching a worker or shopper at any one time, but also as the ‘securitized subject’ described by Grewal, who remains actively alert to any potential security threats and assumes responsibility for their suppression. Moreover, it is no accident that the mere sight of the shopper is enough to provoke Emmanuel’s alarm and disciplinary action in the stage direction. For though Addai gives no description of the shopper, it is not needed; Emmanuel’s immediate suspicion signals the role of profiling which marks the shopper out as a figure of insecurity to be monitored, pursued, and excluded. Thus, even as Emmanuel himself is vulnerable to such profiling, by producing himself as a ‘securitized subject’, he inevitably becomes a disciplinary vehicle through which the racialized, gendered, and classed discriminations of the security state operate.

Nowhere is this channelling more explicit than in Emmanuel’s treatment of Husnad throughout the play. In the opening scene—staged to highlight the surveillance already in place—Emmanuel is implementing his new search policy to substitute for the broken security barrier with Kofi, as an obedient

54. Addai, Oxford Street, 52.

55. Addai, Oxford Street, 27.

56. Addai, Oxford Street, 84, 87.
Husnad becomes the first staff member to undergo an inspection. Despite Husnad’s compliance and attempts to make conversation, Emmanuel only addresses Husnad with blunt interrogations and imperatives, demanding, ‘(points to his cap) Take dat off!’, ‘Where are dee receipts for dese?’, ‘What are dese?’.

The stringency with which Emmanuel conducts the inspection, even going so far as to ‘look inside the cap’ Husnad is wearing, is, in part, comical; yet the performance is also critically structured around racialized ‘stop and search’ policing in the UK, as well as racialized airport searches between state borders, highlighting the structures of power which grant ‘securitized subjects’ the authority to exercise such unrelenting scrutiny and discipline over those bodies they deem to be suspect. As the state functions of the border guard and of the police officer are absorbed into Emmanuel’s position in the store, so too is the violence these roles inflict carried over into his actions.

Moreover, the physical search is only one of several layers of formality to which Emmanuel subjects Husnad before allowing him to exit the store. Firstly, finding receipts in Husnad’s Total Sports bag, he ‘takes them to the side to double-check and sign them’, emphasising his authority to query the evidence of Husnad’s purchase, evidence which is not validated in itself until Emmanuel has added his signature. Then, as Kofi returns Husnad’s rucksack, Emmanuel questions, ‘Ah-ah-ah, have you searched properly?’ and, ‘Are you sure sure?’; the repetition in both phrases highlights the compound strata of confirmation and reconfirmation that must be navigated before Emmanuel will accept that Husnad has not stolen anything during his shift at the store. Finally, before Husnad can leave, Emmanuel orders him to sign ‘dee new sheet you must fill out every time you leave dee building. It also confirms if you have been searched today’, introducing another new security policy which Kofi perceptively calls, ‘The new ‘exit’ law’. By evoking the language of ‘law’, Kofi signals how the ‘bordering processes’ of the security state come to bear upon the security measures at the store. Both the vocabulary of the legal system and the practices of police, immigration, and counter-terror enforcement are taken up in such ‘ordinary spaces’ as Total Sports.

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57. It is no accident that Husnad is the only character to be searched in this scene, nor that Darrell and Loraina are the only other characters searched in the script. Addai carefully stages the profiling of, in Grewal’s terms, ‘nonwhite bodies’ under state security measures.


Likewise, just as surveillance and discipline in the state are not imposed upon all subjects equally, so in *Total Sports* the new ‘exit law’ only applies to Husnad in the scene. Indeed, having subjected Husnad to such an arduous ‘bordering process’, Emmanuel makes no effort to stop Kofi as he ‘rushes to the exit’. This discrepancy is not lost on Husnad:

HUSNAD. How comes you don’t get searched?
KOFI. Cos that’s the way it is.
HUSNAD. I thought it was the ‘law’?
KOFI. I am the law.

HUSNAD AND KOFI, *laugh as they exit*.64

This scene ending, in which the inspector and the inspected leave together, laughing, is certainly far removed from the violence to which low-income Black and Asian men are subjected by police, immigration, and counter-terror officers. However, Kofi’s boast, ‘I am the law’, does encapsulate the claims to sovereignty of those ‘neoliberal citizens’ who implement and enforce surveillance and disciplinary measures over those who are subjected to violent ‘bordering processes’. Emmanuel and Kofi, thus, fulfil the roles of ‘securitized subjects’, exempt from the scrutiny they impose, while Husnad is cast as the figure of insecurity to be suspected, searched, and controlled.

Nor is Emmanuel’s suspicion of Husnad limited to the opening scene. Consider their exchange in Scene Four:

EMMANUEL. *Eh-eh-eh-eh!* Where are you going?
HUSNAD. I’m going to the bank to get some change.
EMMANUEL. Who authorised?
HUSNAD. Steph did.
EMMANUEL. Nobody informed me.
HUSNAD, *sighs.*
EMMANUEL. Come wid me.
HUSNAD. Where are we going?
EMMANUEL. To find Steph. If she says okay, den we go to dee Lodge and you sign out dere.
HUSNAD. But why would I walk out / like that if I didn’t have permission?
EMMANUEL. I can’t have staff members just walking in and out / of dee main entrance like dat.
Dat’s why we provide you wid a staff entrance to monitor your movements.65

Once again, Emmanuel subjects Husnad to a rigorous process of interrogation and formality before he is permitted to cross the borders of *Total Sports*. As is the case with the receipts which he checks and signs in the opening scene, he does not accept Husnad’s responses as evidence on their own and seeks validation from another (white) figure of authority, Steph. Emmanuel thus exposes the disparity between those sovereign subjects—himself and Steph—who are exempt from the ‘bordering processes’ they enforce upon others, and those suspects whose movements are subject to limitations and conditions. Indeed, the pronouns in his phrase, ‘Dat’s why *we* provide *you* wid a staff entrance to monitor *your* movements’, emphasise this disparity between the securitized ‘we’ who actively ‘provide’ and ‘monitor’ and the ‘you’ who must submit to the disciplinary measures. Husnad cannot escape this scrutiny by virtue of his formal status as a staff member in the store, nor on account of the fact that his conduct is always consistent with his role there. For his status is precarious as a result of the suspicions attached to his body by the intersections of race, gender, and class, even as the figure of authority over him (Emmanuel) is also vulnerable to profiling. The policing of Husnad in these scenes not only stages the encroachment of state law enforcement upon ‘ordinary spaces’, which is proliferating in the 21st century. It also performs the reproduction of the security state’s violent practices and profiling in these ‘ordinary spaces’.

Thus far, I have focused on Emmanuel’s profiling of Husnad; however, he is by no means the only character to channel the racialized, gendered, and classed discriminations of the security state into *Total Sports*. When Darrell arrives for his first shift at the store, Aleksander, the Loss Prevention officer, similarly betrays his predetermined suspicions, even as his own character description as ‘Polish’ signals that he too is vulnerable to certain forms of exclusion and precarity at the margins of whiteness:

DARRELL. […] I’m looking for – *(Reads.)* Stephanie Hannon.
ALEK. Oh, Steph. *(Beat.)* Why?
DARRELL. She said to come ask for her at Security.
ALEK. I see. *(Beat.)* What is the nature of your business?
DARRELL. Business? *(Laughs)* I ain’t selling nutink.
ALEK. I see. *(Beat.)* Is this a personal visit?
DARRELL. No, but I guess I’m here – in person.
ALEK. I see. *(Beat.)* But what / are…
DARRELL. *Blud,* you can relax, I’m just here to start my first day of work, *yu get me*?!

66. My emphasis.

As in Emmanuel’s exchanges with Husnad, the dialogue here demarcates the sovereign from the suspected subject, as Aleksander exercises scrutiny over Darrell. Unsatisfied with each of Darrell’s responses, Aleksander repeatedly probes him with questions, until Darrell’s interjection, ‘you can relax’, challenges his profiling. Even after Darrell has explained his presence in the store, the stage directions convey Aleksander’s hypervigilance as he ‘goes to the desk phone, watching Darrell as he dials’ and ‘peers over his newspaper, to spy on Darrell, who notices he is being watched’.68 Emphasising the vocabulary of sight in these lines, Addai depicts Aleksander’s gaze (like Emmanuel’s) as a vehicle of scrutiny, determining sovereignty or suspicion in those under his surveillance through racialized, gendered, and classed profiling. It is of no consequence that Darrell’s status in the store and conduct so far are consistent with his new role as a staff member, for Aleksander makes it clear that Darrell’s admittance to Total Sports, like Husnad’s, can only ever be precarious. Addai thus folds the roles of state police and border guards into Alek’s position as a ‘Loss Prevention officer’ in the store.

There is one more passage from the script which is worth considering before I discuss Addai’s securitization of characters who are themselves exposed to racialized, gendered, and classed profiling. As with the previous examples, Kofi’s and Husnad’s conversation about their attempts to access London clubs illustrates the exclusionary security measures which confront the characters as they navigate ‘ordinary spaces’:

HUSNAD. […] we went out, but we didn’t actually get in anywhere. Too many racist doormen.

KOFI. Hmm, same thing happen to me and my boys few weeks back, at one club near Picadilly Circus. And those bouncers were black! […] I’m telling you, they don’t want our kind in their clubs. I know with my lot it’s probably because they think we’re gonna start shooting up the place. With you guys they probably think you had TNT strap to your waist.69

Crucially, Kofi’s distinction between ‘my lot’ and ‘you guys’ highlights how securitization implicates bodies in different ways. For he argues that the bouncers’ suspicion of his own conduct signals the synonymy drawn by pre-emptive policing between low-income Black masculinities and gun violence, whereas his suggestion that Husnad is suspected of carrying ‘TNT’ evokes the Islamophobic profiling of Asian and Muslim masculinities by counter-terror enforcement. Yet, Kofi’s use of the collective term in his claim, ‘they don’t want our kind in their clubs’, also exposes the homogenizing effects of exclusion.70 Indeed, the racialized, gendered, and classed ‘portraits’ of illegality, criminality, and terrorism do not

68. Addai, Oxford Street, 12, 13.

69. Addai, Oxford Street, 59.

70. My emphasis.
implicate their bodies in the same ways; however, the consequences of being profiled are shared in this passage as they are both presumed to pose violent threats and are refused the right of entry to the clubs. By contrast, the doormen, who can grant or deny entry, take on the roles of state police, immigration, and counter terror officers, channelling the discriminations of the security state through the ‘bordering processes’ they enforce. Produced, and producing themselves, as ‘securitized subjects’, they exercise sovereignty over those who they determine to be suspect.

Yet, Kofi’s exclamation, ‘those bouncers were black!’, complicates the disparity between sovereign subjects and suspects. Indeed, in Grewal’s discussion, ‘nonwhite bodies’ are ‘cast out’ from the ‘neoliberal citizenship’ of the security state, and cast as the figures of insecurity to be surveilled and controlled; they cannot, in her formulation, exercise sovereignty over others in the ways that white or white-passing citizens can. How, then, are we to explain Addai’s securitization of Emmanuel, Aleksander, and the Black bouncers in *Oxford Street*? Do these ‘securitized subjects’ present a paradox as they channel the discriminations of the security state while being racialized, gendered, and classed outside of (or at the margins of) whiteness? Or can the friction in their roles elaborate Grewal’s discussion of ‘neoliberal citizenship’ in ways that are especially relevant to both the UK and the US in the 21st century?

I propose turning to Bridget Anderson’s concept of the ‘Tolerated citizen’ as a means of analysing the above characters in *Oxford street*, for it perceptively charts the very friction which they perform. In *Us and Them?: The Dangerous Politics of Immigration Control*, Anderson examines citizen and migrant subjectivities in modern Western states, focusing especially on the ways in which British immigration and naturalisation laws delineate the boundaries of citizenship. She argues that the state does not simply present citizenship as a legal relation between itself and the citizenry, but rather as a moral and ethical relation between people with shared principles and modes of conduct, constituting the state as a ‘community of value’. That is to say, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious commonalities (which are, of course, racialized, gendered, classed, and sexed) are promoted in the construction of the state and, therefore, of the citizen-subject. Thus, when Elizabeth Windsor claims in 2020 that ‘the attributes of self-discipline, of quiet good-humoured resolve and of fellow-feeling still characterise this country’, she is defining the moral and (liberal) ethical boundaries of British citizenship rather than reciting the formal criteria of eligibility laid out in the BNA 1981.

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72. “The Queen's coronavirus speech transcript: 'We will succeed and better days will come','” *The Telegraph*, April 5, 2020, [https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/04/05/queens-coronavirus-speech-full-will-succeed-better-days-will/](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2020/04/05/queens-coronavirus-speech-full-will-succeed-better-days-will/).
Anderson argues that this promotion of the state as a moral and ethical project produces subjects as ‘Good Citizens’, ‘Failed Citizens’, ‘Tolerated Citizens’, and ‘non-citizens’, though these categories are neither fully detached from one another nor fixed, often forcing subjects between them.73 Firstly, she describes the ‘Good Citizen’ as a sovereign subject whose liberal ideals, industriousness, and obedience of the law grant them a place in the ‘community of value’ and, consequently, the ability to reconfigure the moral and ethical borders of citizenship.74 The description is, I think, unsatisfying to the extent that it is neither explicitly racialized nor securitized as is Grewal’s ‘neoliberal citizen’; as a result, it cannot attend to the ways in which the promotion of the British citizenry as a ‘community of value’ is intrinsically bound up with the securitization of the state in the 21st century. I, therefore, suggest qualifying Anderson’s description of the ‘Good Citizen’ with Grewal’s articulation of the self-empowered ‘neoliberal citizen’, whose place in the security state is assured by their participation in surveillance and discipline, neoliberal capital, and heteronormativity. This qualification does not, I think, alter the basic function of the ‘Good Citizen’ as a member of the ‘community of value’, nor does it diminish the theoretical values of Anderson’s other concepts.

In contrast to the ‘Good Citizen’, Anderson shows that the ‘Failed Citizen’ cannot be admitted into the ‘community of value’ (even though they may hold legal citizenship), for they fail to embody the self-empowered neoliberal subject, upholding the security state.75 Anderson gives the example of ‘the Criminal’ who is presented as a threat on account of their failure to abide by state laws; as a figure of insecurity, they cannot exercise the sovereignty of the ‘Good Citizen’, nor enjoy the same legal rights and must instead be monitored, controlled, and excluded. The ‘Failed Citizen’, thus, negatively delineates the boundaries of citizenship through their undesirability to the ‘community of value’. The ‘non-citizen’ likewise figures the limits of citizenship from a place of exclusion, though, unlike the ‘Failed Citizen’ who may hold legal citizenship, they are not formal members of the state in question. Moreover, while the exclusion of the ‘Failed Citizen’ is justified on the grounds that they ‘have proven themselves unworthy of the community of value’, the non-citizen is pre-determined as a product of elsewhere and, consequently, a product of different values. In other words, they do not necessarily choose to disregard the ideals of the ‘community of value’, but such ideals are—according to the state—necessarily alien to them.76

73. Anderson, 3-7.
74. Anderson, 7.
75. Anderson, 4.
Between all of these figures, and of particular concern to my reading of Addai’s play, is what Anderson terms the ‘Tolerated Citizen’. This subject is only conditionally admitted to the ‘community of value’, and always vulnerable to exclusion from it, on account of their being associated with failed- and non-citizens. Anderson gives the example of the ‘Migrant’ who is both classified as a product of elsewhere (like the ‘non-citizen’, though they hold formal citizenship) and marked by racialized, gendered, and classed ‘portraits’ of insecurity (at risk of becoming the ‘Failed Citizen’). Her example maps closely onto the profiling of postcolonial citizens in the UK, referred to by the architects of the CIAs 1962 and 1968 as ‘coloured immigrants’ who posed a threat to, what Anderson terms, the ‘community of value’. Moreover, Anderson argues that the descendants of the tolerated ‘Migrant’ are themselves racialized as ‘second- and third-generation migrants’, and, therefore, inherit precarity within the ‘community of value’.

In order to maintain balance on this tightrope between non-citizens and failed citizens, Anderson suggests that tolerated citizens are obliged to struggle against these associations by producing themselves as the ‘guardians of good citizenship’. Under the security state, this means that they must exploit any proximity to whiteness, incorporate the roles of law enforcement officers into their daily lives, condemn those who are excluded from the ‘community of value’, and perform their own allegiance to the state. Thus, mindful of the huge increase in deportations, the ‘Migrant’ must wield their credentials (formal status, tax contributions, employment) over the ‘illegal immigrant’ and participate in the ‘hostile environment’ policies. Thus, the refugee, granted leave to remain in the state, must meticulously abide by its laws and support policing measures to discipline those who do not (‘the Criminal’). Thus, the ‘Good Muslim’, attentive to proliferating citizenship deprivations, must distance themselves from the ‘Islamist’ by proving that they share the ideals of the ‘community of value’ and contributing to its securitization through measures such as the ‘Prevent Duty’.

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84. I take this term from Manzoor-Khan’s poem “The Best of the Muslims” in *Postcolonial Banter*. I will discuss both this term and this poem in greater detail in Suspects, not Citizens.
These efforts, of course, only serve to affirm the neoliberal security state.\(^8\) For as the ‘Tolerated Citizen’ becomes an advocate for the purported ideals of the ‘community of value’ and a vehicle for state surveillance and discipline, they channel the racialized, gendered, and classed discriminations which render their own positions precarious, shaking the very tightropes which they must navigate. Indeed, their obligation to exercise scrutiny and discipline over others (in order to postpone or avoid their own exclusion) is not the same as the sovereignty claimed by the ‘neoliberal citizen’ to do so. Therefore, the ‘Tolerated Citizen’ is not only, in Grewal’s terms, ‘cast out’ from ‘neoliberal citizenship’, but through their endeavours to police the formal, moral, and ethical borders of the state, they ultimately cast themselves out too.\(^8\)

This friction is, I argue, precisely what Addai stages through the characters of Emmanuel, Alek, and the Black bouncers in *Oxford Street*. Their positioning as border guards signals the obligations of the ‘Tolerated Citizen’ to police the very borders which deny them sovereignty. Their formal statuses as ‘Loss Prevention’ staff in the store, bouncers at the club and, I suggest, citizens in the state, are contingent upon their expanding the same ‘bordering processes’ of citizenship which render them suspect. Just as Anderson’s ‘Tolerated Citizen’ strives to maintain their precarious position by distancing themselves from other figures of insecurity, so Addai demonstrates how Emmanuel, Alek, and the Black bouncers deflect scrutiny onto other racialized, gendered, and classed characters. For Emmanuel and Alek, this involves targeting characters who are racialized in different ways to themselves; hence, Emmanuel consistently monitors Husnad, while Alek exploits his own proximity to whiteness through his anti-Black

\[^8\] See Anderson, 114.

\[^8\] I would argue that Anderson’s concept of the ‘Tolerated Citizen’ aptly illustrates the roles of Sajid Javid and Priti Patel (respectively the former and current Home Secretary) in recent British politics. Both descendants of Asian British subjects under the Empire (Javid’s father was born in Pakistan and Patel’s parents in Uganda), they have actively sought to produce themselves as securitized ‘neoliberal citizens’, expanding the reach of police, immigration, and counter-terror enforcement while tightening internal and external border controls. Their respective ascendancies within the Conservative government are indicative of the ways they have exploited their proximities to whiteness, in terms of race and class, and channelled an imperial, masculine authority to enhance securitization. Under Javid, the ‘hostile environment’ policies continued, as did Windrush detentions and deportations, despite his ‘compliant environment’ rebranding attempt. He removed restrictions on Section 60 police powers under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, which allow officers to stop and search people without suspicion of any crime. And crowning this legacy of harm, he claimed the sovereignty to remove Begum’s British citizenship, leaving her stateless. Of course, by assigning Begum to Bangladesh, he reinforced the presumed synonymy between Britishness and whiteness which renders his own position in the state precarious. Patel is simply following in Javid’s stead. In her most recent drive to force a new Immigration Bill through Parliament, instituting a points-based immigration system, she was forced to admit that her own parents, and Javid’s father, would not have been eligible for entry into the UK if her proposed restrictions were in place in the 20th century. Andrew Woodcock, “Home Secretary Priti Patel admits own parents might not have been allowed into UK under her new immigration laws,” *Independent*, February 19, 2020, [https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/priti-patel-immigration-laws-parents-home-office-brexit-a9343571.html](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/priti-patel-immigration-laws-parents-home-office-brexit-a9343571.html).
suspicions of Darrell. As for Kofi’s outrage at being denied entry to the club by the Black bouncers, Addai illustrates how subjects who are racialized in similar ways turn to gendered and classed determinants as ways of disassociating themselves and deflecting scrutiny. Yet in all three examples, the ‘bordering processes’ in which Emmanuel, Alek, and the Black bouncers participate implicate their own bodies.

Thus, where Grewal perceptively charts the exclusivity of neoliberal citizenship, I find that Addai’s play and Anderson’s concept of the ‘Tolerated Citizen’ extend her discussion by emphasising how this exclusivity obliges subjects to strive for its sovereignty, even when they are excluded from—or figure the limits of—the ‘white, masculine, and imperial authority’ of the security state. Since this sovereignty is ever out of reach for the ‘Tolerated Citizen’, I should amend my earlier statements that Emmanuel, Alek, and the Black bouncers occupy the positions of sovereign subjects through their securitization; rather, like the actors who perform their roles on stage, Emmanuel, Alek, and the Black bouncers only impersonate the sovereign subjects to which they aspire, for the violence which they direct onto others as border guards is also always self-inflicting.

Departures from discipline

I have considered how characters are produced and actively produce themselves as ‘securitized subjects’ aspiring to ‘neoliberal citizenship’ in Oxford Street. I now wish to turn to the character of Kofi Graham who, I argue, differs from the other members of the ‘Loss Prevention team’, despite their shared duties to enforce surveillance and discipline at Total Sports. Although Emmanuel and Alek consistently exercise their authority over other characters throughout the play, Kofi is more often presented as an object of scrutiny and discipline despite his securitized position at the store. I have already discussed Kofi’s conversation with Husnad in which Kofi recounts how the club bouncers suspect him of violent conduct through profiling low-income Black masculinities. Yet Addai also shows how the presumed synonymy between Britishness and whiteness leaves Kofi’s formal British status open to suspicion. Despite Kofi’s character description as a ‘black Londoner’ and his self-identification as ‘British-Jamaican’, he is consistently racialized, gendered, and classed as a product of elsewhere.

Consider the exchange between Boy One (also described as a ‘black Londoner’ in the character list) and Kofi:

BOY ONE. What you gonna do, African bwoy?

KOFI. What you talking about? I ain’t African!


88. Addai, Oxford Street, 54.
BOY ONE. Whatever. *(Pointing to Kofi’s badge.)* Coffee! I’ll get you deported back to your village!89

Staged at the main entrance to *Total Sports*,90 the scene folds the borders of British citizenship into those of the store as Kofi is threatened with deportation. It is a brief exchange in the script but one that is all the more pertinent, and all the more violent, amid the ongoing ‘hostile environment’ policies.91 Indeed, the choice to dramatize this threat of forced expulsion in such an ‘ordinary space’ exemplifies the encroachment of immigration controls upon daily life in the 21st century. Central to this encroachment are the quotidian obligations on British citizens to produce themselves as internal border guards, especially, as I have argued, when their own place in the state is subject to constant scrutiny. Thus, Boy One does not need to be an immigration officer to participate in the state’s racialized, gendered, and classed ‘bordering processes’. As for Kofi, neither his employment status in the store nor his protest, ‘I ain’t African!’, prevent the threat of deportation; at the border, he is reduced to race, name.

There are also more subtle ways that Kofi’s body is excluded from the state. Although Emmanuel undoubtedly acts as a protective (‘uncle’) figure for Kofi throughout the play,92 he also consistently refers to him through nationalities other than Kofi’s ‘British-Jamaican’ self-identification. Indeed, in the very first scene Emmanuel tells him, ‘You Jamaicans, too much attitude and aggression’, assigning Kofi to his parents’ birthplace (product of *elsewhere*) while simultaneously reinforcing the profiling of Black-Caribbean masculinities as figures of insecurity and threats to the British state.93 Later in the script, Emmanuel ponders Kofi’s relations beyond Jamaica, proposing, ‘your ancestors might be from Ghana. You have such a Ghanaian-shaped head […] I would not be surprised if your roots led back to the Gold Coast’.94 Locating Kofi in a potential ancestral birthplace this time, Emmanuel’s suggestion that Kofi’s head-shape can trace his African ancestry to the Gold Coast—rather than, for instance, colonial routes of enslavement—bears an eerie resonance of racial craniology as propagated by figures like Blumenbach. That is to say, it signals, along with Boy One’s judgement of Kofi’s name, the essentialist forms of

89. Addai, *Oxford Street*, 34.


91. I have in mind the ‘deport first, appeal later’ policy introduced by the Immigration Act 2014 allowing the government to deport people convicted of crimes while prohibiting these people from appealing deportation orders from within the UK.


racialization which are used to exclude Black bodies from the UK and deny Black British claims to citizenship. Thus, Kofi may identify himself as ‘British-Jamaican’; however, like the targets of ongoing Windrush detentions and deportations, people who have been told they do not exist unless they exist in British passports (like Paulette Wilson, forced to ask herself, ‘Am I British?’), Kofi’s self-identification cannot alter the fact that he is subject to others’ racialized, gendered, and classed determinations of his place within British citizenship.

I suggest that Kofi’s recurrent experiences of scrutiny and exclusion throughout *Oxford Street* contribute to his being more attentive to the nefarious effects of securitization than both Emmanuel and Aleksander. That is not to say that Kofi is immune to these effects and does not himself participate in the surveillance and disciplinary measures at *Total Sports*; after all, he is obliged to enforce security, and, therefore, to reproduce discriminatory profiles and practices, on account of his position in the store, as in the opening scene where he and Emmanuel both search Husnad. Nevertheless, there are several moments in the script when Kofi actively challenges other characters who propagate the discriminations of the security state, as in the following dialogue:

**KOFI.** [...] say we up West and police round here are looking for any excuse to arrest – *(To Loraina.)* young, handsome, suave, and sophisticated black males like myself, yu get me?!  

[...]  

**ALEK.** Well, maybe if you teenagers stop causing trouble, the police will leave you alone, no?  

[...]  

**KOFI.** [...] you need to stop with the generalisations. Contrary to what you may read, not every young black male in a ‘hoody’ is involved in criminal activities.95  

Although both Kofi and Aleksander are obliged to produce themselves as ‘securitized subjects’ in their roles as ‘Loss Prevention’ officers, this exchange highlights how Kofi’s Blackness exposes him to the racialized violence of securitization more so than Aleksander, who can exploit his proximity to whiteness, even if he is not described as ‘white’ in the character list. Thus, Aleksander uncritically reiterates the homogenising (‘you teenagers’) criminal profiling of low-income Black masculinities, while Kofi, whose body is directly implicated by this profiling, rejects the reductive configurations of insecurity produced by, and productive of, the security state.

Similarly, in a later scene Kofi challenges Loraina’s reproduction of discriminatory ‘portraits’ of illegality and criminality:

**LORAINA.** All you manz chat the same chat, walk the same walk and are probably up to the same dodgyness.

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KOFIG. That’s some giant assumption there, boi. […] What is your definition, anyway? Do you see me running around shotting, shooting up the place or even jacking stuff?96

Loraina’s claim exemplifies how surveillance and disciplinary measures construct figures of insecurity through race, gender, and class, incriminating characters as different as Kofi and Darrell in the same ways. Indeed, her use of the collective term, ‘All you manz’, alongside the repetitions of verbs (‘walk the same walk’) and ‘same’ perform the homogenising effect of profiling. Yet Kofi highlights the violence of attributing the same actions and characteristics to all low-income Black men, questioning how his particular conduct aligns with Loraina’s essentialisation. Thus, despite the demands of his role as a ‘Loss Prevention officer’, he actively challenges the discriminatory effects of securitization which render his own position precarious.

Kofi’s most explicit departure from the obligations of the security state is undoubtedly his handling of Darrell’s theft and second theft-attempt. While carrying out a bag search, as mandated by Emmanuel’s new security policy,

KOFIG, finds something in Darrel’s bag. He pulls it out to reveal a pair of toddler-size trainers.
KOFIG, immediately pushes it back into Darrel’s bag.

[…]
DARRELL, takes some ripped tags from his back pocket and places them in Kofi’s hand.

[…] In shock, KOFIG, conceals the tags.97

This moment exposes the limit to Kofi’s participation in the securitization of Total Sports. Although he performs the search, he does not enforce the discipline that his position also demands. In fact, he even works against his role to ‘prevent loss’ by aiding Darrell (albeit ‘In shock’) to bypass the main function of the store to exchange goods for capital. Kofi, therefore, fails to produce himself as a ‘securitized subject’, despite his obligations in the store/state.

Ultimately this limit to Kofi’s participation in securitization intersects with the limits of his position in the store after Darrell attempts a larger-scale theft. Much like the earlier search scene, Kofi performs his role as a border guard to an extent, standing in the way of the exit to prevent Darrell from leaving with a ‘trolley filled with shop goods’98. However, rather than launching into disciplinary procedures, Kofi instead tries to speak with Darrell, urging, ‘look at what you’re about to do […] Think about this, man’.99 While the imperatives convey Kofi’s attempts to establish some authority over Darrell,

96. Addai, Oxford Street, 64-65.
97. Addai, Oxford Street, 56.
98. Addai, Oxford Street, 74.
99. Addai, Oxford Street, 74-75.
his communicative approach departs from the obligations to channel the violent methods of state law enforcement into the store, modelling an alternative to securitization. All too aware of the precarious positions dealt to low-income Black men in the security state, Kofi gives Darrell the opportunity to abandon actions which will implicate both of their bodies in racialized, gendered, and classed forms of criminal profiling. Yet, even as Kofi tries to prevent Darrell from embodying the figure of insecurity produced by the security state, he himself is caught up in the effects of this profiling. When the security alarm is set off, Darrell hides, and Emmanuel arrives on the scene, Addai stages how the actions of one ‘black Londoner’ are immediately attributed to another ‘black Londoner’, incriminating Kofi in Darrell’s place.

However, Kofi does not reveal Darrell as the real agent of the attempted-theft, even though his own status in the store is compromised by assuming the blame. He does not participate in the enforcement of discipline, regardless of the consequences to his own position. In Anderson’s terms, Kofi does not perform the role of the ‘Tolerated Citizen’, desperate to prove his proximity to the ‘community of value’ by deflecting condemnation onto Darrell as the ‘Failed Citizen’. For his position in the store would be no less precarious, no less suspected, if he reoriented the blame onto Darrell. Irrespective of Kofi’s formal status at Total Sports, irrespective of his own (limited) participation in its securitization, surveillance and discipline in the store/state operate through the control and exclusion of Black bodies. By keeping the truth to himself, Kofi quietly departs from reproducing this racialized, gendered, and classed logic of securitization.

Moreover, Emmanuel, who has ostensibly pursued ‘neoliberal citizenship’ throughout the play, does not follow through with his pursuit when it obliges him to discipline Kofi. The penultimate scene opens with a dialogue between both characters in the Lodge after Emmanuel has given Kofi a ‘few days’ away from Total Sports following the attempted-theft. Emmanuel makes it clear that this communicative approach is a departure from the process to which he should adhere as a ‘securitized subject’, telling Kofi, ‘If I wanted, I could trow you out, widout any problem. Or even better, call dee police and let dem deal wid you’. Yet even as Emmanuel recites the disciplinary obligations of the security state, he does not enact them. Rather, he implores Kofi to explain the events of the previous day: ‘talk to me. Help me understand […] If you were desperate for money, you should have come to / me’.

As with Kofi’s attempts to talk with Darrell, Emmanuel’s imperatives maintain his authority over the

100. Addai, Oxford Street, 77.
102. Addai, Oxford Street, 77-79.
dialogue at the same time that he models an alternative to securitization. Indeed, his suggestion that Kofi must have been ‘desperate for money’ bypasses racialized configurations of insecurity and acknowledges economic need under the neoliberal state.

Departing from his rigorous enforcement of security in the opening scene, Emmanuel neither deprives Kofi of his status on the team, nor orders him from the store, but grants Kofi the options to explain or to end his employment contract: ‘You can leave or you can talk. Dee choice is yours’.103 By laying out these terms, Emmanuel maintains his position of authority, however, he does not claim the sovereignty of state enforcement to determine Kofi’s position in the store. Emmanuel’s offer, therefore, models a departure from the disciplinary logic of control and expulsion through which ‘securitized subjects’ can snatch away rights, and expel people from the state. Kofi’s ability to choose whether to explain and keep his position in the store or to leave is far from the violent realities of deportation and citizenship deprivation which function through dictate, as in the Home Office letter declaring to Paulette Wilson her ‘illegality’, or the Home Secretary’s letter announcing to Begum her statelessness.

Nevertheless, the options facing Kofi are, I suggest, reflective of the more quotidian disciplining of British citizen-subjects. After all, they clarify that his position in the store is determined by his participation in its securitization; he can either incriminate Darrell and maintain his status as a Loss Prevention officer, extending the very security measures which implicate his own body, or he can leave and give up the authority to exercise scrutiny and discipline over others. Likewise, British policing, immigration, and counter-terror legislations over the 21st century have made explicit how one’s place within formal citizenship—and one’s access to the rights it ostensibly confers—are increasingly determined by participation in the securitization of the state. It is, therefore, all the more significant that Kofi decides to leave Total Sports. For having exposed the ways in which Black and Asian men’s bodies are policed and rejected by border guards throughout the play, Addai ends with a reversal, as Kofi renounces his position as a security guard at the store.

I do not read this as a renunciation of formal citizenship per se, but of the disciplinary rights granted to those who uphold or aspire to ‘neoliberal citizenship’. By leaving, Kofi does not entirely escape the obligations of the neoliberal security state, because, as Addai makes clear, Total Sports is only one of the ‘ordinary spaces’ they have infiltrated. Nor does he escape the violence of its racialized, gendered, and classed forms of profiling, which mark his own body as a figure of insecurity. Yet his physical exit from the store does signal a departure from the active reproduction of state surveillance and disciplinary measures.

103. Addai, Oxford Street, 80.
The broken security barrier

While ‘Oxford Street’ opens with Emmanuel’s endeavours to tighten security at Total Sports, the play ultimately exposes the violence of surveillance and discipline for characters who are racialized, gendered, and classed as figures of insecurity. Kofi’s and Husnad’s experiences of scrutiny and exclusion highlight the profiling of low-income Black and Asian masculinities as threats to both store and state security. For Kofi, in particular, Addai emphasises how the nefarious effects of this profiling are compounded by his obligations to guard the store and, therefore, to reinforce the very ‘bordering processes’ which incriminate his own body. Perhaps, then, Emmanuel’s ongoing efforts to fix the broken barrier throughout the script present an apt metaphor for the intrinsic irreparability of state security systems, which produce, and are produced out of, the rifts between neoliberal and second-class citizens.

However, the script does not end with the same emphasis on security as is present in the opening scenes. That is not to say that the violence of surveillance and disciplinary measures is overcome entirely. Nonetheless, Kofi and Emmanuel ultimately depart from the expectations of their disciplinary roles—Kofi’s being a literal departure from the store at the end of the play. By pursuing communicative rather than punitive approaches to Darrell’s theft-attempt, Kofi and Emmanuel bypass state disciplinary procedures and, instead, model relations of responsibility towards each other as targets of the security state. These departures disrupt the processes of securitization which rely on citizens producing themselves as ‘securitized subjects’, gesturing to ways of disentangling citizenship from the biopolitical obligations to guard the borders of the state. What potential, then, might departures hold as strategies for confronting the obligations of the ‘hostile environment’ policies and the ‘Prevent Duty’ in the 21st century?
**Suspects, not Citizens**

**Introduction**

In the parliamentary debate following Sajid Javid’s decision to deprive Shamima Begum of her British citizenship, MP Sir Edward Davey made the following statement: ‘Surely a British citizen, born in Britain, is a British responsibility’. While rhetorically effective, Davey’s statement is ultimately reductive. After all, the British government has a long history of deflecting responsibility for unwanted Black and Asian citizens onto former British colonies. For example, the CIA 1962 authorised the deportation—as opposed to the imprisonment—of citizens born into British colonies and Commonwealth countries across Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean for criminal convictions. The IA 1971 followed by authorising the deportation of citizens convicted of crimes if they did not have a ‘patrial’ connection to the UK. Not only did these legislative attempts to foist criminalized Black and Asian citizens onto British colonies and newly-independent Commonwealth countries expose the differential disciplining of these citizens compared to white citizens. It also revealed how their conduct was conceptualised differently to that of white citizens in relation to the British state. That is to say, white citizens could be imprisoned (enclosed within the state), but there was no question that either their birth in the UK or descendancy from UK-born British subjects played any part in their criminal convictions. By contrast, the expulsions of Black and Asian citizens demonstrated how their conduct could be criminalized as unBritish and attributed to elsewhere.

Such is still the case for the descendants of postcolonial African, Asian, and Caribbean citizens in the UK, as Begum’s deprivation exemplifies. Regardless of Begum’s formal status, regardless of her having been born in the UK, she could be racialized, gendered, and classed as a product of elsewhere. Her actions could be attributed to Bangladesh, not because she herself has ever been there, but because her father was born and holds formal citizenship there. I would argue, therefore, that her exclusion from the British state was already a reality before it was formalized through deprivation. To recall Joseph’s words, she was always a body ‘outside the state’. On this account, it is less helpful to think of her citizenship purely in legal terms as in Davey’s statement in parliament.

Instead, I suggest that Grewal’s discussion of Muslims as ‘nonwhite bodies’ who are ‘cast out’ from ‘neoliberal citizenship’, and Anderson’s concept of the ‘Tolerated Citizen’, allow for a more nuanced understanding of Begum’s relation to the British state before deprivation. Referring back to my outlines of their arguments in my first chapter, I suggest that Begum was already ‘cast out’ from

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‘neoliberal citizenship’ as a target of scrutiny and discipline before she was ‘cast out’ from formal citizenship. Indeed, for Muslims in the UK, explicit targeting by counter-terror measures has been compounded by heightened scrutiny under immigration policies in the 21st century. Exposure to this intense surveillance already positioned Begum as the ‘Tolerated Citizen’ before she was produced as the ‘Failed-’ and ‘non-citizen’, in Anderson’s terms.106 Obliged to police the formal, moral, and ethical borders of the state in order to maintain her own place within it, her citizenship was always contingent upon its performance, always precarious.

It is the lived experience of this precarity which Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan conveys through several poems in her collection, Postcolonial Banter. In this chapter, I will explore how her poems bear witness to the violence of being increasingly suspected and surveilled by police, immigration, and counter terror enforcement as a Muslim woman of colour, while simultaneously being expected to assist their exploits as a formal citizen. Like Joseph, Manzoor-Khan attends to the ways that British Black and Asian women are racialized, gendered, and classed as ‘bodies outside the state’, exposing the enduring structure of British imperialism in the 21st century. Yet, in this chapter I will also show how her poems challenge the sovereignty of the British neoliberal security state to grant, deny, and remove citizenship and to render life precarious.

**Scrutinized subjects**

In “We did not bring this darkness upon ourselves”, Manzoor-Khan documents the pervasive reach of state security measures and the nefarious effects of surveillance and discipline for generations of Muslims in the UK. She begins:

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it is an ordinary week day
or as ordinary as they come nowadays
which is to say
there is a car parked in the back street
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parked a little too long107

Her repetition of ‘ordinary’ recalls Snoussi and Mompelat’s report of ‘bordering processes’ encroaching upon ‘ordinary spaces’ under recent policing, immigration, and counter-terror policies. Yet, Manzoor-Khan takes their findings even further in the second line of her poem, emphasising how the very concept


of ‘ordinary’ is altered under heightened surveillance. In other words, ‘ordinary’ becomes synonymous with ‘bordering processes’, with the lingering of a car that turns a ‘back street’ into a boundary of the security state.

As the poem continues, Manzoor-Khan signals the roles of race and gender in determining those who extend the reach of state surveillance and those who are subjected to its scrutiny:

so my mother heads outside

two men sit dawdling

she asks what they’re here for
they say *we’re fixing the water*

but because my mother is an immigrant woman
she knows you don’t take white men at their word

especially not ones in uniform

The distinction between the uniformed ‘white men’ and the mother as an ‘immigrant woman’ traces the same distinction in Grewal’s work between securitized white citizens and profiled ‘nonwhite bodies’, as I explored in the first chapter. Indeed, the fact that the mother already ‘knows you don’t take white men at their word’ gestures beyond the immediate power imbalance between the men and herself in their brief exchange, and toward the imperial, patriarchal, and neoliberal structures of violence which produce citizenship, and define security, through whiteness. After all, the mother is determined as an ‘immigrant woman’ in relation to the ‘white men’, demonstrating how race and gender position the men as normative citizens while locating the mother’s body ‘outside the state’. Thus, the white men can channel the sovereignty of the neoliberal security state to monitor this ‘immigrant woman’ and her household. By contrast, the disparity between the men’s activity (they ‘sit dawdling’) and their claim to be ‘fixing the water’ emphasises how the mother is denied the sovereignty to challenge their behaviour and presence outside her home.

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After the mother watches another man install ‘a black box on the telephone pole / […] directly facing the bathroom window’, the poem relates how the feeling of being watched impacts the family members: ‘every day after that no one mentions that we keep the bathroom / light off at night’. Once again, Manzoor-Khan emphasises how the very concept of ‘ordinary’ is distorted under surveillance, as the family immediately adopt the quotidian practice of keeping the light off in their bathroom. The fact that ‘no one mentions’ this collective act exposes just how unremarkable it is to be monitored, and obliged to monitor their own conduct—even in the most intimate of spaces. Indeed, the function of the ‘black box’ remains unspecified, yet the family’s assumption that it must be surveillance technology signals the systemic and panoptic targeting of Muslims under the security state, the effect of which manifests in the family’s routine policing of themselves in their own home.

Manzoor-Khan details how surveillance has manipulated the family’s daily actions and interactions with one another:

[we grew up] with friends who told us to turn phones off when they came around
with biro pens at the ready to write location names down
with an unacknowledged agreement
that the kitchen wall may be tapped
pressing the soft belly of a squeaky toy puppy when we wanted to
say certain words

As in the bathroom, securitization distorts the quotidian functions of the kitchen, turning it into a site of discipline. Just as ‘no one mentions’ the imposed darkness in the bathroom, so here the stifling of speech has become normalized as the family and friends share an ‘unacknowledged agreement’, ‘turn phones off’, and hold pens ‘at the ready’ to communicate information. Nor can the ‘squeaky toy puppy’ simply be a toy in this household, but must operate as a censor; its censorship even crosses into the vague language of the poem, where Manzoor-Khan writes only that ‘certain words’ are spoken beneath its sounds. Surveillance pervades not only the house but the bodies of the family and friends, controlling their movements and impeding their speech.

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The narrative voice then poses a series of questions, highlighting how the normalization of surveillance in the family’s home serves as a persistent reminder of their precarity, their second-class citizenships, in the British state:

Do You Not Remember They Don’t Want Us Here?
Do You Not Remember We Are Suspect?
Do You Not Remember They Want Us To Build Prisons Out Of Our Communities?
To Build Prison Guards Out Of Ourselves?\textsuperscript{113}

I read the shift to capitalisations as replicating the format of British tabloid headlines, notorious for their repetitive vilification of Muslims in the 21st century.\textsuperscript{114} Indeed, Grewal has demonstrated how ‘mediated panics about external threats from immigrants and terrorists’ are instrumental to the production of ‘securitized subjects’ who police the borders of the state, as well as the reproduction of racialized, gendered, and classed figures of insecurity.\textsuperscript{115} By echoing the headline format to convey the exclusionary effects of these ‘mediated panics’ on Muslims, Manzoor-Khan exposes the quotidian violence which goes unreported, the precarious reality of being a suspect rather than a citizen. The lines also highlight the neoliberal state’s endeavours to enlist Muslims in the very processes of securitization which target them.

As I explored earlier through the ‘Loss Prevention team’ in Oxford Street, the biopolitical obligations on Muslims to ‘Build Prison Guards Out Of Ourselves’ in Manzoor-Khan’s poem—notably through the ‘Prevent Duty’—charts the friction between upholding ‘neoliberal citizenship’ while being ‘cast out’ from it. Under these obligations, it is not only the black box outside of the bathroom window or the kitchen wall which may extend the reach of the security state. It is also oneself.

In addition to being suspected and criminalized, compelled to monitor oneself and each other, continually reminded of one’s contingency in the state, the poem describes how Muslims are pathologised for the embodied effects of securitization:

We’re All Crazy Here
[...]
by crazy I mean in a state of constant hypervigilance
[...]
by crazy I mean in pain

\textsuperscript{113} Manzoor-Khan, Postcolonial Banter, 52.


\textsuperscript{115} Grewal, Security State, 5.
I mean devastated anxious unable to sleep
slumped shoulders and aching back

In her notes on the poem, Manzoor-Khan explains that she expressly chose the word ‘crazy’ to emphasise how Muslims, and especially Muslim women of colour, are ‘portrayed as illogical, ill and hysterical, rather than responding to the conditions of violence we live in’. Indeed, the imperial, patriarchal, and neoliberal structuring of the security state exposes Muslim women of colour to scrutiny and discipline at the same time that it functions to silence them. Manzoor-Khan’s emphasis on censorship and the limits of speech throughout the poem is, therefore, framed through gender, exposing the borders she herself faces in the process of writing. When one cannot express the nefarious effects of securitization in speech, out of fear both of the disciplinary ramifications and of stigmatisation, Manzoor-Khan demonstrates how they find other ways of manifesting in the body, in the ‘slumped shoulders’ and ‘aching backs’, which bow under the weight of precarity. Her breathless list, ‘devastated anxious unable to sleep’, performs the unrelenting violence of vilification upon the body as existence is shadowed by surveillance. For the hypervigilance of the state, and those patrolling its borders, in turn necessitates the ‘constant hypervigilance’ of those who are racialized, gendered, and classed as suspects.

Manzoor-Khan’s poem, therefore, complements Grewal’s work on ‘securitized subjects’ by illustrating how the neoliberal security state also produces scrutinized subjects. While ‘securitized subjects’ police the borders of citizenship, scrutinized subjects who are cast as figures of insecurity must assiduously monitor themselves as the targets of surveillance and discipline. Profiling, as Grewal perceptively writes, ‘produces terror for those it catches in its security net’; it is the embodied effects of such terror which Manzoor-Khan highlights in this poem. Her work bears witness to the violent realities of second-class citizenship, of being a suspect in one’s own home.

‘Britain is the burka’

“We have even tolerated these segregated communities behaving in ways that run counter to our values”

– David Cameron, 2011

Over the past decade, the coalition and Conservative governments have focused on delineating the ethical and moral borders of British citizenship (the ‘community of value’ in Anderson’s terms) through counter-terror legislation. This project manifests most explicitly in the government’s 2011 Prevent Strategy, which defines extremism as ‘vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including

117. Manzoor-Khan, Postcolonial Banter, 53.
118. Grewal, Saving the Security State, 12.
democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs’.\textsuperscript{119} Leaving aside the discussion over how this vague, Lockean, and amnesiac selection of values aligns with the reality of the UK for the moment, the rest of the document leaves no question as to who figures the greatest threat to these purported values: the word ‘Muslim’ is repeated 85 times, ‘Islam’ (and variations) 59 times, ‘mosque’ 34 times, and ‘madrassah’ 15 times – to put that into perspective, the document only mentions the terms ‘neo-Nazi’ and ‘white supremacist ideology’ once.\textsuperscript{120} The implications are clear: firstly, the security state claims the sovereignty to define the moral and ethical borders of Islam through British citizenship, which it constructs through whiteness and (Protestant) Christianity.\textsuperscript{121} The state therefore distinguishes between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Muslims who either perform or fail to demonstrate ‘British values’. Secondly, Muslims, regardless of whether or not they hold formal citizenships or have spent their lifetimes in the UK, need state intervention in order to learn and exhibit ‘British values’.\textsuperscript{122} This intervention was formalised in the 2015 ‘Prevent Duty’, which made it compulsory for schools and childcare providers to promote ‘British values’. Lastly, no matter how diligently Muslims perform these values, and condemn those who do not, the neoliberal state’s construction of insecurity through racialized, gendered, and classed determinants will always produce them as scrutinized subjects, the targets of surveillance and discipline.

In “The best of the Muslims”, Manzoor-Khan challenges these ongoing attempts to define the moral and ethical Muslim subject through the securitization of British citizenship. She writes:

\begin{quote}
The Good Muslim is a silent Muslim who worships, foremostly, acceptability

The Bad Muslims are the Extremists the Distorters and the Radicals\textsuperscript{123}
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{120} Home Office, \textit{Prevent Strategy}.

\textsuperscript{121} See Grewal, \textit{Saving the Security State}, 29-30.

\textsuperscript{122} As Khadijah Elshayyal writes, there is an assumption that ‘British Muslims need to “learn” these values and “unlearn” those “un-British” aspects of conservative Islam’. Khadijah Elshayyal, \textit{Muslim Identity Politics – Islam, Activism, and Equality in Britain} (London: Tauris, 2018), 205.

\textsuperscript{123} Manzoor-Khan, \textit{Postcolonial Banter}, 62.
The pluralised list of ‘The Bad Muslims’ compared to the singularity of ‘The Good Muslim’ emphasises how there are various state-defined subjectivities which are condemned and only one which is tolerated. Echoing Anderson’s ‘Tolerated Citizen’, Manzoor-Khan illustrates how the ‘The Good Muslim’ is always dealt a contingent position in the state; producing oneself as such a subject not only necessitates the suppression of one’s voice, but crucially the subordination of ‘worship’ as an action of faith to a performance of one’s allegiance to the neoliberal state. Yet no matter how closely one adheres to the state’s profile of ‘The Good Muslim’, there is only one adjective distinguishing this subject from its ‘Bad’ counterparts, and the borders between them are never fixed.

Refusing to silence herself in pursuit of ‘acceptability’, Manzoor-Khan instead gives voice to the silences which the state brushes over in its promotion of ‘British values’:

- [is it not suspicious that...] Holding Liberal Values
- happens to denote Obedient Citizenship?
- And Obedient Citizenship means ‘be blind to colonialism’
- ‘don’t complain about the racism’
- ‘neoliberalise your identity so modest fashion is enough’
- ‘integrate or deserve deportation’
- ‘at the same time tolerate dehumanisation’
- ‘and know that anyway, we’ll never accept you as having fit in’

The list of imperatives emphasises how the state wields citizenship as a disciplinary instrument, obliging ‘Obedient’ participation in its securitization while threatening exclusion for non-compliance. Indeed, the sovereign commands place the onus upon citizens to adhere to the formal, moral, and ethical borders of citizenship, even as the state actively configures and reconfigures these borders around them. Thus, Manzoor-Khan shows that ‘Obedient Citizenship’ necessitates Muslims’ compliance with their own targeting, as they are forced to ‘tolerate dehumanisation’. As in the previous poem, she emphasises the ways that these obligations impact the body, as the obedient subject is forced to control their sight (‘be blind’), speech (‘don’t complain’), and self (‘neoliberalise your identity’) in order for the state to tolerate their presence. Nevertheless, as the final line makes clear, the blindness of ‘The Good Muslim’ to colonialism will not change the fact that imperial, patriarchal, and neoliberal structures of violence determine their precarity. Their silence over racism will not change the fact that they are racialized, gendered, and classed as a product of elsewhere. Nor will their efforts to extend the reach of the security state change the fact that they are already, in Grewal’s terms, ‘cast out’ from ‘neoliberal citizenship’ as a figure of insecurity.

124 Manzoor-Khan, Postcolonial Banter, 62.
It is also significant that the list of commands does not include any responsibilities of the state towards the citizenry, for this absence signals the ways that citizenship is being rearticulated through neoliberalism in the 21st century. Most scholarship on British citizenship—particularly in social policy and political theory—points towards T.H. Marshall’s 1950 essay, ‘Citizenship and Social Class’, as a foundational liberal model of modern western citizenship. Published just two years after the BNA 1948, during the Attlee government’s nationalisation and welfare projects in the UK, the essay describes citizenship as an ‘institution’ conferring both ‘rights and duties’ equally upon citizens.125 As I outlined in the introduction, this theoretically-equal access to rights certainly did not align with the lived experience of discrimination for citizens born into African, Asian, and Caribbean colonies and Commonwealth countries, nor their descendants born in the UK—in fact, one of the glaring downfalls of Marshall’s anglocentric essay is its failure to account for citizenship as an imperial institution at all. However, laying aside the particular deficiencies of Marshall’s essay, what is significant is that his civic architecture stipulates obligations for both the state and the citizens towards each other.

By contrast, the ‘Obedient Citizenship’ in Manzoor-Khan’s poem is not articulated through relational ‘rights and duties’, but rather through state-defined obligations and discipline (‘integrate or deserve deportation’). This conceptualisation signals the ways that neoliberalism from Thatcher onwards has shifted the welfare responsibilities of the British state for the citizenry onto the private sector, while the obligations of formal citizens towards the state have proliferated. Thus, citizenship has been increasingly disarticulated from a discourse of rights and rearticulated through the lens of security. The state offers fewer and fewer social protections, but claims instead to be defending citizens against the threats posed by “criminals”, “illegal immigrants”, and “terrorists”. In accordance with this project, the state obliges formal citizens to comply with heightening securitization on the grounds that it is for their own protection. Yet, for those formal citizens ‘cast out’ from ‘neoliberal citizenship’ as targets of police, immigration, and counter-terror enforcement, their obligations towards the security state directly compromise their own positions within it. ‘The Good Muslim’ may diligently oblige the neoliberal state, enabling the latter to parade its ‘tolerance of different faiths and beliefs’ as a distinctly ‘British value’; however, as the borders of citizenship shift around racialized, gendered, and classed figures of insecurity, an appeal to rights cannot prevent even this obedient subject’s exclusion.

Manzoor-Khan ends her poem by highlighting the futility of producing oneself through the state’s definition of ‘Obedient Citizenship’:

The Good Muslim is an excuse to condemn the rest

and all that really means is that in their eyes
if you want to be one of those who pass the test
the Best of all the Muslims

is a Muslim who’s not

As British citizenship is increasingly securitized, the state produces and weaponises the subjectivity of ‘The Good Muslim’ to justify the surveillance, discipline, and deaths of Muslims (and people racialized as Muslims) who do not align with its declared borders. The vocabulary of the ‘test’ emphasises how one’s place in the security state is not simply determined by formal citizenship (which is itself under constant review), but by the active and ongoing performance of state-defined ‘British values’. That this perpetual ‘test’ of obedience is conducted ‘in their eyes’ recalls my discussion of ‘securitized subjects’ in the first chapter, whose sight becomes a vehicle of scrutiny; relying upon racialized, gendered, and classed profiling, these subjects cast Muslims as threats to security regardless of formal citizenship. Thus, Manzoor-Khan’s poem demonstrates that the ideal Muslim subject is, in fact, a product of the whiteness, (Protestant) Christianity, and imperialism, which construct the British state. The ideal Muslim subject is a product of ‘neoliberal citizenship’ from which Muslims are ‘cast out’. The ‘Best of all the Muslims’ is a product of erasure.

I have explored how Manzoor-Khan presents the state’s efforts to define the moral and ethical borders of British citizenship. I now wish to turn to her poem, “British Values”, to demonstrate how she defines the state from her position as a citizen. The poem begins by establishing the environment in which her configurations of the state take place, through a series of tabloid headlines and extracts, which reflect the unrelenting scrutiny of Muslims in the UK:

Young Muslims In Britain Often Straddle Two Worlds / They Appear to Have a Foot in Each Culture / Concerns Revealed Around the National Identification of Muslims In Britain / Review Raises Alarm Over Social Integration in The UK / Schools to Promote Fundamental British Values / The Face Of Britain Is Changing Beyond Recognition

The language of ‘Concerns’ and ‘Alarm’ exemplifies what Grewal calls ‘mediated panics about external threats from immigrants and terrorists’, except that, here, the “concerning” figures are—physically—‘In Britain’ and ‘in The UK’. I say ‘physically’ because the headlines locate Islam as a different ‘World’ outside of the UK, positioning Muslims as both physically present in and culturally distant from the state. The concerns over their ‘National Identification’ emphasise how formal citizenship (legislated under the

126. Manzoor-Khan, Postcolonial Banter, 63.
British *Nationality* Act) does not remove the precarity Muslims face as suspects, whose active identification with the nation-state is presented as a matter of national security.

Confronting these efforts to displace bodies across borders, the subject of Manzoor-Khan’s poem asserts their place within the state, declaring, ‘I am inside’, ‘I am the inside you pretend is outside’, and ‘I’m here.’ Compared to the state-defined ‘Good Muslim’ in the previous poem and the ‘*Young Muslims*’ in the media extracts above, all of whom are described in the third-person without voicing their own experiences, these repeated first-person assertions present a subject who is self-defining and who refuses the precarity dealt to Muslims in the UK. This is not only a refusal of physical and formal exclusion from the state, but also cultural exclusion, as Manzoor-Khan writes, ‘no reason I’ve got to learn Britishness from the somehow more devout’.

Notice how the vocabulary of faith is once again diverted into ‘Britishness’, as in the previous poem where the state-defined Muslim subject ‘worships acceptability’. By presenting Britishness in religious terms, and, therefore, ‘British values’ as articles of faith, Manzoor-Khan highlights the irony of the fact that the state determines the ‘devotion’ of its subjects by their proximities to whiteness, liberalism, and (Protestant) Christianity. By clarifying that she has no need to ‘learn Britishness’, she challenges the colonial amnesia of the state which designed British subjecthood to span the globe, and imposed British rule over her own ancestors.

By no means are these assertions of formal and cultural citizenship the same as the endeavours of Anderson’s ‘Tolerated Citizen’ or ‘The Good Muslim’ to bend their bodies to the borders of citizenship as defined by the neoliberal state. Rather, Manzoor-Khan claims the sovereignty to define the state through her lived experience, centring the presence and cultural influence of postcolonial citizens in the UK. She writes:

- Britain is bismallah
- Britain is basmati rice
- Britain is box braids and black barbers’ shops, Bollywood and bhangra
- Britain is Bradford and Barking and Birmingham
- Britain is biryani and black beans
- Britain is black, Britain is brown
- Britain is boys blasting dubstep on the bus to town
- Britain is body-popping outside the tube
- Britain is Brick Lane before it was cool


Britain is bilingual
Britain is the burka
Britain is praying in the changing rooms

Her alliterative description centres the very bodies which are racialized, gendered, and classed by the state as figures of insecurity and products of elsewhere. In particular, her centring of Islam in the British landscape challenges the violent profiling of Muslims under the neoliberal security state, shifting from the vilification to the affirmation of language (‘bismallah’), clothing (‘burka’), and conduct (‘praying in the changing rooms’). Manzoor-Khan’s varied list of metaphors, which roll through enjambment, and the motion of the continuous present verbs (‘blasting’, ‘body-popping’, ‘praying’) resist replacing the state’s static image of itself with another, and instead emphasise how multiple imaginings and experiences of Britain coexist and overlap. By asserting her own mobile definitions of the British state in the 21st century, Manzoor-Khan’s poem continues the work of 20th century postcolonial writers and artists whose presentations of the UK are centred around the lived experiences of British Black and Asian citizens. Indeed, Joseph describes such multimedia approaches of the late 20th century in her chapter:

…challenging the notion of who is ‘British’ and coming to terms with the constantly shifting implication of what it means to be ‘English’ informs much Black art of this period. Instead of fictions of cultural homogeneity, these art practitioners suggest a transforming urban syncretism that is altered and in turn shapes its various immigrant and indigenous presences.

It is precisely this ‘transforming urban syncretism’ that Manzoor-Khan locates in ‘Bradford and Barking and Birmingham’ in her poem. These particular settings, along with ‘Brick Lane’ define ‘Britishness’ and ‘Englishness’ beyond their presumed synonymy with whiteness, without allowing the redefinitions to stagnate and impose new essentialised borders. Yet Manzoor-Khan’s project of redefinition in this poem is not simply about celebrating Black, Asian, and Muslim lives in the postcolonial landscape of Britain. She also, crucially, attends to the colonial geology underlying this landscape and exposes the imperial, patriarchal, and neoliberal structures of violence which continue to orchestrate the erasures of Black, Asian, and Muslim bodies in the name of security. She writes:

[we have to stop] pretending the rolling hills are just romantic
not remnants of injustices swept under a rug
like the tea didn’t come from Asia

130. Manzoor-Khan, Postcolonial Banter, 132.

like its sugar wasn’t grown by slaves
like dry humour isn’t a way to ridicule dissent
and queues don’t expose the way we’re always told to wait for change
rather than making it

and it’s funny that over-apologising is seen as a national trait
cos half of history is still waiting

The lines give voice to the silences behind lauded cultural stereotypes, tracing the colonial routes of British-claimed commodities to emphasise the exploitation which introduced ‘tea’ and ‘sugar’ to British tables. The ‘rolling hills’ are placed above the ‘remnants of injustices’ on the page, reflecting the process of overwriting which conceals the violence, built into the British landscape, beneath Wordsworthian verse. Manzoor-Khan, thus, challenges the nationalistic attempts to praise banal representations of British culture when the brutal realities behind them are also, necessarily, intrinsic to the British state.

Her challenge also extends beyond inanimate cultural representations (‘tea’) to ‘national traits’. By framing ‘dry humour’ and ‘queues’ as tools for suppressing ‘dissent’ and ‘change’, the poem illustrates how discipline becomes embodied. This embodiment highlights how the promotion of certain ‘national traits’ is by no means arbitrary. Rather, it is vital to the systematic production of biopolitical subjects whose ‘ridicule’ of ‘dissent’ and lack of active organising (emphasised by the passive construction, ‘we’re always told to wait for change’) pose no threat to imperial, patriarchal, and neoliberal structures of violence. In fact, the promotion of ‘national traits’ even distracts from these structures, for the final two lines in the extract above reveal the disparity between the national narrative of ‘over-apologising’ and the unapologetic brutality which has left ‘half of history’ waiting for amends.

Colonial amnesia and distraction through the informal promotion of benign ‘national traits’ are not the only techniques for erasing the British state’s own perpetrations of national and transnational violence. Deflection is also a crucial tool, wielded through the formal promotion of ‘British Values’ under the ‘Prevent Duty’.133 As I explained earlier, the Prevent Strategy explicitly defines ‘British values’ as the antithesis of ‘extremism’, proclaiming the British state as the authority on ‘democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs’, without interrogating the historical and ongoing discrepancies between lived realities and these purported values. The subject in Manzoor-Khan’s poem calls attention to this deflection:

132. Manzoor-Khan, Postcolonial Banter, 133.

133. I draw on the language of ‘deflection’ which Manzoor-Khan herself uses in her notes on the poem. See Manzoor-Khan, Postcolonial Banter, 138.
Britain is barbaric
– oh sorry, did you think that was me?
Barbaric bystander straddling the boundary?
Not quite inside so you could say I’m the things you forgot
like you’re ‘modern’ so I’m ‘backwards’
you’re ‘democratic’ so you say I’m not

The double valence of foreignness and brutality in the language of ‘barbarism’ emphasises how race and in/security are imbricated in the configuration of the ‘Barbaric bystander’ and, therefore, in the construction of ‘British values’. Having challenged the accuracy of the professed ‘national trait’ of ‘over-apologising’, the poem employs it in the question, ‘oh sorry, did you think that was me?’, as a means of exposing the hypocrisy of the deflection; for, the subject who is racialized, gendered, and classed as a ‘Barbaric bystander straddling the boundary’, a body ‘Not quite inside’ the state, performs the ‘national trait’ more closely than the British state itself.

The lines also expose how the promotion of ‘British values’ as a counter-terror strategy is used to legitimise state violence, by framing its perpetration and perpetuation as a pursuit of ‘democracy’, ‘law’, ‘liberty’ and ‘tolerance’. Under this logic, the state justifies the securitization of citizenship by producing the targets of surveillance and discipline as threats to all of these ideals. In other words, the narrative of security is reduced to binaries—democracy versus the ‘undemocratic’, modern versus ‘backwards’—in a way that deflects condemnation away from the architecture of imperialism, patriarchy, and neoliberal capital, and onto individuals who are cast as figures of insecurity. Indeed, Manzoor-Khan poeticises what Grewal theorises as the criminalization of ‘nonwhite bodies’ under the neoliberal security state:

Britain is blaming the kids who aren’t white
Britain is blaming the Muslims
Britain is blaming the immigrants

The repetition of ‘blaming’ emphasises how the state continually evades accountability by controlling the definition of ‘British values’, and, therefore, the definitions of citizenship, violence, and in/security.

Yet Manzoor-Khan refuses the deflective logic of the neoliberal state, revealing the chasm between its avowed values and the ongoing national and transnational atrocities it orchestrates under the banner of securitization:

Britain is the bombs the Saudis drop on Yemen


Britain is using fear to build surveillance apparatus since 9/11

Britain is believing in human rights whilst removing them all
Britain is Yarl’s Wood, Brook House, Colnbrook and Morton Hall
Britain is sixteen hundred dead in or after police custody since 1990
Britain is no qualms about detaining asylum seekers indefinitely

The metaphors draw attention away from the self-aggrandising abstractions of ‘British values’ and offer concrete nouns (‘bombs’, ‘surveillance apparatus’, immigration detention centres, ‘sixteen hundred dead’) to define the British state in terms of what it produces. By documenting the ways that it claims the sovereignty to kill, directly and indirectly, within its borders and beyond them, the poem holds the state accountable for the necropower it wields. Manzoor-Khan exposes how Britain is actively ‘using fear’ to heighten surveillance, ‘removing’ human rights, and ‘detaining’ asylum seekers and, therefore, challenges the state’s profiling of ‘nonwhite bodies’ as the ‘causes of insecurity’. Indeed, she writes, ‘Britain is the terror to be countered’, reversing the narrative of security espoused by the government’s Prevent Strategy, and locating terror in the detentions, deportations, and deaths organised by the state. Her exposures highlight how the state’s self-professed ‘fundamental British values’ are fundamentally misaligned with the realities of state violence.

Following these definitions, Manzoor-Khan writes, ‘there’s only a few things left that are Great about Britain’, and reiterates her affirmative metaphors centred around British Black, Asian, and Muslim lives. By no means does this repetition overwrite the violence she has exposed throughout the poem, for the co-existent definitions—‘Brick Lane’ and ‘Brook House’—exemplify the complexities of postcolonial citizenship in the UK. Rather, the repetition reinforces the poem’s rejection of racialized, gendered, and classed configurations of in/security, showing that the people who are profiled as threats to the neoliberal state, are, in fact, constructing Britain’s postcolonial landscape. The poem’s final lines emphasise this affirmation: ‘I am the Great in Great Britain now / And aren’t you terrified?’ The question at once evokes the ‘mediated panics’ over Muslims at the beginning of the poem and underlines how such panics distract from state forms of terror. Refusing to be cast as a suspect by the same state


139. Manzoor-Khan, Postcolonial Banter, 135.

140. Manzoor-Khan, Postcolonial Banter, 135.
which ruptures its professed values, the subject of the poem claims the sovereignty to define both Britain and their own place within it. In doing so, they challenge the authority of the government to establish and continually re-establish the borders of British citizenship as a way to cast Black, Asian, and Muslim bodies ‘outside the state’.

**Defining the state**

My study of three poems from *Postcolonial Banter* has offered but a glimpse of the depth and significance of this collection given the ongoing securitization of British citizenship in the 21st century. Yet in this selection alone, Manzoor-Khan both exposes the lived experiences of second-class citizenship and challenges the authority of the British state to impose such precarity. Indeed, all three poems bear witness to the quotidian suspicions and violations to which Muslims, and especially Muslim women of colour, are subjected in the UK. They illustrate how the ‘ordinary’ and the ‘disciplinary’ merge under intensifying surveillance, such that scrutiny becomes embodied. It serves as a constant reminder that formal citizenship is not enough to cement one’s place in the state, a place that is increasingly contingent upon the performance of government-legislated ‘British values’ and, by the same token, one’s participation in securitization.

However, in “British Values” Manzoor-Khan’s poetic counter-narratives of the British state confront its assumption of sovereignty over citizenship and over Islam. Amid the ongoing proliferation of racialized, gendered, and classed exclusions from the state, her work of centring Black, Asian, and Muslim lives in the postcolonial British landscape is crucial. Her poem offers a rhizomique vision of postcolonial citizenship shaped by British Black, Asian, and Muslim lives: the violence of Empire, but also the creativities continually shaping the British landscape. This vision of citizenship is not one in which the security state assumes the sovereignty to determine people’s places within its borders; rather, it is one without borders, one in which citizens are not defined by documentation, by their participation in securitization, or by scripted performances of nationalism. It is a vision in which postcolonial citizens are able to assert their rights in the British cities, towns, and villages built on the backs of their ancestors—and upheld, to this day, by the national and transnational labour of low-income women of colour.141 It is a vision which challenges the functioning of citizenship as a disciplinary instrument of the security state and looks towards its organisational potential for those most nefariously impacted by imperial, patriarchal, and neoliberal structures of violence to assert their lived experiences and their rights.142 It is one in which Paulette Wilson is able to answer the question, ‘Am I British?’, for herself.

141. I use the word ‘citizens’ here regardless of formal status.

142. Caldwell et al. address this organisational potential in *Gendered Citizenships*, 4.
Conclusion

As the British state claims the sovereignty to enforce, restrict and mobilise the (formal, ethical, moral) borders of citizenship, the distinction between those who hold it and those who are refused or removed from it is not simply governed by nationality law. Increasingly, it is configured in terms of racialized, gendered, and classed distinctions between ‘securitized subjects’ and figures of insecurity. The former are the products of biopolitics, at once obliged and authorised to exercise scrutiny and discipline over others, while the latter are constructed out of necropolitics, to be scrutinized, disciplined, and killed in the name of security. Challenging the securitization of British citizenship in the 21st century is, therefore, not without its risks, for the more that citizenship is securitized, the higher the stakes of holding it become. Nevertheless, for those of us who are cast as ‘bodies “outside the state”’, those of us profiled as the targets of police, immigration, and counter-terror enforcement, those of us whose second-class citizenships hang by ever more fragile threads, challenging securitization is a matter of urgency.

The Covid-19 pandemic, through which I have written this thesis, has brought this urgency into sharp focus. While the Conservative government present their plans for more prisons, more police, and more border controls, the pandemic has laid bare the extent to which neoliberal austerity measures have stripped away social protections, leaving the National Health Service devastatingly underfunded and understaffed. The fatal consequences of second-class citizenship can be read in the rising death toll, disproportionately comprised of Black and Asian people from many of the UK’s most impoverished and overcrowded households. At the same time, postcolonial citizens account for around half of the NHS staff who are working to clean hospitals, raise awareness, and care for patients; Muslim doctors, Adil El Tayar and Amged el-Hawrani, both of whom were born in Sudan, and Habib Zaidi, born in Pakistan, were the first three doctors to die treating Covid-19 patients in the UK. Their lives and deaths highlight the callousness of the ‘hostile environment’ and Prevent measures which, continuing under the pandemic, smear Black, Asian, and Muslim people as threats to the British state, even when they are the doctors, care workers, and cleaners dying in their attempts to save lives.

How is the Conservative government honouring the memories of these doctors? On June 30th, most of its MPs approved Priti Patel’s post-Brexit Immigration Bill in Parliament to establish a points-based system of entry which further securitizes British citizenship. They have supported expanded police measures, which led to over 22,000 stop-and-searches of Black boys and men in London alone during

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lockdown, even as state governors themselves have flouted travel restrictions without repercussions. Meanwhile Boris Johnson ordered his private jet to be repainted with the union jack, to the tune of £900,000, exhibiting his sovereignty as a ‘neoliberal citizen’ to cross the borders which his cabinet are fortifying against low-income ‘nonwhite bodies’. This prime minister, whose initial pursuit of ‘herd immunity’ made clear how he conceives of the citizenry as a kind of civic cattle—whose bodies he is willing to sacrifice at the altar of neoliberal capital—is overseeing the criminalization and exclusion of the very people who make survival possible, not only under this pandemic but under the pre-existent systems of violence which have determined its spread throughout the UK.

Yet the forms of challenge to securitization presented by Addai and Manzoo-Khan are expanding as the borders of citizenship tighten. People are staging their own departures from discipline, including ‘Docs not Cops’ campaigners who are refusing to act as border guards for the security state, asserting people’s rights to seek treatment and care regardless of immigration status. Likewise, teachers in organisations such as ‘Against Borders for Children’ are refusing to produce themselves as ‘securitized subjects’ in order to police children in their schools. Social media has also become a site of counter-surveillance, a space to expose and document the violence of ‘neoliberal citizens’ as a call for accountability. Black Lives Matter protesters in Hoddesdon town centre recently filmed and broadcast white men shouting, ‘why don’t you go back to Africa?’, at Black women (eerily resembling the exchange between Boy One and Kofi in *Oxford Street*). In several videos, a police officer can be seen walking breezily up to one of these screaming men as if to ask him about the weather, at once conveying the hostility of individual ‘securitized subjects’ and the state structures which produce and sustain them.

In the US, similar exposures are challenging the attempts of white, wealthy citizens to wield racial capital as a tool of the security state. Lisa Alexander, the white CEO of LaFace Skincare, has seen cosmetic companies cut ties with her brand after James Juanillo filmed her threatening to call the police on him for vandalism as he was chalking ‘Black Lives Matter’ outside of his own home (like the family in

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“We did not bring this darkness upon ourselves” whose home is a site of discipline. Just as Manzoor-Khan’s poetry documents state forms of terror, so these exposures across social media bear witness to the state’s racialized, gendered, and classed constructions of in/security, which see ‘nonwhite bodies’ scrutinized and criminalized for merely existing.

The revived efforts to tear down colonial statues are also defying the state’s assumed sovereignty over its narrative. There is something distinctly poetic about the images of Black Lives Matter protesters in Bristol casting the statue of Edward Colston—a member of the Royal African Company which enslaved hundreds of thousands of Africans throughout the 17th century, thousands of whom would drown in the Atlantic—into Bristol harbour. Like Manzoor-Khan’s call to stop ‘pretending the rolling hills are just romantic’, the moment that Colston’s metallic glower hit the water marked a rejection of the British state’s landscaping techniques, which seek to bury imperial atrocities beneath polished-bronze narratives of the nation. It marked a rejection of securitized citizenship and its obligations to uphold the violence of the neoliberal state while extolling its purported values. I do not think that citizenship can be entirely disentangled from the grip of the security state in my lifetime. Yet I glimpse in Oxford Street, Postcolonial Banter, and the images of Colston’s statue sinking, the affirmation that Britain is Black Lives Matter pushing bronze into Bristol harbour and the potentials of postcolonial citizenship.

Bibliography


