

TRANSNATIONAL AND TRANSCULTURAL DESIRES

TRANSNATIONAL AND TRANSCULTURAL DESIRES:  
REPRESENTATIONS OF IDENTITIES OF SOUTH ASIAN NORTH AMERICAN  
FEMALE SEXUALITIES

By  
SARMISTA DAS, B.A.

A Thesis  
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies  
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements  
For the Degree  
Master of Arts

McMaster University

© by Sarmista Das, August 2006

MASTER OF ARTS (2006)

McMaster University

(English)

Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Transnational and Transcultural Desires: Representations of  
National/Cultural Identities of South Asian North American Female  
Sexualities

AUTHOR: Sarmista Das, B.A. (Concordia University)

SUPERVISOR: Professor Donald C. Goellnicht

NUMBER OF PAGES: vii, 107

## ABSTRACT

This study considers how South Asian North American female writers articulate identity formation. While subjectivity has been a discursively explosive topic in postcolonial and feminist studies, the intersections of gender, race, and sexuality as it relates to South Asian women of the North American diaspora remains overlooked as a subject of sustained query. Addressing the ways in which European colonialism enforced the construction of a European ‘Self’ and a non-white ‘Other,’ my study explores how South Asian North American women negotiate issues of racial privilege and oppression within their interracial relationships, and considers how these relationships inform their identities. Chapter 1 (“Normalcy, Desire, and Orientalism in Heteronormative Interracial Relationships”) investigates how racism and colonialism affect the politics of desire and identification in the heteronormative relationships depicted by Sharmeen Khan and Tanuja Desai Hidier. Chapter 2 (“Normalcy, Desire, and Orientalism in Same-Sex Interracial Relationships”) explores how Shani Mootoo’s *Cereus Blooms at Night*, Annie Dijkstra’s “Colombo to Haputale,” and Suniti Namjoshi and Gillian Hanscombe’s *Flesh and Paper* articulate desire and subjectivity in same-sex interracial relationships. Concerned with issues of the body, subjectivity, and space, Chapter 3 (“The Simultaneity of Geography, The Confines of the Body, and Forging a Space of Possibility”) considers how the aforementioned writers attempt to create alternative subjectivities and spaces that oppose Orientalism.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My profound gratitude goes to Donald C. Goellnicht, my supervisor, for his sustained guidance and confidence in this project. His advice, timely feedback, carefully considered comments, and painstaking work proved invaluable to the completion of this project as a whole. My utmost thanks go to him for his patience with me during the most trying of times, and for providing encouragement and hope when I felt that the project was too great for me to undertake.

I would like to thank Lorraine York and Chandrima Chakraborty for the time they devoted to reading and commenting on my thesis.

I am greatly indebted to Lillian Robinson, Viviane Namaste, Jill Didur, and Tanisha Ramachandran, who have encouraged and inspired me to pursue my research interests, whose continual support and enthusiasm is deeply appreciated.

I extend my warm thanks to those with whom I have shared many laughs and the occasional tear, my colleagues, who have made the trials and tribulations of graduate school manageable. I would especially like to thank Mary Ellen Campbell, Amanda Lim, Sana Siddiqui, Saswati Sen, Sreejith Ullattil, Arif Rahman, Shahriar Alam, and Zeeshan Abedin, my 'surrogate Hamilton family,' who consistently brought me through my emotional ups and downs.

How can I even begin to articulate the profound thanks I extend to those who come first and foremost in my life? My final appreciation must go to my family, whom I hold in the utmost esteem for the unbelievable amount of patience, love, and support they have given me. To my father Susil Kumar Das, for his invaluable words of wisdom and informed advice, whose diligent work ethic set up an example of determination and ambition unsurpassed in the eyes of his loving daughter. To my personal cheerleader, my mother Mita Das, whose unflinching confidence in me pushed me through my most troubling times. Her positive attitude and continual advice (not to mention the home-cooked meals she smuggled into my knapsack) have helped bring a sense of 'home' closer to me, and have kept me in good health and spirits. Finally, my thanks go to an individual wise beyond her age, my sister Malini Das, for her insight and encouragement.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1-14
CHAPTER ONE:	
<b>Normalcy, Desire, and Orientalism in Heteronormative     Interracial Relationships</b>	15-40
i) Introduction	15-16
ii) Colonized Desire	16-22
iii) Colonizer Desire	22-25
iv) Orientalist Knowledge	25-29
v) Knowledge and Desire	29-35
vi) Resisting Orientalist Categories of Knowledge and Identity	35-39
vii) Conclusion	39-40
CHAPTER TWO:	
<b>Normalcy, Desire, and Orientalism in Same-Sex     Interracial Relationships</b>	41-60
i) Introduction	41-42
ii) Essentialist Desire and Complicity	42-54
iii) The Space of Impossibility and the Quest for Normalcy	54-60
CHAPTER THREE:	
<b>The Simultaneity of Geography, The Confines of the Body,     and Forging a Space of Possibility</b>	61-97
i) Introduction	61-62
ii) Simultaneity of Geography: Heteronormative Interracial Relationships	62-70
iii) Same-Sex Perspectives of The Body as a Place of Captivity	70-78
iv) The Simultaneity of Geography in <i>Flesh and             Paper</i> : Envisioning Alternative Spaces	79-96
v) Conclusion	96-97

CONCLUSION

98-103

WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED

104-107



## INTRODUCTION

Gayatri Gopinath suggests that the troublesomely complex representations of South Asian North American (SANA) female sexualities in relation to corporeality, nation, gender, and imperialism are largely understudied in diasporan discourse (“Nostalgia” 468-469). Given the range of literary texts available that explore SANA female sexualities, most notably by Ginu Kamani, Bharati Mukherjee, and Shani Mootoo to name but a few, there is still a shortage of appropriate and satisfying literary criticism that deals with these issues (Srikanth 469). My study of the representation of female sexual identities as they relate to national and cultural identities within the South Asian North American diaspora will go some way to addressing this gap in current criticism. Building on analyses of subjectivity and space, and on feminist and postcolonial theory, I investigate the ways SANA women negotiate identity when they are in interracial relationships with white men and women. I explore the complexities of SANA female sexuality by investigating representations of the cultural production of identities, and how these identities adhere to or resist Orientalist productions of identity. Edward Said’s groundbreaking *Orientalism* explains that Orientalism consists of a set of beliefs and practices that take for granted Eurocentric universalism and the ‘inherent’ superiority of the European ‘Self’ and the inferiority of the non-European ‘Other.’ Orientalism thus creates two imaginary categories; one that Said calls the Occident, represented by the ‘pure,’ rational,’ and ‘moral’ European, whereas the other, the Orient, is represented by the ‘impure,’ ‘lazy,’ ‘emotional’ non-European. The Orient “becomes the repository or

projection of those aspects of themselves which Westerners do not choose to acknowledge (cruelty, sensuality, decadence, laziness, and so on) at the same time they paradoxically consider the East as exotic and seductive” (Barry 193). This study investigates these contradictory subjectivities constructed by Orientalism, and investigates how Orientalism manifests and limits the identification offered to SANA women. I undertake this study of subjectivity because I believe that Orientalist discourse has influenced and limited South Asian women’s possibilities for identity formation. The production of national identities will be explored from a South Asian and North American perspective. I have selected inter-racial relationships between white individuals and South Asian women because I want to explore how the colonizer’s fantasy informs contemporary understandings of South Asian women’s sexual identities, as well as how SANA women forge their sexual identities in opposition to those fantasies.

The texts I explore range from short stories, through poems to non-fictional autobiographical essays. Three of the texts come from a recent, first-of-its-kind anthology of SANA erotica, *Desilicious*. While there is little or no research examining this work, aside from book reviews, I believe these texts are worthy of exploring because they offer a view into the often ignored and understudied aspects of South Asian sexuality and subjectivity, as it is experienced and understood in North America. From *Desilicious*, I have chosen to explore Sharmeen Khan’s essay, “Confessions of a Paki With Colonized Desire: Or How Giving White Men Blowjob Reproduces Colonialism,” Tanuja Desai Hidier’s short story “Tiger, Tiger,” and Annie Dijkstra’s short story

“Colombo to Haputale” because they deal with interracial relationships in ways that both complicate and conform to Orientalist understandings of Self and Other. Though they sometimes revert to racist depictions of the “Other” woman, and, in the case of Khan and Desai Hidier, foster stereotypical ideas of white men, I believe they offer insights into the ways Orientalism continues to affect the consciousnesses of North Americans. The most researched text that I investigate is Shani Mootoo’s novel *Cereus Blooms at Night*. While a majority of the research focuses on the relationships between the protagonist, Mala, and her father, as well as between the narrator and androgynous Otoh, I investigate the relationship between Mala’s mother, Sarah, and Lavinia, the daughter of white, colonial missionaries. Though they are only mentioned at the beginning of Mootoo’s narrative, I argue that their presence, and abrupt absence, holds implications regarding essentialist/lesbian feminism and race that merit investigation. In addition to Mootoo’s novel, I also explore the poems in Suniti Namjoshi and Gillian Hanscombe’s book of collaborative poetry, *Flesh and Paper*. Namjoshi’s collaborative poetry with partner Gillian Hanscombe has received considerable attention in Lorraine York’s *Rethinking Women’s Collaborative Writing*. My study attempts to build on the work York has provided on *Flesh and Paper*, investigating how Namjoshi and Hanscombe negotiate the racial dimension of their relationship. Of particular interest is how ethno-cultural difference affects the essentialist lesbian claims they make in their earlier poems, in contrast to their later poems, which attempt to grapple with nationality and Orientalism. Taking into consideration the now common assumption that life writing uses similar

literary techniques and elements as fiction, this study examines both fictional texts and life writing. I have chosen to undertake the study of both genres because they can be used to explore and interrogate the limits of subjectivity.

As women of South Asian descent living in North America, the authors whose texts I explore exist within the South Asian diaspora. Described as “exemplary communities of the transnational moment” (Tololian qtd. in Clifford 303), diasporas place issues of identity, geography, politics, culture, and citizenship in question. As James Clifford explains,

diasporas ... connect multiple communities of a dispersed population. Systematic border crossings may be part of this interconnection, but multi-locale diaspora cultures are not necessarily defined by a specific geopolitical boundary. It is worth holding onto the historical and geographical specificity of the two paradigms, while recognizing that the concrete predicaments denoted by the terms *border* and *diaspora* bleed into one another. (304)

Because ‘borders’ and ‘diasporas’ “bleed into one another,” diasporas, and those who inhabit them challenge the borderlines set up by geopolitical lines, many of which have been influenced by European colonial power. While notable scholars Gayatri C. Spivak and Inderpal Grewal’s research on South Asian transnationality centers around consumerism, labour, feminism, and neoliberalism, my research uses the term ‘transnational’ in the ways Khachig Tololian and James Clifford adapt the word. In particular, I use ‘transnational’ and ‘transcultural’ to signal the multiple border-crossings South Asian North American (SANA) women undertake, including real and imaginary national and cultural boundaries. I use ‘transnational’ and ‘transcultural’ in the sense that the SANA authors and characters under analysis move beyond boundaries of nationhood,

traversing in-between cultural and national markers such as Canadian/American/First World, Third World/South Asian, queer, lesbian, and heterosexual.

Furthermore, as Clifford eloquently describes,

diasporic forms of longing, memory and (dis)identification are shared by a broad spectrum of minority and migrant populations. And dispersed peoples ... increasingly find themselves in border relations with the old country thanks to a to-and-fro made possible by modern technologies of transport, communication, and labor migration ... This overlap of border and diaspora experiences in late-20<sup>th</sup>-century everyday life suggests the difficulty of maintaining exclusivist paradigms in our attempts to account for transnational identity formations. (304)

The SANA female writers whose texts I examine rest in the border that constitutes diaspora, and in many cases, exist within the margins of those borders, as lesbians/queers, feminists, activists, and generally deviate from the icons of South Asian femininity that are informed by Orientalism and South Asian patriarchy. This marginalized state allows them to imagine a subjectivity liberated from Orientalist and essentialist ideas of the Self, and it is their cultural schizophrenia that permits them to imagine alternative spaces.

Of the many existing diasporas, the South Asian diaspora remains one of the most thoroughly documented (Mishra 448). This is because Britain called for indentured labourers after the end of slavery, the majority of whom were of South Asian descent (Mishra 448). Working predominantly in the sugar plantations in Trinidad, Guyana, Surinam, Mauritius, Fiji, and South Africa, and in railways and tea and rubber plantations in East Africa, Sri Lanka and Malaya, the South Asian diaspora began its expansion in the 1800s (Mishra 448). Many South Asians immigrated to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s. In Canada and the United States, while documentation exists of Indians arriving in

the late 1800s and early 1900s respectively, racist immigration laws barred South Asians from settling in North America. It was not until the 1960s that South Asians were permitted immigration, and the majority of these immigrants were students and professionals. The vast array of border-crossing, cultural exchange, class and historical differences of South Asian diasporans should signal that, while sharing common roots and claims to ethnicity, the South Asian diaspora diverges in multiple ways, and should signal the plurality of the diaspora. Indeed, as Vijay Mishra points out, one can trace a division between what he calls “old” or “exclusive” South Asian diasporas and “new” or “border” South Asian diasporas. Whereas the “old” diasporas are those “of exclusion because they created self-contained ‘little Indias’ in the colonies ... the new diaspora’s overriding characteristic is one of mobility. ... Diasporas of the border in these Western democracies are visible presences ... whose corporealities carry marks of their hyphenated subjectivities” (448). Both old and new diasporas share the experiences of displacement, which they attempt to alleviate by sharing an imaginary construction of the ideal homeland (448). Even within these two categories of diaspora, one can find sub-categories. Speaking specifically of multiply marginalized diasporans, particularly queer South Asians, Gopinath coins the term “South Asian public cultures” to signify “the myriad cultural forms and practices through which queer subjects articulate new modes of collectivity and kinship that reject the ethnic and religious absolutism of multiple nationalisms, while simultaneously resisting Euro-American, homonormative models of sexual alterity” (*Impossible Desires* 20). The authors whose work I explore “articulate

new modes of collectivity” and challenge the very claims made by both to the imaginary homeland. Issues of corporeality play an important role in their writings, as do issues of subjectivity, mobility, and space. My study examines the ways in which Khan, Desai Hidier, Mootoo, Dijkstra, and Namjoshi create alternative diasporas by working within the margins of the border diaspora.

Since diasporas question the limits of nation, geography, and citizenship, they bring issues of space to the forefront. Avtar Brah coins the term “diaspora space” to describe the ways diasporans imagine location as more spatial than territorial. Rather than depict a geographical space set up by borders and set in territoriality,

diaspora space as a conceptual category is “inhabited,” not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and repressed as indigenous. In other words, the concept of diaspora space (as opposed to that of diaspora) includes the entanglement, the intertwining of the genealogies of dispersion with those of “staying put.” (qtd. in Gopinath, *Impossible Desires* 144)

Space, location, and geography are thus understood as interlinked to history, and as much imaginary and conceptual as—perhaps more than—they are physical. Furthermore, as David Eng argues,

diaspora in Asian American studies works to undermine and to dislodge any smooth alignment of home and nation-state. ... Moreover, [the idea that Asian American studies is] grounded in one location ... would merit reconsideration through the lens of a more spatially ... theoretical framing” (31).

Indeed, as space is worthy of investigation in Asian American studies, space is also of interest for Khan, Desai Hidier, Mootoo, Dijkstra, and Namjoshi. This is evident in the authors’ representation of geography, and borders both real and imaginary. Instead of recreating a home-space that is set in one particular nation, they recreate issues of space

to disrupt old notions of home and nation-state, and forge spaces that are more suitable for their complex, sometimes contradictory, and fluid subjectivities. This is because SANA literature depicts “ways of living at home or abroad – ways of inhabiting multiple spaces at once, of being different beings simultaneously, of seeing the larger picture stereoscopically with the smaller” (Sheldon et al qtd. in Srikanth 3). Rather than remain in one set space, or inhabit a space that is limiting to a particular history, diasporans toy with location and space in ways that deviate from colonial constructions of nation and geography.

One of the most frequently asked questions of diaspora studies is that of subjectivity. Indeed, Rey Chow tells us that “one of the most important enterprises nowadays is that of investigating the ‘subjectivity’ of the other-as-oppressed-victim” (28). Stuart Hall tells us that in diasporic communities, identities are constituted within discourse and relate to the invention of tradition and the imaginary homeland; they are thus partly constructed through fantasy (“Who Needs Identity” 2-3). Hall also argues that there are two related but different views of cultural identity: the first being the essentialist view of a mythical cultural authentic that sees all members of the diasporic community as the ‘same,’ and the second being the recognition that “as well as the many points of similarity, there are also critical points of deep and significant *difference* which constitute ‘what we really are’; or rather – since history has intervened – ‘what we have become’” (“Cultural Identity and Diaspora” 394). While the invention of tradition and the fantasy homeland may allow diasporic communities a chance to escape the everyday realities of



racism and displacement, these communities may still find themselves recast into Orientalist conceptions of identity. Since Orientalism has shaped what is considered ‘authentic’ to colonized lands and people, the image of the non-white Other is mediated by the Orientalist gaze (Chow 9).

How is the South Asian North American female imagined? This identity is informed by South Asian constructions of the female self, as well as First World conceptions of the South Asian woman, and ultimately, all these images are informed by the Orientalist mythical authentic. For South Asian women and those inhabiting the diaspora, this image is that of the compulsory-heterosexual, exotic, self-sacrificial, docile, hyper-feminine female (Banerji and Dekha 5). In many South Asian countries, particularly India, the image of the ‘noble,’ compulsory-heterosexual or celibate, self-sacrificial woman has been used to support a masculinist nationalist agenda (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires* 9). The policing of South Asian women’s sexuality continues to be an issue both at ‘home’ and in the diaspora, ingraining beliefs of what is considered ‘traditionally’ South Asian and what modes of sexuality and representation are ‘foreign’ and ‘Western.’ Diasporas utilize the South Asian (and SANA) female body as “the boundary marker of [the] ethnic/racial community in the ‘host’ nation. The ‘woman’ also bears the brunt of being the embodied signifier of the ‘past’ of the diaspora, that is, the homeland that is left behind and continuously evoked” (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires* 18). The most recent and volatile example of this policing of sexuality and the evoking of the idealized homeland occurred in the late 1990s in India during Deepa Mehta’s filming

of *Fire*. The film focused on the socio-political problems facing Hindu Indian women, and of particular interest to audiences in South Asia and abroad, was the erotic relationship that ensued between the two female protagonists. Responding to the Western description of the main characters as “lesbian” and in response to the exposure of a same-sex South Asian relationship, Shiv Sena, a right-wing Hindu party, called Mehta and lesbianism “alien to Indian culture” (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires* 11). Mehta, herself, was vilified and labeled as an inauthentic who is unable to represent adequately the lives of ‘real’ South Asian women because of her status as a diasporan woman. Her diasporic status “was repeatedly cited as evidence of her lack of knowledge about the erotic and emotional lives of ‘real’ (Hindu) Indian women” (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires* 131). Authenticity, then, is not wholly possible for diasporic women. This image of the ideal, ‘traditional’ South Asian woman has thus been exported to the diaspora, and continues to restrict South Asian women both ‘at home’ and abroad.

There is a difference, however, in the sexual representation of South Asians in the North American and European imagination; in the United Kingdom, the South Asian woman is usually hyper-sexualized, while in North America, she shifts from hyper-sexualized to desexualized and overwhelmingly docile and/or invisible. Of Canadian representations of South Asian women, Himani Bannerji writes,

even though South Asian women are members of the so-called ‘visible’ minority groups ... research shows that there is a remarkable paucity of their images in the Canadian media [(and, I would include American media)]. The few images of South Asian women that do exist are primarily non-sexual, passive, docile, and feminine. There is a small sub-category of sexualized imagery, but this sub-category of pagan, exotic, over-sexedness ... seems to be more prevalent in ex-

colonial Britain than in [North America]. ... However, this absence ... is intimately connected with the few types of images that do exist. (144)

While most images of SANA women are non-sexual and passive, there are representations of the 'over-sexualized' SANA woman in film, as seen in Mira Nair's *Mississippi Masala*, and more recently in Deepa Mehta's *Bollywood/Hollywood*. Aside from these rare representations, images of SANA women are generally invisible in the North American media. When she is represented, the images that dominate the screen, and the minds of North Americans, are contradictory and, ultimately, informed by Orientalist constructions of the South Asian female authentic. My study focuses on some North American conceptions of South Asian female sexualities, as represented in literary texts, investigating the many contradictions and constructions of SANA female subjectivity as it relates to contemporary Canada, the Caribbean (as in Mootoo's text), and the United States. Far from being a comprehensive study on SANA female sexualities, my research is a preliminary investigation in an area that has yet to receive considerable attention.

The main questions I investigate in this thesis as a whole, through my readings of cultural texts, include: How do SANA women understand and deal with race privilege and oppression within their relationships? Why do they get involved in interracial relationships? Do they actively seek them, and if so, why? What do they desire in the relationship? How do they negotiate race in their relationships? How does gender play a part in their relationships? What kind of nationality and culture do they identify with? What kind of hope do they provide for equality, and reconciliation of race, gender, and

sexuality? Literary texts, and cultural texts in general, can be particularly effective mediums through which to imagine and experiment with alternative identities. While there are no easy answers to these questions, through their literature, Khan, Desai Hidier, Dijkstra, Mootoo, and Namjoshi shed light on the ways in which SANA female identity is articulated and provide hope for the forging of space and alternative, anti-Orientalist subjectivities. I have chosen to examine both heterosexual and same-sex relationships to give a sense of the range of sexualities that are adapted and forged by SANA women, and to explore how these women attempt to escape the power imbalances of Orientalism.

My first chapter investigates desire and the way it is mediated by Orientalism in the heteronormative relationships experienced by Sharmeen Khan and as represented by Desai Hidier. I look at the ways in which racism and colonialism have affected the politics of desire, and the ways in which race and gender intensify the experience of oppression and marginalization Khan and Desai Hidier's protagonist undergo. In the last section of this chapter, I examine how Desai Hidier provides a potential solution to the limits of Orientalist subjectivity.

My second chapter deals with desire as it is depicted and understood in same-sex interracial relationships in Namjoshi and Hanscombe's *Flesh and Paper*, Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*, and Dijkstra's "Colombo to Haputale." Throughout this chapter, I use four different terms: lesbian, queer, same-sex, and non-heteronormative. I use "lesbian" to connote same-sex relationships that make essentialist claims (Barry 143). Since the term 'queer' "rejects female separatism" (Barry 143), I use this term to describe

same-sex relationships that oppose essentialism. The terms non-heteronormative and same-sex are used interchangeably to signal both queer and lesbian relationships. In this second chapter, I examine essentialist feminism and how the authors and protagonists come to understand their identities in conformity with and contrast to essentialist feminism.

Gopinath tells us that within South Asian diaspora studies, “what remains to be fully articulated ... are the particularly disastrous consequences that the symbolic freight attached to diasporic women’s bodies has for non-heteronormative female subjects” (*Impossible Desires* 18). In my final chapter, I examine how Khan, Desai Hidier, Mootoo, Dijkstra, and Namjoshi represent the SANA female body and complicate the construction of the compulsory heterosexual, docile South Asian woman at the same time as they toy with gender and racial clichés. Titled “The Simultaneity of Geography, The Confines of the Body, and Forging a Space of Possibility,” this chapter examines the ways Khan, Desai Hidier, Namjoshi, Mootoo, and Dijkstra offer hope for interracial relationships, give insight into how to oppose Orientalism, and attempt to forge alternative subjectivities and spaces. Issues of the body, as they relate to geography and the psyche, are of particular interest. I assert that although discourse is overwrought with antifeminist, heterosexist and racist stereotypes of South Asian women,

for many, the image [of the authentic] is also the site of possible change. In many critical discourses, the image is implicitly where the battles are fought and strategies of resistance negotiated. ... ‘Subjectivity’ becomes a way to change the defiled image ... by showing the truth behind ... it. (Chow 28-29)

Furthermore, since “identification [is] a construction, a process never completed – always in process” (Hall “Who Needs Identity” 2), subjectivity holds the potential for transformation, which is precisely what many SANA writers attempt to do. Because “the constitution of identity is an act of power” (Laclau qtd. in Hall “Who Needs Identity” 5), the authors I explore challenge and shift both the heterosexist patriarchal Orientalist gaze, as well as the direction of power. These authors expose the myth of authenticity, whether it be the ethnic mythical authentic (that of the compulsory heterosexual SANA woman) or the socio-political lesbian feminist mythical authentic (who is characteristically white, middle-class and from the First World). Rather than stick to a monolithic subjectivity, they expose the ‘truth’ behind subjectivity; that it is ever-shifting, plural, and contradictory, and above all, has the potential to dismantle and oppose oppressive Orientalist constructions of space and the image of the subaltern woman.

## CHAPTER 1

### **Normalcy, Desire, and Orientalism in Heteronormative Interracial Relationships**

#### **1. Introduction**

Borrowing a quotation from poet Lloyd Schwartz, Rajini Srikanth tells us that South Asian American writers both “flirt with and ultimately avoid the trap and lure of clichéd portrayals of South Asian women and men,” especially when it comes to issues of “gender relations and sexuality” (Srikanth 99). This chapter deals with the ways in which SANA female writers Sharmeen Khan and Tanuja Desai Hidier grapple with the categories of race and gender by both maintaining certain stereotypes and resisting others. Like writer Ginu Kamani, Desai Hidier and Khan demonstrate an “interest in desire [that] is also always an interest in the social and cultural forces affecting the manifestation of desire. The erotic is wrested out of the realm of the private and placed within the domain of the public” (Srikanth 117). While Khan and Desai Hidier’s character Kayla negate the stereotype of the monolithic authentic South Asian woman (Banerji and Dekha 5), because of the continuing interplay between Self and Other, they find themselves re-inscribed into Orientalist constructions of the Other Asian woman. Sharmeen Khan tells us that though “body image, self-hatred, and wanting to be desired are things that everyone deals with,” “the impact and implications it has on different men and women are complex when race and Otherness come into play” (103). In this chapter, I explore how Orientalism affects the interracial relationships of SANA women and their white male partners in the writing of Khan and Desai Hidier. Within this chapter, I hope

to explore how Khan and Desai Hidier “flirt with and ... avoid the cliché[s]” of Orientalism, as the clichés relate to desire, knowledge, and the SANA female body.

## **2. Colonized Desire**

Edward Said tells us that the project of Orientalism is a created body of both theory and practice (6). Orientalism reproduces and maintains itself through both civil and political society, mainly through discourse, whether it be academic, political, religious, or any number of other discursive practices (Said 2, 6-7). Furthermore, Said suggests that Orientalist discourse pervades all areas of both public and private life (2). If Orientalism colonizes both the public and private realms, and if it does affect our daily interactions, it must then affect sexuality and sexual interactions between different groups of people. Though Said does not expressly deal with issues of sexuality, a growing field of scholarship exists on the intersections between Orientalism, gender, and sexuality.

At the beginning of her confessional, Sharmeen Khan outlines that her text explores how desire is racially determined, and how colonialism affects sexual desires (99). Khan comes to the realization that desire is not neutral but constructed, and questions where her desire for white men comes from (100). Similarly, but in less explicit terms, Desai Hidier implies that desire is mediated by Orientalist productions of knowledge. In her provocative title and throughout her text, Khan challenges the neutrality of sexual desire by specifically labeling it “colonized desire” (99). Khan’s first “confession” is that she has grappled with “colonized desire.” She mentions that her



consciousness of “colonized desire” is only recent as she never questioned why she was exclusively attracted to white men, a revelation that exposes itself while she is engaged in a sexual act with “a white communist” (100). Upon her discovery, Khan asks her partner whether he has white supremacist thoughts while they perform sexual acts. The “passive-aggressive,” uninformed, and curt response she gets from her partner only confirms her suspicion that her partner is ignorant of, and therefore complicit in, gender and racial problems. This is the pivotal moment when Khan realizes that her desire is racially mediated, and she comes to the conclusion that no matter what rhetoric of flattery, sympathy, or equality white men apply to discussions of racism, “it is impossible for them to understand,” especially since the men she interacts with fail to account for their own participation in racism (100, 101). Despite the discovery that by desiring white men, she is accepting, desiring, and positioning herself into the “colonized” role, Khan still finds herself desiring white men. Believing her desire to be oppressive, how can Khan continue to remain complicit with her “colonized desire?” What is colonized desire, what is desired, and is this desire fulfilled?

The two terms “colonized” and “desire” put side by side can refer to the desires of the colonized group, as well as the desire the colonized has to be colonized. Khan reveals that all of her lovers have been white, and lists a spectrum of different “types” of white men she has been involved with. Khan’s list includes white men who come from different classes and, one can assume, different linguistic and ethno-cultural groups. Despite the range of white men she dates, Khan unites them and homogenizes them into the same

race (as she does in her category of “colonized”). Rather than desiring class, wealth, or status, Khan desires ‘whiteness,’ which is the determining factor of what Khan calls “normalcy” (99). By questioning her desires, Khan comes to understand that her desire for white men is a manifestation of her quest for normalcy - that being the invisibility that her white partners have in terms of race and gender. She describes this desire as one that is driven by how “those white boys ... carry themselves. The way they can concentrate on better things in life than racism or gender. The way they can make us brown girls feel white. The way they can make us feel just as worthy and sexy as white girls” (101). She also tells us that “high school was a period of bad body image, bad sex, and surrendering my power in relationship after relationship. Just because I felt that being with a white man raised me to a higher level” (103). It becomes apparent to the reader that white men become a tool for Khan’s fulfillment of normalcy. Moreover, she writes, “the issue of desiring whiteness is not about ‘having’ white men, but white men ‘having’ me ... for white men to desire me” (103). Here, Khan expresses her desire as an object for her partner to possess, reflecting an ambivalent desire for colonization. In addition, not only is there a desire to be normal and white, there is a desire to be a normal and white female, hinting that desire and normalcy is racialized and gendered. By desiring her, white men are, in Khan’s opinion, allowing her to appear more normal, white, and feminine. In these passages, Khan implies that sex with white men is ultimately a compromise for her, one where she compromises her pleasure, her self-respect, and her power in order to achieve a false sense of normalcy and femininity.

Similarly, Kayla's desire for Tristan in "Tiger, Tiger" mimics Khan's conflicted relationship with desire. When Kayla sits in a smoky bar awaiting a rendezvous with Tristan, "she nods for the bill, thinking of how Tristan's kisses leave her breathless, how his desire in much the same way wicks the life from her" (Desai Hidier 19). Tristan's desire for Kayla is one that engulfs and suffocates her ("leave[s] her breathless"), and robs her of life. Furthermore, she explains that "his is a steel embrace, as if he is saying, *Don't worry, I will keep it all under control if you just hold perfectly still*" (Desai Hidier 19-20). In these instances, Kayla represents Tristan as being in control and asserting authority, while she is represented as an object in need of civility and containment. Kayla also mentions that she brings Tristan and her together "in her moaning desire to tide out of herself into his hands, in her saying nothing at all, even the way she taught class" (Desai Hidier 21). Because Kayla desires being controlled, contained, silenced, engulfed, and tamed by a white male, and because Kayla's desire reflects the uncontrolled and wild 'native' in need of civility, Kayla experiences "colonized desire." Though Kayla desires being contained, it is more than simply a desire to be controlled, it is a desire for normalcy that is reflected in Khan's text, a desire not to have to explain oneself or be perpetually Othered. This is potentially the only way she can imagine gaining some kind of normalcy. Both Khan and Desai Hidier provide a conflicted representation of "colonized desire" that is further complicated by their positions as well-educated middle class women, who assert a fair amount of authority and resistance to certain stereotypes, while hyperbolically preserving others.

Furthermore, as a confessional, Khan's story admits to guilt and shame as indicated in the title. Khan expresses feelings of self-hatred and envy, which not only creates a conflicted sense of self and desire, but attaches desire to a dimension of shame (102). This shame emanates both from desiring normalcy/supremacy and white female standards of beauty and her inability to attain a level of 'normalcy.' Furthermore, the self-hatred she experiences intensifies as a result of the conflict between her desire and her position as an anti-racist feminist (Khan 103). While she attempts to resist colonial representations of brown women, she desires men precisely because these men affirm her femininity, which both pleases her and oppresses her, and is the source of her shame.

Kayla also experiences this ambivalence and shame when she confesses that

she would see herself being stitched into the pattern, a slender thread, a particular slant that he [her lover] would wrap about his shoulders for an instant to warm himself with. These were the frustrating moments that drew her in, made her long to be different and for him to be the same. (Desai Hidier 28)

Here, Kayla desires to be a trivial object for white men, and is frustrated and possibly shamed by this desire. Though Khan and Kayla's desire for white feminine normalcy is contradictory, ambivalent, self-deprecating, and shameful, the fulfillment of their desires allows them to feel some illusion of validation as women in a white supremacist patriarchal society.

This need for validation and normalcy stems from what Khan calls the "Franz Fanon complex" (102). Khan uses this term to elaborate on the hyperbolic nature of "colonized desire." In her narrative, Khan imagines explaining her experience as a SANA woman in an interracial relationship by telling her partners that "you are about to

sleep with a girl who has wanted to be white for the majority of her life. You're sleeping with a girl who is projecting a lifetime of racism, a lifetime of hating brown and envying white" (102). Khan says that the Franz Fanon complex is "internalized ... [and] confusing and complex" (102). Indeed, her self-hatred as a non-white individual and as a woman make her doubly aware of "abnormalcy" and can account for her unrealistic desire for normalcy. In her essay, "South Asian American Literature," Ketu H. Katrak quotes Meena Alexander's idea that Asian Americans experience "an aesthetics of dislocation" (201). This aesthetics of dislocation is experienced by visible minorities marked by "the vision of being 'unserved'" which is constantly present in the consciousness of Asian Americans (Alexander qtd in Katrak 201). She also states that this aesthetics of dislocation is "violence[t]" due to the dialectical dislocation of consciousness that is perpetually at play. The violence experienced by this dislocation is what Kayla and Khan wish to be free of, but since they cannot escape the confines of their bodies or the awareness of their "abnormalcy," they cannot stop the violent gaze that contains them. Furthermore, Ania Loomba states that "in patriarchal societies, women are split subjects who watch themselves being watched by men. They turn themselves into objects because femininity itself is defined by being gazed upon by men" (162). Fanon describes the objectification of blacks and their internalization of this process in the same way: "I cannot go to a film without seeing myself. ... The people in the theater are watching me" (qtd. in Loomba 162). Gender and race consciousness are both made apparent with the white male gaze, which is both desired by Kayla and Khan,

and is also detested by them in their roles as anti-racist feminists. Rather than experience a double consciousness as expressed by W.E.B. Dubois, Khan and Kayla experience “multiple consciousness” (Goellnicht 339). In thinking about the consciousness of diasporic women, Donald C. Goellnicht suggests that “rather than thinking in binary terms of inside/outside, we should perhaps think of hybrid positions as a web of multiply intersecting and shifting strands in which the precise location of the subject is difficult to map” (339-340). It is this difficulty that produces the ambivalent and contradictory, and oppressive yet sometimes resistant understandings of identity for Khan and Desai Hidier.

### **3. Colonizer Desire**

If “colonized desire” exists, is there such a thing as “colonizer desire?” Khan, Desai Hidier, and various other postcolonial theorists argue that there is, in fact, a colonizer’s desire for the Other. Anne McClintock’s concept of the “porno-tropics” is most relevant in this discussion of “colonizer desire,” and is a concept that comes into play in both Khan and Desai Hidier’s writings. McClintock argues that European travel writing fostered “a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears. Thus non-Europeans, especially women, were repeatedly constructed as libidinally excessive, and sexually uncontrolled” (154-5). Following the logic of the Manichean allegory, if “colonized desire” is the desire to be controlled, engulfed, objectified, and Othered, “colonizer desire” includes the desire to

control, engulf, know, label, discover and exoticize the “colonized.” Both Kayla and Khan are repeatedly exoticized and ‘known’ by their lovers.

The interplay between “colonized desire” and “colonizer desire” and the idea of projecting forbidden sexual desires is of particular interest is Desai Hidier’s representation of the Tiger. Loomba tells us that the colonial European imagination viewed foreign lands and people as “both exciting and monstrous” (158) and that as an “icon for deviant sexuality in general,” the Other woman is often represented “in terms of animals” (160). Keeping the notion of projection in mind, one can imagine that in their desire to free themselves of the rigid codes of sexual conduct, colonizers (especially British) fantasized retreating to a more carnal sexual state (Loomba 158). “Colonizer desire” can thus also come to represent a desire to break away from repressive sexual mores, expressed through a projection of desire onto the Other. As a result of this projection of desire, not only is the Other woman constructed as carnal and animalistic, she is also dehumanized.

In “Tiger, Tiger,” Tristan both dehumanizes and projects his “colonizer desire” onto Kayla. Throughout the narrative, Tristan repetitively labels, and “knows” Kayla as a sexually aberrant and lascivious “tiger.” He tells Kayla that she looks “like a tiger” (Desai Hidier 25), calls her a “heathen tiger child” (26), “bet[s she] fuck[s] like a tiger” (26), and commands Kayla to act “like a tiger” in the bedroom (28). This behaviour is all unnatural to Kayla, and rather than enact the tiger Tristan believes she is, she attempts to protest verbally and physically, but finds herself silenced and restrained by Tristan.

Though Kayla is initially related to a sexually excessive tiger, Desai Hidier makes it apparent that it is Tristan who projects his desire to be carnal onto the Other woman, and it is Tristan who embodies the tiger. The title of Desai Hidier's story itself suggests the presence of two different kinds of imaginative "tigers," one that is projected onto the Other, and one that is enacted by the colonizer. Rather than desire the symbolism of the tiger as Tristan does, Kayla is clearly repulsed and frightened by it, so much so that she wishes to evade and harm him (Desai Hidier 30-32). While Tristan clearly labels Kayla a tiger, Kayla's representation of Tristan provides subtle hints that it is Tristan who embodies the tiger. Tristan is physically and behaviorally like a tiger. For instance, he is physically represented as a tiger because like a tiger, Tristan has "yellowish" eyes (Desai Hidier 20), "hisses" at Kayla (28), has "curled-over toenails" that scratch Kayla much like tiger claws (24). Also, after he rapes Kayla, he lies asleep on top of her back and she "is afraid to move, afraid that she has misunderstood and that he will rise and leap at her, growl his way back into her flesh" (Desai Hidier 31). Here, Tristan's predatory and violent behaviour is heightened by the fear that he will attack her in the manner of a wild animal. Furthermore, the light and shadow of the room makes Tristan's entire body resemble the markings of a tiger, since the slivers of light that seep through the dark room "cast[] orange strips that drop down the wall and across his turned head, slide the length of his body and bed" (Desai Hidier 31). By presenting the "colonized" perspective of the Other woman as animalistic and reversing this idea, Desai Hidier implies that both colonized and colonizer are dehumanized in the process of colonization, and in the



process of “colonizer/colonized desire” in contemporary interracial relationships. Not only are both white male and brown female dehumanized, but Desai Hidier suggests that Orientalist conceptions of Self and Other persist in contemporary interracial relationships, and suggests that despite location and temporality, the act of projecting “colonizer desire” is still practiced today.

#### **4. Orientalist Knowledge**

The assemblage, production, and reproduction of knowledge have played a critical role in the project of Orientalism. Ania Loomba tells us that “colonialism reshaped existing structures of human knowledge. ... The process was somewhat like the functioning of ideology itself, simultaneously a misrepresentation of reality and its re-ordering” (57). As an ideological tool that misrepresents and re-orders human knowledge, the academy is an obvious culprit in the dissemination of Orientalist doctrines. In fact, Edward Said states that “Orientalism lives on academically through its doctrines and theses about the Orient and Oriental” (2). Furthermore, he asserts that all fields of the academy and theory are dependent on Orientalism, which is based on distinctions between East and West (Said 2). This oppositional distinction between East and West is based on what Abdul JanMohamed calls the “Manichean allegory,” which pits the European Self and the non-European Other in oppositional categories, whereby the Self represents the subject of knowledge and modernity, while the Other is the object of knowledge and primitivism (60). Furthermore, the Manichean allegory depends upon

stereotyping, which “involves a reduction of images and ideas to a simple and manageable form; rather than simple ignorance or lack of ‘real’ knowledge, it is a method of processing information” (Loomba 59-60). In relation to women of the Asian Orient, and as discussed in my previous section, women were stereotyped as sexually deviant and excessive, models of feminine behaviour, and as generally uncontrollable. In addition to this, Asian women were represented as lavish, emotional, sensual, and representative of the riches of the Orient itself (Loomba 153). One of the central questions I explore in this section is, how does Orientalist knowledge and the Manichean allegory, with their notions of the ‘woman of the Asian Orient,’ affect *diasporan* women in a *postcolonial* context?

In her book *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt coins the term “contact zones” to signify “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (3). She goes on to state that these unequal power relations continue to exist in the postcolonial context as aftermaths of colonialism and slavery, “as they are lived out across the globe today” (Pratt 3). Khan, Desai Hidier and numerous other critics and writers suggest that the production of Orientalist knowledge still affects contemporary society and spans across geographical and historical boundaries.

In early travel writings, European colonists carried Orientalist stereotypes on their journeys to foreign lands, which resulted in “both the continuity and a reshaping of these

images” (Loomba 58). We see the continuity and the reshaping of these Orientalist images of Other women most prominently in Desai Hidier’s short story, in the depiction of Kayla’s teaching assistant (TA), and most notably in her portrayal of Tristan. For instance, these travel writings noted “specific eating habits, religious beliefs, clothing and social organization,” which launched anthropological studies (Loomba 60). This Orientalist gaze is reproduced in the relationship Kayla has with Tristan. The unequal power dynamic of the contact zone is re-created in Tristan’s gaze, whereby Tristan comes to “know” Kayla through his stereotyped ideas of Indian women. On their first date, Tristan asks Kayla to teach him about her culture. He brings Kayla to an Indian restaurant and asks her to order: “he wanted her to correct him, spell words, pronounce slowly. He fixed his eyes on her mouth as it funneled sound for him. He told her ... that he found eating with the hands not only sensible, but much more sensual” (Desai Hidier 22). Tristan also tells Kayla that he loves Indian food because it is “so hot and exotic, so colourful. ... Like Indian women, ... like you” (22). Not only does Tristan equate Kayla with a consumable and sensual object, Tristan’s gaze focuses on difference, akin to colonialist anthropological practices, signaling the continuity of the reproduction of colonial “knowledge.”

The entire physical description of Kayla mimics colonial and anthropological ideas of the Other woman as exotic, sensual, lavish, and foreign. Kayla tells us that she is

made physically aware of her body by [Tristan’s] gaze: its nakedness marked by the warm patches on her buttocks, slow pull of inner thighs, the quiet push of her nipples against silk, and the trickle of gold cool around her neck. Her hair was long, black as a bull’s flank, to her hips. She used it to hide the eye that told too much ... [it]

shielded her profile when it seemed, as it often did, foreign and stark. She felt she had the head of an alien, with its wide forehead and eyes, and the unyielding jut of skull behind her ears. ... Tristan was always watching her. (Desai Hidier 20)

“Colonizer desire” is evident in this description, as the erogenous parts of Kayla’s body are caught in the “vortex” of Tristan’s gaze, and is also apparent in the metaphorical link between Kayla and the bull (signaling a similarity between the Other woman and animals). Tristan’s gaze also heightens the silk and gold that decorate Kayla’s body, which were sought-after “riches” of the Orient. Also, anthropological studies during colonial times studied the bodies of Europeans and non-Europeans, comparing nose length and width, skin colour and hair texture, and the structure of skulls to prove the superiority of European races. Through Tristan’s gaze, Kayla is made aware of her “alien” and “unyielding” skull, hearkening back to Orientalist anthropological ideas of Self and Other. Furthermore, Kayla’s hair functions as a metaphorical veil. The image of the veiled Asian woman is one that pervades the Orientalist imaginary, and comes to represent the mysterious, foreign and exotic Other. The Orientalist “desire to penetrate the mysteries of the Orient and thereby to uncover hidden secrets ... usually expressed in the desire to lift the veil... is one of the constitutive tropes of Orientalist discourse” (Yegenoglu 73) and is one that is repeated in Kayla’s relationship with her ex-TA. Throughout “Tiger, Tiger,” Kayla uses her hair to shield her when she feels that she is being ‘exposed,’ intimidated, or Othered. This representation of veiling is complicated because, while she uses the veil to protect herself, this veiling works against her, as it works to Other her in its reproduction of the Orientalist fantasy of the veiled woman.

Despite the end of British occupation in India, and despite the fact that Kayla lives in North America and not in colonial India, her status as an object of knowledge remains. This complication implies that Orientalist knowledge does in fact still affect non-white women living in North America, despite the boundaries of geography and history. The dialectic between the past and present, and the contradictory nature of representations are further explored in my following subsections.

## **5. Knowledge and Desire**

If Tristan and Kayla's TA are indeed allured by the image of the veil, what do they hope to uncover? In today's globalized world, where North America contains most of the world's material riches, it is unlikely that Tristan and Kayla's TA are in search of the material riches of the Orient. Instead, I believe they seek to uncover the "mysteries" and "hidden secrets" Kayla, as the libidinal and wily Other woman, has to offer them in terms of sexual knowledge.

Though Kayla's TA is the disseminator and producer of knowledge, he casts Kayla as the producer of knowledge. Rather than generate her own knowledge, Kayla unconsciously reproduces Orientalist ideas, and is rendered an instrument for the acquisition of knowledge for the TA. This is exemplified after their first sexual encounter, where the TA tells Kayla that he "had gained valuable information from [Kayla] that would aid him" (Desai Hidier 27). Here, Kayla is reduced to a manual or textbook that will help him on his future encounters with Other women. For the TA, sex

acts as a way of producing and transmitting knowledge, of “knowing” a person. The illusion is that Kayla is teaching him valuable ‘new’ information, but she only reinforces his own ideas of what an Other woman is.

Kayla’s desire for the TA stems from his breadth of academic knowledge (26). Kayla wishes to learn from him, and he is described as “pleased to initiate the eager ex-student into his kingdom of fleeting light” (Desai Hidier 20). The night after Kayla’s unsatisfactory liaison, she rediscovers her interest for her TA when he discusses Beaudelaire, Proust, and Nietzsche (Desai Hidier 26). However, just as soon as she desires his academic knowledge, the TA launches into a discussion of his sexual knowledge, and produces a list of all of his lovers, which “frazzles” and disappoints Kayla (Desai Hidier 26). Like the colonist’s extensive construction of lists and the colonial ordering of information, the TA adds Kayla to his list of “discovered” objects. Furthermore, Kayla’s disappointment may come from her belief that sexual knowledge is not a substitute for academic knowledge. Kayla’s TA tells her that she will “make a fine lover, and perhaps teacher – was there a difference? Weren’t both about kindling desire?” (Desai Hidier 27). Desire, physical love, and teaching are intertwined for the TA, and Kayla adopts this mentality. Although she initially is resistant to the idea of “listing” and “knowing” others through sexual contact, she ultimately begins compiling a list of her own (Desai Hidier 27), and reverses, and paradoxically preserves, Orientalist practices of documentation and knowledge. For Kayla, though, this quest for knowledge fails her since she cannot allow her partners to “[go] quite all the way inside her [or] turn them

into men in the baffling factory of her body, as she never felt she'd completely expelled [the TA] from her, regained her space and balance" (Desai Hidier 27). Once the TA "knows" her, she feels that she will never be free of his "knowledge," and she hints that she will be plagued by this unequal relationship indefinitely.

While the knowledge/power relations between Kayla and the TA are fairly straightforward, knowledge and power are more complex in Kayla's relationship with Tristan. In her depiction of the relationship between Kayla and Tristan, Desai Hidier not only suggests that Orientalist knowledge persists, but also implies that regardless of authoritative position, race is the overarching factor that determines power, whereby white men assert more power than brown women, even if brown women are not in a position of subordination. This is because Tristan eventually asserts authority over Kayla and uses Kayla as an object of knowledge, despite Kayla's authoritative position as his TA. Tristan initially tells Kayla that he has learned so much from her class, and wants her to continue teaching him things. While Tristan pursues Kayla's supposed wealth of knowledge, we soon learn that Tristan's pursuit of knowledge is his desire for sexual knowledge, and more specifically, his desire to reinforce his Orientalist patriarchal stereotypes. The first hint we receive of Tristan's objectification of Kayla as a thing to be "known" is when he compliments her ability to teach. He tells her "You have taught me so much. You've taught me to see the world in a whole new way. You are so different from anything I've ever experienced. I mean, your class is" (Desai Hidier 22). The mistake that Tristan makes is particularly telling. A possible Freudian slip, Tristan

conflates the class with Kayla. Kayla becomes the object under his study. Not only is Kayla the object under study, it is the “different[ce]” of Kayla that Tristan learns from, similar to how Orientalists came to understand themselves as different from those they colonized. Furthermore, Tristan tells us that he experiences her as an instrument of entertainment or a consumable good, which is quite different from learning from a human being. It is at this point that Kayla is hyperaware of Tristan’s gaze, and “lets her hair fall forward,” an action she does when she feels she is viewed as “foreign and stark” (Desai Hidier 22). Once Tristan asks her out to eat, she “remember[s] she was the teacher” and lifts her face (Desai Hidier 22), an action that most likely reveals her profile. In this instance, Kayla may be both unveiling herself to Tristan and thereby re-enacting the powerless Other woman, or Kayla may be pulling herself back into a position of power by boldly rejecting the idea that she is foreign and exotic. What ensues is the previously discussed “sensual” eating experience that only reinforces Tristan’s stereotypical view of the Other South Asian woman, and is another instance where power funnels back to Tristan.

Kayla’s loss of power is further emphasized in Tristan’s authority to direct, disseminate, and silence knowledge. Rather than allow Kayla to teach Tristan things in a meaningful way with her own agenda, Tristan directs his “learning” to reinforce the “exotic” and exciting stereotypes of Indian culture (Desai Hidier 22). When Kayla tries to take agency in his “learning,” Tristan silences her and speaks for her, mimicking the Orientalist production of knowledge of the Other. Right before Tristan rapes Kayla,



Kayla begins to tell him of the origins of her tiger claw. The claw, and the history of the claw, is represented as being sacred to Kayla and being much more representative of herself than any of the aesthetic and trivial “knowledge” Tristan has asked for thus far. When Kayla begins to unexpectedly reveal the truth behind her personal history, Tristan silences her, telling her “Shh ... hold still. You are so beautiful when you hold still” (Desai Hidier 25). The repetition of “holding still” may represent the monolithic view of South Asian women that Tristan wants to preserve in his memory. When Tristan tells her this, Kayla “imagines the outline of a hand against her mouth and holds back a cry of indignation” (Desai Hidier 25) because she recognizes that he is silencing her knowledge. It is at this point that Kayla looks over at Tristan’s glass of tequila and “focuses on the way the tequila is lit up, a melt of garnets and rubies like the ones the British swiped from the Taj Mahal” (Desai Hidier 25). This reference to the plunders of colonialism reflects her awareness of the Orientalist nature of her relationship with Tristan. Though Kayla attempts to resist Tristan’s exclamations that she is a “heathen tiger child,” and “Queen of the Kama Sutra,” she is repeatedly silenced by Tristan. Furthermore, though Tristan wants Kayla to lead and teach him all the “tricks” of the Kama Sutra, as “[her] people wrote the book of love” (Desai Hidier 26), during her rape, Tristan is the one who leads and directs the sexual acts (28-31), further emphasizing the power he maintains over her.

Finally, his quest to learn from Kayla, and in her attempts to “show [him] things” (Desai Hidier 22), Kayla comes to recognize that “she sees now that the boy before her today was the boy in the lounge all along” (25). Tristan does not, in fact, learn anything

from Kayla; instead, Kayla is the one who learns, since “she feels so far from the young woman she was in that other place” (Desai Hidier 25). Tristan pulls a ginkgo leaf out of her hair right after her silencing, and she mentions that “it looks inappropriate in this room” (Desai Hidier 26). Ginkgo biloba, a plant used for improving memory and which, in this text, symbolizes memory and knowledge, seems inappropriate in the bedroom because the bedroom is not a space for adequate learning for Kayla. Ginkgo is mentioned earlier in the text, when Tristan takes Kayla to the restaurant. Tristan gives Kayla a ginkgo leaf, which indicates that it is Tristan who gives Kayla knowledge, and not the other way around. Tristan makes Kayla aware that regardless of her status as a TA, her power is ultimately thwarted because of the power relations inherent in their relationship. Finally, while Tristan pulls on her chain just before the rape, he also tells her that she is covered with ginkgo leaves and brushes her off (Desai Hidier 26). This is symbolic of how Tristan is taking command of Kayla’s past (by grasping her Tiger claw, which represents Kayla’s history) by erasing her memory and silencing her knowledge (by brushing off the ginkgo leaves). This scene reflects the colonial practice of silencing the Other and rewriting the Other’s history. Right after this scene, Kayla has a flashback to her first sexual encounter with her TA. This flashback is important, as it resonates with the scene where Tristan brushes off the ginkgo leaves, thereby silencing Kayla’s knowledge and eroding her memories of her history. Right after her liaison with her TA, Kayla and her TA brush the twigs and pebbles from their clothes, which mimics the brushing of ginkgo leaves, while they are on rue “Perdue,” which is French for “lost”

(Desai Hidier 26). Desai Hidier may be suggesting that the Orientalist practice of silencing the Other and rewriting histories and knowledge renders people lost, and perhaps refers to how, without knowledge, one becomes lost. Not only is Kayla lost in the process, but the TA is lost as well (he is on rue Perdue as well, and brushes twigs off of himself), and Tristan is ultimately lost since the only knowledge he has is Orientalist in nature. Even though Tristan and the TA are lost as a result of colonialist knowledge, Kayla is more deeply harmed by colonialist knowledge, since she cannot assert any agency in her relationships with white men. Rather than teach Tristan anything meaningful about her culture, Kayla comes to understand that she has reinforced Orientalist ideas of South Asian women, and learns that despite her position as teacher (both in class and in the bedroom), she cannot assert the same amount of power as a white man. Desai-Hidier seems to suggest that Tristan's status as a white man instills preconceived notions of "Other" women. Through her depictions of the TA and Tristan, Desai Hidier therefore implies that Orientalist desire and interactions in relationships between SANA women and white men only reinforce the Manichean gap between the Knowledgeable Subject and knowable Object.

## **6. Resisting Orientalist Categories of Knowledge and Identity**

Given the troublesome relationship between knowledge, desire, identity, and Orientalism, how can SANA women reject Orientalist claims to knowledge? Desai Hidier

seems to suggest that non-binary ways of seeking identification, and the rejection of the Franz Fanon complex, are possible routes to resisting Orientalist productions of identity and knowledge.

Although Kayla becomes the powerless Other woman through her interactions with her TA and Tristan, by the end of the story, she ultimately fights against the representation of Self and Other. We see this in Desai Hidier's depiction of the tequila glass, which suggests the Lacanian mirror-stage of identification. The mirror-stage is dependent on the idea of binaries, since the ego is dependent on the Other (Barry 114-115). Like the infant who strives for identification through difference, Kayla initially understands herself through her difference from Tristan and her TA (as the Other woman), an understanding that un-works itself through the course of the story.

The tequila glass is initially described as "a melt of garnets and rubies like the ones the British swiped from the Taj Mahal" Desai Hidier (25). The glass represents the mirror, in which Kayla comes to recognize the difference in identity and power between herself and Tristan. This understanding of the glass as Lacanian mirror is further strengthened by the passage, "as a child in India, everything she touched seemed to long to be elsewhere: china, clocks, mirrors" (Desai Hidier 32). This passage indicates a "lack," as the mirror "longs to be elsewhere." This possibly refers to colonized people's identification as "lack" compared to the "complete" European Self, thereby reflecting the Self/Other, Franz Fanonian complex. By smashing the tequila glass, Kayla rejects the

Franz Fanon complex and refuses to be seen as Other in comparison to a European Self. Though Kayla is trapped under Tristan's weight, "finally, she is able to wrench free an arm and flings it out. It hits something hard and there is a crash that is composed of thousands of tiny crashes, mirrors slamming into each other" (Desai Hidier 30). If we substitute the glass for the mirror, we can infer that this is the instance in which Kayla is not only hyperaware of her difference, but is the pivotal moment where she rejects the Self/Other binary by smashing the mirror. Once Tristan falls asleep, Kayla searches for her tiger claw, which gets lost during her rape. She finds the "tiger claw's chain burning through a tawny heap of ginkgo leaves and the brilliant, shattered glass her foot has just missed" (Desai Hidier 31). The tiger's claw is buried within the ginkgo leaves, which as previously mentioned, symbolize memory and knowledge. We can interpret the hidden tiger claw as suggesting that 'real' knowledge and history, as well as routes back to familial and cultural ties, are buried underneath Orientalist knowledge. Furthermore, it is important to note that though the shards of glass (or the Lacanian mirror) are strewn all over the floor, Kayla is unharmed by the shards, suggesting that her rejection of Self/Other is a path to protection and safety, or implies that she at least knows how to negotiate her subjectivity beyond the mirror stage. Though Kayla is unharmed by the shards of glass and retrieves her claw, she misses a link from her chain and then longs for her family "back home." The shards of glass in this instance can come to symbolize the shards of glass/memory Salman Rushdie discusses in his essay "Imaginary Homelands" (12). As a diasporan, all Kayla has to remind herself of "home" are the bits and pieces of

memory she can muster in her imagination. Kayla has lost the “whole picture” of what it means to be home, and all she has are fragments of memories to remind her of home, the most important memory being the story of the tiger claw. The fact that Kayla loses a link to her tiger claw chain in her interaction with Tristan suggests that interracial relationships based on Orientalist knowledge and desire irreconcilably destroy any ties to personal history and memory.

Although she feels the loss of her history, Kayla is bent on seeking vengeance as a result of the shattering of Self and Other. Instead of leaving Tristan in silence, Kayla seeks vengeance on him by using the shards of glass (shards of memory, and the broken Lacanian mirror of identification through difference) against Tristan. Kayla traces her history back to her great-grandmother, and uses the knowledge of her great-grandmother to be “painstakingly careful” while squatting and collecting the pieces of glass (Desai Hidier 32). Kayla takes the shattered mirror and “pours the larger pieces of broken rubies into [Tristan’s] bedside slippers[,] ... scattering behind her a dense wake of the invisible splinters” (Desai Hidier 32). As Tristan identifies himself through the binary of Self and Other, Kayla is symbolically destroying Tristan’s process of self-identification, and does so in a way that will harm him. Finally, after smashing the mirror and slipping the glass into Tristan’s slippers, Kayla “brushes the hair from her eye, and exits.” Rather than hide behind the veil of her hair and fear being viewed as “foreign and stark” and inferior, Kayla’s actions suggest that she is rejecting that idea of herself, as she smashes the mirror and gains mastery over it, by using it to her advantage, instead of allowing it to dictate

her own identification. Kayla thus uses the glass/mirror, remnants of the Self/Other divide and the memory and pain of her history to her advantage, and implies that she will no longer “long to be elsewhere” or defined by Orientalist knowledge. Desai Hidier implies that by rejecting identification through the Manichean allegory, and by seeking out one’s personal and cultural history, one can resist Orientalist constructions of knowledge and identification.

## **7. Conclusion**

Ania Loomba states that “many critics are beginning to ask whether, in the process of exposing the ideological and historical functioning of [the Manichean allegory], we are in danger of reproducing them” (104). Looking at Desai Hidier and Khan’s texts, we notice how they portray, as sixteenth-century Europeans did, “sexual and colonial relationships [as] analogous to each other” (Loomba 151). Indeed, given the reiteration of this comparison, we can ask at what point is Khan and Desai Hidier’s exposure of Orientalism subversive, and at what point are they exhausting the Manichean dichotomy? Though we can easily criticize Khan and Desai Hidier for reproducing binaries, I believe such a reading may not only be reductive, but works to silence the narratives, and thus the realities of SANA women in disparate interracial relationships. Such criticism, I argue, is in danger of shutting down the texts; it is in danger of shutting out the possibility that Orientalism maintains its doctrines through public and private realms, despite boundaries of geography, history and time. Even though they may

reproduce certain binaries, and depict sexual and colonial relationships as analogous to each other, Khan and Desai Hidier also complicate and confuse these binaries, and make it impossible to contain themselves or their characters in a particular category of time, space, history, ethnicity, or identity. Furthermore, upon first reading “Tiger, Tiger” and “Confessions of a Paki with Colonized Desire or How Giving White Men Blowjobs Reproduces Colonialism” (indeed, from Khan’s title alone), Khan and Desai Hidier may seem to suggest that cross-cultural sexual contact is ultimately enslaving and exploitative, and seemingly imply that there is little, or no hope for interracial relationships. Granted Khan and Desai Hidier depict no interracial relationships that are reciprocal or healthy, one can come away from their readings as particularly pessimistic and even counter-productive for diasporan women. Such a reading, however, would not adequately account for the presence of colonized/colonizer desire, the pervasiveness of Orientalist knowledge, the dislocation of aesthetics, “multiple consciousnesses,” the Franz Fanon complex, or the complexities of the dialectic between geography/space, history, time, nationality, ethnicity, and gender. Rather than affirm the notion that cultural harmony can be achieved through romance as early mythical Orientalist love plots (Lomba 158), Khan and Desai Hidier seem to suggest that there is no easy route to gender and racial equality, especially in interracial relationships in which Orientalist conceptions of desire, knowledge, and identity remain unchallenged.



## CHAPTER 2

### **Normalcy, Desire, and Orientalism in Same-Sex Interracial Relationships**

#### **1. Introduction**

In my previous chapter, the notions of colonizer/colonized desire, ‘normalcy,’ and Orientalist knowledge were discussed. This chapter revisits these concepts, but from the perspective of queer SANA women in interracial relationships with white women, with a particular focus on how SANA females are represented as equal to white females to depict a Lesbian utopia. The conceptual framework that best explains the Lesbian utopia is lesbian feminism or essentialist feminism, which “assume[s]... that there exists[s] an essential female identity which all women ha[ve] in common irrespective of differences of race, class, or sexual orientation” (Barry 141). The idea of “the woman identified woman” (“Radicalesbians”) is central to lesbian feminism, “since lesbianism turns away from .... patriarchal exploitation and instead consists of relationships among women, which ... constitute a form of resistance to ... existing forms of social relations” (Barry 141). Lesbianism is therefore understood as direct opposition to patriarchy, and forms an intrinsic part of the essentialist feminist mandate. In addition to lesbianism, language and writing constitute a large part of the Lesbian Utopian tradition. Though potentially subversive, the vision of the Lesbian utopia based on essentialist feminism is one that is dependent on universalizing women’s experiences and locations under a grand metanarrative of similarity based on sexuality and gender. There exists much debate over the cultural and racial homogenization that essentialist feminism entails, most notably by

Adrienne Rich, whose concept of the “politics of location” opposes metanarratives. The “politics of location” refers to a recognition that there is, in fact, a politics of difference among women that not only challenges the claim that all women are equally affected by patriarchy and oppression, but also suggests that women can experience multiple locations, which implies “a space that is fragmented, multidimensional, contradictory, and provisional” (Blunt and Rose 7). Throughout this chapter, I use the term “lesbian” to describe same-sex relationships that are essentialist in nature, and the term “queer” to signal same-sex desire that rejects essentialist claims. The perspective of the “politics of location” as well as the terms “lesbian” and “queer” create rifts within feminist circles and remains a site of contestation, as is evident in the texts I explore within this chapter.

## **2. Essentialist Desire and Complicity**

Central to the texts that I examine in this chapter are the themes of sameness, belonging, shared oppression, and reciprocal understanding. Namjoshi, Hanscombe, Dijkstra, and Mootoo present same-sex relationships in which there rests a desire to forge an egalitarian partnership in spite of differences, and despite the existence of multiple locations. When issues of ethnicity come into play within a same-sex interracial relationship, does sexuality take precedence over issues of race, and if so, at what risk? At what moment does this discourse of equality rupture? How do the authors and characters come to understand and experience difference? How are categories of nationality, ethnicity, and belonging grappled with? Is there such a thing as colonizer

desire and colonized desire in inter-racial lesbian relationships? Is Orientalist knowledge perpetuated even in same-sex relationships? Though gender complicates a simplistic conclusion that lesbian SANA women and their white female partners experience colonizer/colonized desire and Orientalist knowledge is continued, I argue that there are traces of racial and Orientalist desire, which complicate inter-racial lesbian relationships.

Whereas the characters in the previous chapter experienced colonized and colonizer desire as a result of Orientalism and patriarchy, the writers and protagonists I explore in this chapter experience what I call “essentialist desire,” or the desire to create an essential lesbian female identity despite differences of class, race, or ethnicity. Whereas JanMohamed’s concept of the Manichean allegory exhausts racial differences and suggests a series of binaries, essentialist desire ignores issues of race and creates a single binary between patriarchy and lesbianism. Rather than a strict colonizer/colonized relationship, essentialist desire implies an opposing situation; one in which differences are ignored and subsumed under a totalizing mandate. In this sense, essentialist desire can be misunderstood as the antithesis of colonizer/colonized desire, but on closer inspection, it shares many commonalities with colonizer/colonized desire. Like the Manichean allegory, essentialism has major implications for issues of race and Orientalism. Orientalism can persist precisely because Essentialist feminism fails to account for racial differences and does not pay attention to Orientalism, and because essentialist feminists sacrifice these differences for the ‘greater good’ of lesbian feminism.

Despite approaching race in opposing ways, colonizer/colonized desire and essentialist desire produce a similar consequence: that of complicity. Both colonizer/colonized desire and essentialist desire entail a rhetoric of complicity whereby both partners remain complicit in the perpetuation of racism, colonial history, and Orientalist knowledge. This is particularly complex for same-sex partners because gender complicates patriarchal tropes of discovery, insemination, and colonization. In their complicity, do SANA women in same-sex relationships become the colonized, and do their white partners become colonizers? Is Orientalist knowledge perpetuated? Certainly, critics have lambasted the essentialist feminist subject as one that “is most likely ideologically complicit with ‘the oppressor’” (de Lauretis 137). Given this perspective, do the SANA characters occupy the same complicit space as “the oppressor” in some instances, and are they aware of the “politics of location” in others?

It is difficult to label either partner “colonized” or “colonizer” because, whereas in the preceding chapter, the colonized/colonizer relationship followed a strict gender binary, the characters in this section are of the same gender, which problematizes the gender codes of the Manichean allegory. Whereas the SANA characters in the previous section reverted to the feminized, racialized Other, those examined in this chapter oscillate between the racialized and gendered Other under Orientalist patriarchy and the female Self under essentialist feminism. In their involvement as the female Self, race tends to be disavowed. As described in the previous chapter, Khan implies that one is complicit in racism and Orientalism if racial politics are ignored, which leaves many

essentialist feminists, particularly those of colour, in a bind. While some of the writers are aware of the politics of location, others disregard racial differences. In some instances, I argue, Orientalist knowledge is in fact perpetuated despite attempts to appropriate patriarchal, Orientalist language and to satirize colonial tropes. Furthermore, Gopinath tells us that “there is no queer desire without these histories [of colonialism and racism], nor can these histories be told or remembered without simultaneously revealing an *erotics of power*” (*Impossible Desires 2*, emphasis mine). In other words, an “erotics of power” is present in interracial same-sex relationships because Orientalist history is embedded within lesbian and queer desire. This implies that there is a potential colonized/colonizer desire for queer SANA women that is a result of the colonizing mission. We see this “erotics of power” as well as the re-appropriation/eroticization of colonial tropes in Annie Dijkstra’s short story “Colombo to Haputale,” and in Suniti Namjoshi’s sacrificial denial of her lover’s racial privilege in the poem “Was it Quite Like That?”.

The issue of complicity is complex in Dijkstra’s “Colombo to Haputale,” as Dijkstra appropriates colonial language and tropes in the love scenes her characters engage in. It is questionable whether Dijkstra’s eroticization of Orientalist tropes is subversive or merely perpetuates the tired metaphor of conquered land. Her story is further complicated by the fact that the races of the protagonists are never specified. The reader is made aware that there is “one large white girl and one small brown one” (Dijkstra 147), but we are never told which race is that of the “explorer” and that of the

knowledgeable native. The races of the two women are only mentioned while they are gazed at by men outside of their private carriage, while the women are in heterosexist public space. While the women are in their private carriage, however, their races are not made apparent. The fact that Dijkstra does not specify whose race is whose in the carriage can show that while race is an exhausted issue in the public, patriarchal world, it is not so in lesbian private spaces. Though race does not seem to affect the characters within the carriage and gives us the impression that there is an egalitarian relationship between the two, an equal partnership is thwarted, as one character has more knowledge and power than the other. We see this knowledge/power dynamic in an intimate scene between the two characters:

I could hear other passengers clumsily pressing against the carriage door, in contrast to your masterful tracing of the boundaries of my pleasure. So studiously you charted the fathoms, knowing so much more about the terrain than I had even realized existed. Impatiently I would demand and cajole, but resisting all campaigns you marched away from easy victory. Exploring new territories to conquer, I would lose a sensation abruptly and gain a continent without knowing it even existed. (149)

The “masterful tracing of the boundaries,” the act of “charting” the terrain, and conquering continents are strongly reminiscent of the colonial project of discovery, mapping, and knowledge production. Should we consider the narrator the SANA woman and the studious teacher her white lover, the Orientalist continuum is quite evident. It is the white lover who shows her the terrain, remaps and charts the island as well as her body. The sex act becomes the very process of colonization. The narrator is complicit to the extent that rather than re-appropriate colonial tropes, she seems to perpetuate

Orientalist knowledge/power dynamic that complicates a path to equality. Unlike Namjoshi and Hanscombe, whom I discuss later, Dijkstra gives us no explicit awareness or desire to confront colonial history and involvement; only a reworking of tropes which does not seem particularly revolutionary or subversive.

In addition to colonial language and the metaphorical link of sex to the colonial project, the insemination trope is carried out in this story. The narrator is penetrated by her partner, after which she states, “I lost myself and suddenly found a new me I had forgotten about” (Dijkstra 150). The sex act, described in Orientalist terms, allows the protagonist to “discover” herself. Though it may be subversive, in that we do not know whether the narrator is brown or white, and in that the two are women and so the trope of insemination is rendered satiric, the racial confusion between the two women results in complicity. This is because simply appropriating and confusing Orientalism and race does not convince me that they are trying to constructively deal with their differences or actively confronting Orientalism. Even if the narrator is the white woman, there is a risk of falling into Orientalist complicity. Though the role reversal would allow the SANA woman, the traditional subaltern, to exert control, teaching, mapping and colonizing, the inversion of the knowledge/power desire relationship does not seem constructive. While this can be potentially subversive as it ridicules and problematizes patriarchal Orientalism, I argue this appropriation of colonial tropes and language is deeply troubling because it eroticizes Orientalism more than it resists colonial tropes. This fetishization

of Orientalism replicates old forms of colonization more than it challenges them, and does not appear to be particularly satiric or undermining of the colonial endeavour.

Shani Mootoo's characters Sarah and Lavinia experience a form of complicity that differs from that of Dijkstra's characters. Rather than rework colonial tropes or eroticize the colonial project, Sarah and Lavinia remain complicit in their absence from the text. The novel begins with Chandin, son of an indentured labourer who is adopted by a white reverend. Chandin's love for the reverend's daughter, Lavinia, stimulates Chandin's intense hatred for his own race and culture, instilling him with an extreme form of Khan's aforementioned "Franz Fanon complex." Unable to consummate his love for Lavinia because of racial, familial, and gender boundaries, Chandin marries Sarah, a Lantanacamaran convert and Lavinia's companion. Lavinia retreats back "North" for several years, and returns to Sarah and Chandin's life after the birth of their two daughters, Asha and Mala. Chandin's self-hatred intensifies as he senses Sarah and Lavinia's intimate relationship, and takes a final violent turn after they run away to live together up "North," an absence that stimulates his incestuous relationship with Asha and Mala. Though Sarah and Lavinia are only mentioned in the first section of *Cereus Blooms at Night*, their absence produces lasting effects for the rest of the novel.

An interesting gender inversion is at play between Chandin and Lavinia. Chandin, who experiences an overbearing sense of colonized desire for Lavinia as a result of the Franz Fanon complex, is tormented by a white *woman*. It is her racial privilege that makes him hyper-aware of his race and class, and she comes to represent the epitome of



the colonial fantasy. It is Chandin's misguided understanding of race and masculinity, mediated by Orientalist patriarchy, which stimulates his violence. If Lavinia's 'white'/Orientalizing presence and symbolism causes such a lasting and dangerous manifestation of the Franz Fanon complex, what kind of effect does Lavinia's presence have on Sarah? While Kayla and Khan experience a violent aesthetics of dislocation as a result of the white male patriarchal Orientalist gaze of their lovers, Sarah does not seem to undergo an aesthetics of dislocation from the gaze of Lavinia. Instead, it is Chandin's gaze, mediated by patriarchal heterosexist Orientalism, which polices Sarah into the gendered, racialized, compulsory heterosexual Other. We see this when Chandin reveals to Sarah that he only married her because Lavinia was unattainable. While arguing, Chandin uses the diction he learned from the reverend, while Sarah uses Lantanacamaran diction. Chandin asks Sarah, "why don't you speak as you were taught in school? It is appalling that the educated wife of a man like myself refuses to exercise her knowledge. It just doesn't look good. What on earth would Lavinia herself think?" (Mootoo 57). For Chandin, Lavinia amounts to an ideal, policing colonial authority. Sarah, on the other hand, tells us that "she [Lavinia] never correcting how I speak. Is only you who always correcting me" (57). It is Chandin, then, who polices, corrects, and Others her, and not Lavinia. What this suggests is that there is a stronger female, or lesbian, bond between Sarah and Lavinia that exceeds racial difference.

Although Sarah and Lavinia are depicted as treating each other equally and even though Sarah does not seem to share an ingrained inferiority complex as Chandin does,

their absence from the island results in the destruction and demise of Mala and Asha. Even though they plan on taking Asha and Mala with them to the “North,” they sacrifice the two children in order to live together. Obviously not their preferred plan of action, the two ultimately abandon the children, who perish under heterosexist Orientalist patriarchy. Though it is not a chosen complicity, their absence and evasion implies a kind of complicity; that simply escaping one form of patriarchy and Orientalist authority is not enough to effectively resist patriarchal colonial authority.

Unlike Sarah, Lavinia, or Dijkstra’s narrator, Namjoshi and Hanscombe spend a great deal more time on the issue of complicity and culpability regarding colonialism. There are times when Namjoshi, the Indian-born poet, excuses racial difference in order to foster a seamless essentialist feminist utopia. This complicity is most evident in the poem “Was it Quite Like That?.” Broken into three sections, the first speaker, Namjoshi, writes

Come to the country of which  
my bones are made up  
...  
You were like me. Did you exercise caution  
O my dearest love? You did not question my kinship. (56)

Here, Namjoshi equates her body to her nationality and to her lover. Hanscombe does, however, question both the kinship and the comparison between Indian-born Namjoshi and herself, asking:

Was it quite like that?  
...  
I’m white. I’m Western Civilization. I’m Christendom,

their blood running in rivers. I'm capitalist  
imperialism overlording their lords. I'm  
barbarism: misplacing, renaming. I'm us, not them. (56)

Aware of her race, Hanscombe is reluctant to remain complicit by excusing her racial privilege. Of this passage, Lorraine York writes,

lines of community and difference overlap in a bewildering but productive complexity; the poet's attempt to write over her inevitable participation in 'Western Civilization ... Christendom' (56) looks to lesbian community to heal the breach, but the ellipses speak tellingly of the impossibility of such erasure as healing. (143)

Hanscombe, therefore, is aware of the irreconcilable differences between herself and Namjoshi as a consequence of their national and ethnic disparities, and grapples with seeing herself as the European Self opposed to Namjoshi, and the lesbian Other in unity with Namjoshi. In this sense, Hanscombe is attempting to come to grips with her white privilege and her involvement in Orientalism, and is thus trying to deal with issues of complicity. While Hanscombe tries to deal with these difficult and conflicting subject positions, Namjoshi encourages her to absolve her racial privilege for the benefit of lesbian unification. This is evident in the final section of the poem, where Namjoshi writes,

But we were  
together  
not face to face, side by side ...  
And behind the explanations  
the frightening admission:  
in this kind of country  
of exact relationships, there is  
no word  
for you and me.  
Come lover,

they are my kin  
   and I their alien,  
 share the bloodied bonds with me. (57)

This, I believe is an instance in which Namjoshi actively accepts complicity in order to facilitate the essentialist feminist dream of lesbian unity. Indeed, York tells us that this is an example of how Namjoshi “reiterates this acceptance of rupture and offers it, *sacrificially* to her lover” (144, emphasis mine). Interestingly, Hanscombe remains adamant and reluctant to accept Namjoshi’s easy exemption from the colonial project in later poems, in which Namjoshi continues to sacrifice her racial difference for the greater good of the Lesbian utopia. Whereas Hanscombe attempts to emphasize her participation in Orientalism, Namjoshi excuses Hanscombe’s inevitable participation in a manner that is eerily akin to colonized desire. We see this in Namjoshi’s imagery of “bloodied bonds” (57), which mimics Hanscombe’s metaphor of “Christendom/ their [Indian] blood running in rivers” (56). Namjoshi chooses to write over Hanscombe’s blood imagery, symbolically sacrificing the blood of her own race for the blood of lesbians. This is similar to colonized desire in that Namjoshi excuses colonialism in her desire for essentialism and a state of ‘normalcy’ with her lover; she invites and encourages Hanscombe to cast off her guilt and involvement in Orientalism. In this sense, Namjoshi and Hanscombe both remain complicit with racism and Orientalism, which ironically problematizes the essentialist feminist dream, as their races and nationalities continue to haunt and affect their partnership. Unlike the characters in Dijkstra’s story, Namjoshi and Hanscombe’s complicity is conscious, and as a result of this conscious complicity,

they continue to grapple with their irreconcilable differences throughout both their poems and their relationship.

In this sense, Blunt tells us that

to overlook the roles played by colonizing women helps to perpetuate imperial notions of transparent space and its unproblematic mimetic representation not only of an ‘other’ but also itself. Instead, a focus on white, colonizing women raises questions of complicity with and resistance to hegemonic strategies of domination. (8)

Though Namjoshi and Hanscombe desire an egalitarian and ‘transparent’ partnership, they eventually realize that such essentializing renders both partners complicit with colonialism. The collection of poetry, ending with the passage, “there is no undiscovered country” and the question, “but in spite of a hurtful history/ shall we speak of a peopled place / where women may walk freely / in the still, breathable air?” (64) suggests their awareness that colonial tropes, the concept of *terra nullius*, and “discovery” projects are indeed imperialistic, and so in this sense, the poets both address and try to grapple with complicity (York 150).

Although one cannot clearly label the authors as experiencing colonizer or colonized desire, one can locate instances in which Orientalism is excused through complicity. The consequences of the sacrificing of race for gender can result in the eroticization of Orientalism within feminism, as is suggested by Dijkstra’s short story. Complicity can also result in the sacrificing of one’s ethno-cultural background, as we see with Namjoshi. In either case, complicity with colonialism has detrimental effects, as

suggested by Mootoo, who implies that simply evading Orientalist patriarchy and ignoring racial privilege can be destructive.

### **3. The Space of Impossibility and the Quest for Normalcy**

In the previous chapter, I discussed what Sharmeen Khan calls “normalcy,” which is understood as the ability to escape the confines of being the “Other.” While Khan and Desai Hidier wish to elide their status as the brown female “Other,” the writers I discuss in this chapter seem to seek a different form of normalcy. Rather than evade racial and gender stereotypes mediated by patriarchal Orientalism, Namjoshi, Hanscombe, Dijkstra, and Mootoo’s characters Sarah and Lavinia wish to escape their “Other” status as lesbians, mainly by evading heterosexist patriarchy. How do queer SANA writers re-write space and both understand and come to grips with ‘normalcy’? The term ‘normalcy’ itself is misleading, as it connotes conventionality. Rather than imply conventionality, I believe these writers are trying to map out a space in which their relationships cease to be compromised by racial, gender, and sexual boundaries and mores. Normalcy is not only the desire to escape the confines of being Other and of heterosexist patriarchal ideology, but has more to do with claiming one’s own space and equal rights. For Mootoo’s characters Sarah and Lavinia, “normalcy” amounts to the seemingly simple right of having one’s own family, being able to sleep in the same bed as one’s lover, and holding one another (64). Normalcy also involves visibility, having a ‘name’ and a cause that is empowering and non-abusive, and forging alternative women-

positive (specifically lesbian-positive) public and private spaces. Normalcy, in this sense, comprises the ability to be free of harassment and patronizing attitudes, and includes having a sense of belonging and reciprocal understanding, equality, the ability to claim space, land, and the same resources and rights as a same-sex couple.

The most prevalent of these desires among these authors seems to be that of space, whereby the authors wish to reclaim and transform public, private, and national spaces in ways that make positive those relegated to women under heterosexist patriarchy. Of space, the Indian immigrant bourgeoisie, and queer SANA women, Gayatri Gopinath writes that

a ‘nonheterosexual Indian woman’ occupies a space of impossibility, in that she is not only excluded from the various ‘home’ spaces that the ‘woman’ is enjoined to inhabit and symbolize, but, quite literally, simply cannot be imagined. Within patriarchal diasporic and nationalist logic, the ‘lesbian’ can only exist outside the ‘home’ as household, community, and nation of origin, whereas the ‘woman’ can only exist within it. (*Impossible Desires* 18)

A queer SANA woman is therefore not considered part of the diaspora, home, or nation space. The writers I explore in this chapter describe how they are unable to claim space in Eastern and Western public and private spaces. I assert that their desire for normalcy is fuelled by their exclusion from Eastern and Western spaces as a result of being trapped in the “space of impossibility.”

This exclusion from the nation-space is exemplified in Namjoshi and Hanscombe’s poem, “Because of India.” While in India, the couple feel silenced and invisible in public and private spaces. They write, the history not for taking:

the family not for joining:  
the cause not for naming:

and lover, what could we discover  
in any country or poetry? (being

visitors; and seemly). (62)

Having no name, no cause, no family, no history, country or literature, lesbians are deemed eternal “visitors,” or outsiders, and are never true inhabitants of land or space.

While the poets lament that there is no country or poetry for lesbians, it is India in which there is “no cause for naming,” as there is no word for lesbian. Similarly, there is a ‘lack’ of a name in Lantanacamara for queer women, evidenced by Mala’s confusion at discovering the love affair between her mother and Sarah, as “she had no words to describe what she suddenly understood was their secret” (Mootoo 60). This absence of a name and a ‘cause’ haunts Namjoshi, Hanscombe, and Mootoo’s characters, because they are excluded from national identity and inhabit a space of invisibility and impossibility.

If the nation home-space is a space of impossibility for lesbian/queer SANA women, what possibilities can the First World offer? Mootoo’s narrator, Tyler, suggests that there is more sexual freedom in the First World for SANA individuals. Like Gopinath, Tyler suggests that lesbian/queer SANA individuals cannot inhabit the diaspora, home, or nation space, and like Dijkstra, Namjoshi, and Hanscombe, Tyler seeks refuge from heterosexist patriarchy. As a queer and effeminate male in the compulsory heterosexual island of Lantanacamara, Tyler’s desire for normalcy brings him to the metropolis of the First World. He states, “my desire to leave the shores of



Lantanacamara had much to do with studying abroad, but far more with wanting to be somewhere where my ‘perversion’ ...might be either invisible or of no consequence to people to whom my foreignness was what would be strange” (Mootoo 51). This passage implies that, as a queer male, he is foreign in his home nation, and that he would rather face racial foreignness in a host nation than sexual foreignness in his home nation. While the “Shivering Northern Wetlands,” or the metropolitan First World centre, brings with it an overbearing burden of colonial history and Orientalism, Tyler trades off his racial normalcy for sexual ‘normalcy,’ as the First World implies the promise of sexual freedom. Similarly, Sarah and Lavinia share Tyler’s desire for sexual ‘normalcy.’ While we do not know what the plight of Sarah and Lavinia is once they leave the island in hopes of starting a family and living a more open same-sex life, and we do not know if they do find more freedom, we see the destruction their absence causes Mala and Asha, which suggests that there is a high cost for abandoning one’s ethno-cultural background.

If the nation-space and the diaspora exclude lesbian/queer SANA women, and if claiming a lesbian/queer identity is considered foreign and a construct of the First World, what options do queer SANA women have with regards to their identity and finding a space of *possibility*? Tyler paints a bleak picture for queer SANA individuals, where ‘normalcy’ is simply a fantasy and never reality. Feeling despair after witnessing the plight of the elderly Mala, Tyler tells us that he “wonder[s] at how many of us, feeling unsafe and unprotected, either end up running away from everything we know and love, or staying and simply going mad” (96-97). Being lesbian/queer in Lantanacamara

amounts to madness for Tyler, so the only other option he sees for queer SANA individuals is to escape to the First World. What this suggests is that there is a contestation between sexual freedom and cultural identity for SANA queer individuals, where they must choose between their racial identity or their sexual identity, two categories that seem to be in perpetual conflict.

This dualistic situation is explained by Kaushalya Bannerji, who writes,

I was almost seduced into believing that I could not be an Indian and a lesbian without betraying either the culture of my birth and family, or the culture I had chosen as a lesbian and a feminist. Just as men had silenced me in the solidarity committees and meetings of the left, so too I found white lesbians talking for me and about me as though I was not present. (60)

Lesbian/Queer SANA women are therefore perceived as outsiders and foreign constructs of the metropolis in the diaspora or nation-space, at the same time they are perceived as foreign to First World lesbian-feminist communities. The quest for normalcy, then, begins with a toss-up between First World and Third World communities. By this logic, the SANA lesbian/queer subject, either male or female, is labeled foreign to both home and host spaces, rendering the quest for normalcy a mere fantasy and relegated to the 'space of impossibility.'

Furthermore, while the First World may afford more freedom, it only offers limited freedom and exclusion. While there is no name for lesbians in South Asia or Lantanacalara, there is an excessively used abusive one in the First World. This is exemplified in Namjoshi and Hanscombe's poem, "Was it Chance," where the poets describe their "Other" status as lesbians inhabiting the heterosexist First World:

They explained in the end:  
You must know your name.

They wrote on my photograph,  
Wrote on my poems,  
Wrote in affection  
On the back of my head;

Gorgon, they said.  
I wondered. I hurt. (27)

Not only is there a clear distinction between the heterosexual Self, represented by the “They,” and the non-heterosexual Other, heterosexist public space violently labels, distorts, and attacks the very notion of the lesbian re-appropriation of space. This goes to show that lesbian/queer SANA subjects also inhabit a space of impossibility in the First World, though different from the space of impossibility in South Asia and Lantanacalara (or the South Asian diaspora). Furthermore, the pressing issue of vanquishing one’s race for one’s sexual preference remains an issue for queer SANA subjects.

Though Tyler, Sarah, Lavinia, and Namjoshi attempt to seek normalcy by inhabiting Western spaces, the destruction that befalls Mala and Asha, and the harassment faced by lesbians in the West suggests that lesbian/queer subjects, particularly those who occupy a non-white subject-position, inhabit a space of impossibility regardless of context. Not quite ‘authentic’ referents of the diaspora or homeland, and not quite racially represented or understood by the predominantly white lesbian community, normalcy for queer SANA women seems an impossibility. Although queer SANA women may feel a contestation between their sexuality and race, and while finding adequate ‘space’ seems unlikely, Namjoshi, Hanscombe, Mootoo and Dijkstra attempt to

envision new spaces where they can make their sexuality and race compatible, instead of contesting categories. They try to do this by restructuring the domestic space through their literature, and by addressing the private/public divide, as well as imagining alternative cartographies. Just as Kaushalya Bannerji points out that she was “*almost* seduced into believing” this opposition between her sexuality and her nationality, implying that she has managed to get beyond that opposition, Dijkstra, Mootoo, Namjoshi and Hanscombe grapple with the contestation between sexuality, gender, and race. Namjoshi and Hanscombe in particular forge an alternative subjectivity that tries to account for their differences at the same time they try to envision spaces that challenge heterosexist Orientalist patriarchy. This mapping of an alternative subjectivity is discussed in my final chapter, where I argue that while the ‘nonheterosexual Indian woman’ cannot be imagined in these spaces, Namjoshi, Hanscombe, Dijkstra, and Mootoo conceptualize an imaginary space of possibility, or normalcy, for the lesbian/queer SANA subject.

### CHAPTER 3

## **The Simultaneity of Geography, The Confines of the Body, and Forging a Space of Possibility**

### **1. Introduction**

Whereas the previous chapters dealt with heteronormative relationships separately from the same-sex ones, this chapter investigates the different ways in which Khan, Kayla, Sarah, Lavinia, Dijkstra's protagonists, and Namjoshi experience the body and the simultaneity of geography. In my first subsection, I explore Khan and Kayla's experiences of being trapped in the confines of their racialized and gendered bodies. The body is understood as oppressive, while the mind remains haunted by memories of Orientalist patriarchy. Dionne Brand's idea of the "spectre of captivity" will be explored with reference to the aforementioned texts, and I will explain the commonalities and differences with respect to the way the body and subjectivity are understood, as well as the ways that the authors attempt to grapple with Orientalist patriarchy. My second section attempts to uncover how non-heteronormative SANA women experience the "captivity of the body" while they traverse patriarchal spaces, and when they are in spaces where they are able to safely interact with their partners. Issues of mobility, as well as essentialism, will be explored with reference to heterosexist Orientalist patriarchy. Finally, in my last subsection, I use Namjoshi and Hanscombe's collection of poetry to point out how an alternative perspective of nationalism, subjectivity, and the

body can be forged despite the limitations Orientalist patriarchy imposes on the SANA psyche.

## 2. **The Simultaneity of Geography: Heteronormative Interracial Relationships**

In her essay, “Gender and Colonial Space,” Sara Mills tells us that

early feminist work on women and space tended to focus on women’s confinement and restriction in movement; for example ... the way that women learn to situate themselves and move in space in a way which is significantly more restricted than men -- even simple actions ... are ones where the female subject is self-consciously not allowing herself to transcend the limits of the body as an object. (Mills 697)

Khan and Desai Hidier’s characters experience restrictions of space doubly; whereby they are restricted in their physical movements as *women* in their interactions with men, and restricted in their mobility as *non-white Others* in Eurocentric North America. As Dionne Brand asserts about black women of the diaspora, “the body is the place of captivity” (35), South Asian women in North America are trapped in the confines of their bodies by gender and race, with little chance of relief from these limits. SANA writer and theorist Meena Alexander suggests that South Asian women are confined by the limits of the body, and tells us that as gender and ethnicity are “located in our bodies,” one cannot deny the concrete realities experienced by the body (Alexander qtd. in Katrak 209). Despite a difference in geographical and temporal location, as a concrete physical marker of gender and race, the body determines the way both South Asian women, and the world they live in, come to “know” SANA women. Brand suggests that the black female body is held hostage by the “spectre of captivity” (29), whereby black women are trapped

between time, imprisoned in the memories of the Middle Passage and the ideal homeland, and trapped in the colonial constructs of geography, history, and racist notions of Black identity. Similarly, Khan and Kayla experience a type of “spectre of captivity” as a result of Orientalism, as they complicate linear time by shuttling from colonial South Asia to present-day North America, and are imprisoned by the memories of colonial domination, desire, and knowledge. I recognize the danger in striking an equivalence between black diasporan women, who share a history of the trauma of the Middle Passage and slavery, and SANA women, who have generally experienced displacement as dependents, labourers, refugees, or by their own will. I do not mean to make an easy comparison between these two diverse diasporan subjects; rather, I would like to draw a parallel with the ways the body is understood in relation to the traumas of displacement. The colonial past and the postcolonial/diasporic present collide in their bodies, as well as their minds/imaginings. Though black and SANA women are trapped in the “spectre of captivity” of their bodies, the literary technique of the simultaneity of geography, or the mind/body split, signifies a potential break from the strict binaries set by Orientalist discourse. Of course, the mind/body split is a dichotomous form in itself, and ideally, a holistic approach to the mind and body is more desirable. However, because of the everyday oppression diasporic women experience as a result of their gendered and racialized bodies, it is difficult to escape the confines of the body and the psychic splitting of mind and body. Since the body carries so much significance in the physical world and is marked by difference, all the authors can do until the limits of the body are

relieved is *imagine* an alternative subjectivity, corporeality, and space. Though they use the model of the mind/body split, the authors do offer some ideas as to how to ultimately overcome the limits of the body, thereby offering some hope that this dichotomous model can eventually shift to a holistic model of the Self, mainly through anti-racist education, as asserted by Khan (105).

Ketu H. Katrak defines the simultaneity of geography as “the possibility of living here in body and elsewhere in mind and imagination” (201). Katrak argues that this is a central framework for the analysis of South Asian diasporic writing (201-202). This is because “when one adds a spatial dimension, for instance, migrations, into [a] temporal unfolding, the intersection of geography with history opens up new areas for imaginative exploration – returning home through the imagination re-creating home in narrative, creating simultaneous present of being both here and there” (Katrak 202). Furthermore, by using the simultaneity of geography, these writers “imaginatively challenge the linearity of time and the specificity of space by juxtaposing their here and now with their histories and past geographies” (Katrak 202). Adding a spatial dimension to temporality, then, allows Desai Hidier and Khan a link back to the homeland, and as mentioned in my last section with Kayla, a link back to a more accurate history and knowledge. The “simultaneity of geography” works both to SANA women’s advantage, and to their disadvantage.

We are first made aware of the simultaneity of geography in “Tiger, Tiger” when Kayla engages in sexual relations with her TA. The tiger claw, Kayla’s link back to her



identity, history, and knowledge, “comforted her, distracted her from the sensation that her entire body was turning porous, and she floating above it, waiting for the shifting below to cease, for it to be safe to come down again” (Desai Hidier 20). The sexual experience is described as almost violent, and as most unpleasant for Kayla. Though Kayla does not physically escape her TA, and cannot physically escape the confines of her body, the tiger nail transports her outside of her body. It is also at this point that Desai Hidier’s narrative switches back to Kayla’s memories of India. There is a constant dialectic between present America and past India in “Tiger, Tiger,” which is reflective of Alexander’s concept of the dislocation of aesthetics. SANA women are therefore understood as being capable of shuttling between past and present mentally and psychically, despite the “captivity of the body” and the limits of geography and linear time. Another graphic example of Kayla’s ability to separate body from mind is during her rape. The following passage describes this, where

[Tristan] twists her over and the weight settles on her back. She feels her ass being pried apart, but her mouth is crammed with fabric and her chest run through with a series of tiny pricks and then something shimmers down between her breasts... She is aware of every organ of her body, its weight, pulse and fallibility... The pressure builds inside her, pushing against the walls of her rupturing body from the inside out, combating the pressure from the outside in. (Desai Hidier 29)

In this instance, Kayla becomes aware of the “fallibility” of her body, and this awareness facilitates her mind and her memories of South Asia to take over (facilitated by the “shimmer[ing]” claw), represented by “the pressure [that] builds inside her ... combating the pressure from outside in” (Desai Hidier 29). Kayla therefore uses the ability to experience the simultaneity of geography to escape the physical limits of her body, and

uses it to combat Tristan's external violence. The simultaneity of geography is represented as a resistant reaction to the Orientalist and patriarchal construction of the Other woman.

Though the simultaneity of geography can be relieving in some situations, just how free the mind is remains questionable, since Kayla, and Kahn especially, are also enslaved by the mind/body split. As a result of the "aesthetics of dislocation" (Alexander qtd. in Katrak 201), diasporan South Asians cannot be in one place/space/time without the memory of the other. Khan and Kayla are constantly haunted by place, dislocations of space and time – in the form of family, stereotypes, colonial history, geography, and knowledge. Similarly, sexuality is not linear in time. Instead, sexuality is a continuum caught between space and time, in which Orientalist ideas of the Other woman shuttle between past and present. Though the mind/body split can be a positive means of transcending the body, it can also be a painful and fragmentary process of coping with the realities faced by SANA women. For diasporic South Asian women, this ability to transport themselves back to the "homeland" in mind can work to both intensify the captivity of the body and the mind, and in other situations as we see with Kayla, is a site of resistance to racism.

The mind/body split is even more oppressive when Khan and Kayla *embody* geography. In Desai-Hidier's depiction of Kayla, and in Khan's memoir/essay, both Kayla and Khan are not only trapped between time, history, knowledge, and geography, their bodies are represented as landmasses that can be controlled, studied, inseminated,

and tamed. While Khan and Kayla complicate the image of the dutiful South Asian woman that Dekha and Banerji point out (5), by rendering the SANA female body as landmass, Khan and Desai Hidier reproduce colonial ideas of the Other woman as landmass, and do so with the objective of revealing the ways in which SANA women are, to some extent, trapped by history.

Anne McClintock states that women basically served as “boundary markers of imperialism” by being “the ambiguous mediators of what appeared to be the predominantly male agon of empire” (24). Part of the feminizing of the land and male conquest was so that males could re-inscribe, as natural, a gender and racial hierarchy (McClintock 24). Ania Loomba tells us that “from the beginning of the colonial period till its end (and beyond), female bodies symbolize the conquered land” (152). Not only did colonists refer to uncolonized landmasses as women, the ‘New World’ is described as having a “maidenhead” and was represented as having fertile, virgin soil (Loomba 108). Though this view of “virgin land,” or *terra nullius*, was not applied to South Asia by Orientalists, Khan and Desai Hidier play with this idea of “virgin land” in their texts, reflecting a larger narrative of colonial rape and plunder. In this depiction of the “virgin land,” Khan and Desai Hidier engage in the imperial trope of the “virgin lands” of the Americas (the Asian Orient was, in contrast, viewed as plentiful and lavish), thereby complicating their narratives by intertwining Orientalist stereotypes of the Asian and those indigenous to North America. The violence enacted by these men made them (in words of Descartes) “masters and possessors of nature” (McClintock 24), so “in the

minds of these men, the imperial conquest of the globe found both its shaping figure and its political sanction in the prior subordination of women as a category of nature” (24). This means that in order to go about their imperial conquest, they had to view and treat nature as they would a woman.

We see this conflation of woman and virgin land, and the violence of colonial men as “masters and possessors of nature” in Desai Hidier’s and Khan’s narratives. This depiction is most explicit in Khan’s memoir, when she states,

I shudder when his hands press my head down to his dick: *exploring, conquering, and civilizing the dark land. The barbaric, uncontrolled areas. My dark nipples, my black hair. As his white hands move over every inch of my body, he slowly colonizes it. Since it has been graced by the white man, I can slowly assimilate. The belief that the more white men fuck me, the more I can be white. As if his penis is an instrument of infection.* This is the problem of colonialism – the internalized racism and hatred over my own identity and wanting to be more like the colonizer. (104, emphasis mine)

In addition to making the connection between her body and colonized South Asia, she refers to her white partner as an instrument of infection, insemination, and assimilation, revisiting the colonial attempt to populate and ‘whiten’ races. Whereas discourse of the nineteenth and early-twentieth century depicted Asians as carriers of illness and corruption to North America, this “infection” of SANA women by the white colonizer is an interesting reversal. Furthermore, we see this conflation of woman and colonial landmass, and the “infection” of the colonist’s penis when Kayla has intercourse with her TA. Kayla’s TA takes her “maidenhead” both literally and figuratively. When Kayla has intercourse, her body is positioned directly on the earth, which draws a parallel between herself and the land. Furthermore, Kayla is “ground against the pebbles” (Desai Hidier

20), metaphorically grinding into and becoming part of the land. Furthermore, Kayla reveals that after her experience with the TA, she could not let her partners “[go] quite all the way inside her [or] turn them into men in the baffling factory of her body, as she never felt she’d completely expelled [the TA] from her, regained her space and balance” (27). Kayla not only becomes symbolic of land, in his ‘discovery’ of Kayla/land, the TA infects/inseminates her. Since the infection of the penis, Kayla never “regain[s] her space,” and seems to be irreparable, suggesting that Orientalism persists despite historical and geographical spaces.

This concept of infection/insemination/assimilation by white males and the link between non-European women and colonial lands is further exacerbated during Kayla’s rape scene, when she imagines the tree growing inside her. When Tristan forces himself into Kayla, rather than think of the rape, Kayla imagines “a tree taking root. A tree is trying to grow inside [her]. [Her] mouth is stuffed with leaves, [her] tongue caught in the branches” (Desai Hidier 29). The tree that takes root, in this instance, can symbolically represent the colonizer’s seed. This seed can be representative of both Tristan’s sperm, and metaphorically, the colonizer’s “mastery,” “infection,” and “assimilation” of nature. While the ability to transcend the limits of the body psychically can be used to alleviate some of the stress related to being “captive” in the body, Khan and Desai Hidier seem to suggest that the mind/body split works against South Asian diasporan women in interracial relationships by intensifying the link between body, landmass, and Orientalism. Furthermore, instead of representing the simultaneity of geography

positively, as a means of escaping the confines of the body and a way to retrieve a sense of self and the homeland, Khan presents the simultaneity of geography as a disadvantage, and as intensifying the “captivity of the body,” and suggesting the “captivity of the mind” despite its ability to move back and forth in time and space. While Khan’s body is in present-day Canada, her mind goes back to colonial South Asia. Khan’s ability to go back in time and geography in her *mind* is marked by Khan’s *body* (a physical reminder of colonialism), which makes the mental and psychological trek to colonial South Asia even more obvious. The mind, therefore, cannot always be used to free oneself from the captivity of the body, but in some instances, can only serve to intensify the confines of mind and body.

### **3. Same-Sex Perspectives on The Body as a Place of Captivity**

As with the characters in heterosexual relationships, Sarah, Lavinia, Namjoshi, and Dijkstra’s protagonist present the body as haunted by the spectre of captivity, specifically while they are in the presence of the male Orientalist heterosexist gaze. While Khan and Kayla are perpetually haunted by the spectre of captivity and confined to their subject positions and experience a limitation of space, the SANA women in same-sex relationships attempt to carve out a space of possibility and experience greater mobility in the presence of their respective female partners. Though they seemingly experience greater mobility, I argue that they cannot simply evade the issue of race and colonial history, as is evident by their use of Orientalist tropes and language used by

Dijkstra and Namjoshi. This suggests that while they may attempt to be free of the confines of the body, and while they may envision alternative ways of understanding the body, the body is ultimately marked by the violent history of Orientalism.

Like Khan and Desai Hidier, Mootoo, Dijkstra, and Namjoshi represent the body as a place of captivity in the presence of men. However, while Khan and Desai Hidier's protagonist Kayla experience a restriction of mobility in their heterosexual relationships as a result of their gender and race, Namjoshi, Hanscombe, Dijkstra, and Mootoo's texts suggest that women can experience greater mobility in the company of other women, even if these women come from a privileged racial category. While Mootoo, Namjoshi, and Dijkstra's protagonists experience a restriction of mobility in the heterosexist patriarchal world, their mobility increases while they are with their partners in both private and imaginary spaces. In the case of Dijkstra's characters, their 'private' realm overlaps with the public, as it does with Sarah and Lavinia, implying that same-sex interracial desire can potentially challenge the patriarchal structure of spaces.

In their quest for privacy and normalcy, Sarah and Lavinia use the buggy and the camera, instruments that are traditionally relegated to men, in order to increase their mobility at the same time as they challenge 'male' spaces and patriarchal instruments of control. Lavinia owns and drives her own buggy, which wins the admiration of Chandin. Unbeknownst to Chandin, Lavinia teaches Sarah how to ride the buggy. While Chandin admires Lavinia for her unconventionality, he disapproves of his wife's interest in driving. Chandin, the policer of Orientalist heterosexist patriarchy, accepts Lavinia's

appropriation of mobility because she comes from a privileged race, and disagrees with Sarah's interest in mobility because, as a Lantanacamaran woman, appropriating a 'white' and 'male' object deviates from her subject position. Once the two are "out of sight of the other villagers" (59), who gaze at and police their actions in accordance with heterosexist Orientalist patriarchy, the women are able to exercise greater mobility and develop a stronger relationship. Furthermore, Mootoo's preoccupation with the heterosexist Orientalist gaze is mentioned in the description of Sarah's and Lavinia's trips to market. When the camera is used and gazed through by Chandin, the heterosexist patriarchal Orientalist monitoring of racial and gender codes is enacted. We see this when Chandin uses the camera to gaze at and monitor Sarah and Lavinia on the beach (62). By gazing at them through the camera, Sarah and Lavinia's intimacy is revealed. The camera becomes a tool of oppression under the direction and gaze of Chandin, whose heterosexist Orientalist patriarchal gaze monitors Sarah and Lavinia's behaviour, ultimately leading to the demise of the family. In the hands of Lavinia, however, the camera becomes a medium for mobility. We see this when Mootoo describes how "Aunt Lavinia would stand on the seat of the buggy or hop off into the unpaved country trails, uncaring that the ground underfoot might be muddy or treacherous, and she would pull out her Eastman Brownie camera and click away" (59). In this instance, when the women are safely away from the policing gaze of Lantanacamarans, they are able to traverse "treacherous" spaces "uncaring[ly]" at the same time as they direct their own gaze (59), represented by the camera.



Dijkstra's "Colombo to Haputale" is also concerned with issues of mobility and the collision between public and private spaces, particularly in reference to public transportation. Dijkstra's narrator describes her desire for normalcy upon boarding the train to the Haputale tea plantations with her lover. Safely in the private carriage of their train, the narrator revels at being away from the male gaze. She writes, "we sat opposite each other recovering from the scrabble of boarding. Smiling with glee at having escaped, enjoying the privacy. Holding hands without being pushed or gawked at. One large white girl and one small brown one" (147). Here, even the simple act of holding hands publicly warrants a racialized and heterosexist gaze, one that the narrator wishes to escape. Once they are in the carriage, the two lovers are able to enjoy the freedom of each other's company without the gaze of Orientalist patriarchy. The two characters take their desire to reclaim space one step further by challenging cultural and sexual laws. Their physical act of lovemaking not only challenges social and cultural customs, but also constitutes the reclaiming of public and private spaces. The overlapping of their private carriage and their sexual acts, juxtaposed with the loud and "clumsy" passengers in the next carriage, as well as descriptions of the Sri Lankan countryside (Dijkstra 149), make us aware of the collision of public and private spaces. While the authors experience a restriction of mobility and their bodies when they are in patriarchal spaces, or under the gaze of heterosexist Orientalist patriarchy, they are confined by the limits of the body. It is only when they are in the presence of other women that the limits of the body are alleviated.

While it is feasible that the women experience greater mobility in the presence of one another, the depiction of the alleviation of the limits of the body is one that is essentialist and runs the risk of falling into Orientalism. We see this in Dijkstra's problematic re-appropriation of the phallic and imperial symbolism of the colonial railway system. Instead of allowing themselves to be contained by their bodies and confined and policed by colonial and patriarchal history that the train has come to symbolize, Dijkstra's protagonists ironically use the imagery of the train to challenge patriarchy and increase their mobility by accessing spaces that traditionally exclude women. We can observe this in the following passage:

Feeling your slender strength pressed against the foot of the bed, slight movements of the train rippled through your legs. ... I gasped as you entered me, finally using the energy of the train and my gradual letting go to work yourself further and further into me. ... Dropping into the valley as we climbed upwards, I greedily pushed and pulled. ... Your first gasps rose slightly over the noise of the tracks. (149-150)

By using the movement and the noises of the train to aid their lovemaking, the women use the train, an instrument of imperial power and the symbolic phallus, to rebel against heterosexist patriarchy. Furthermore, the confusion between the actual train and the lovers' bodies as they reach climax, a confusion that suggests the characters not only make love on a train, a typically Orientalist masculine instrument of mobility and space, they also metaphorically embody it, thereby psychically epitomizing a space of possibility. While the two women find themselves trapped by the confines of their racialized and gendered bodies in the presence of men, once the Orientalist patriarchal gaze is removed, the women are able to claim mobility. The body is thus understood as a

transformative site of pleasure and possibility, affording the protagonists an alternative (yet problematic) perspective of space and mobility. While the protagonists challenge patriarchy in this instance, I question to what extent they resist Orientalism. Though, as mentioned in my first chapter, I discuss how the races of the protagonists cease to be an issue for the characters once they are away from the gaze of heterosexist patriarchy, I still assert that the fetishization of Orientalism and colonial tropes does little to actually challenge Orientalism. While the protagonists are able to re-appropriate a traditionally masculine space, I still assert that they do not adequately resist the eroticization and exotification that Orientalism entails, a problem that points towards complicity and essentialist feminism.

This essentialism of the body is also expressed by Namjoshi and Hanscombe in their earlier poems. At the same time the authors present the body as a place of possibility while in the company of their partners, the body is still haunted by the memory of Orientalism. I argue that though the authors attempt to evade race, their bodies remain marked by Orientalism. We see this in the way Dijkstra, Namjoshi and Hanscombe utilize the simultaneity of geography, particularly in the way they depict the woman-as-landmass trope. In their poem “Christ How my Circumspect Heart,” Namjoshi and Hanscombe portray the woman-as-landmass trope as empowering, as Dijkstra does in her short story. Namjoshi and Hanscombe write,

you oh you  
have  
discovered me  
unsealed my longing

appointed me mighty

named me. (18)

Like Dijkstra's character whose body is "explored," "conquered," and "charted" (Dijkstra 149), one of the women's bodies in "Christ How my Circumspect Heart" is "discovered," "appointed," and "named" (Hanscombe and Namjoshi 18). The body of one woman becomes the explored and conquered land, while the other woman claims it. Here, the woman-as-landmass trope carries with it the hope of carving out a new space of possibility. Whereas the *terra nullius* trope and the simultaneity of geography was harmful in the relationships depicted by Khan and Desai Hidier, Dijkstra and Namjoshi eroticize the idea of the *terra nullius* and portray the body as liberating. Of this passage, York tells us that "two people[s] inhabiting one space has been historically problematic.... Collaboration's negotiation of space, therefore, is accompanied by its fair share of postcolonial complexity" (150). The passage is certainly complex in its use of colonial tropes, and suggests to me that the spectre of captivity cannot be evaded as easily as Dijkstra, Namjoshi, and Hanscombe would like it to be. As in Dijkstra's short story, the races of the 'explorer' and the 'explored' are not made apparent, suggesting that race ceases to be an issue when the women are together. While this may seemingly be the case, I assert that the mere use of Orientalist language implies that colonial history cannot be erased from either the mind or the body. Even in the case of Dijkstra, colonial history does resurface, even if it is problematic and contradictory. As York suggests, the task of finding a truly egalitarian space of possibility is historically problematic (150). The

politics of the body are no exception. Despite their attempts to evade oppression, this postcolonial complexity is also evident in the way the authors write the body, as the depiction of the body is riddled with Orientalist history, patriarchal language, and, ironically, the desire for finding a space of possibility. For Khan and Kayla, Orientalist tropes and the memory of Orientalism are ultimately oppressive; however, paradoxically, Dijkstra and Namjoshi attempt to re-appropriate these tropes in hopes of paradoxically transforming history. This goes to show that while the authors may wish to evade race and avoid Orientalist history, these realities simply cannot be escaped. This is because “the queer racialized body becomes a historical archive for both individuals and communities, one that is excavated through the very act of desiring the racial Other” (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires* 1). While they do not remain confined by the spectre of captivity as Khan and Kayla do, colonial history does make a presence in their texts, signaling that Orientalist history does, to some degree, affect the nature of their relationship and their understanding of the body.

However liberating Dijkstra, Namjoshi and Hanscombe consider the simultaneity of geography and the re-appropriation of colonial tropes, I still assert that the eroticization is problematic because, like Dijkstra, it fetishizes Orientalism more than it challenges it. I also argue that rather than evade issues of race and Orientalism, the fact that they use Orientalist language and trace it onto the body is evidence that the authors cannot simply escape their races or fulfill the essentialist feminist dream of equality.

Though they try to escape the limits of the body and the spectre of captivity, the spectre of captivity ultimately does make an appearance in their relationships. There is, however, a difference in the ways the queer SANA women experience the captivity of the body and with how they deal with Orientalism. Like Desai Hidier and Khan, the queer SANA women are both confined to the limits of their body and colonial history when they are in the presence of men and when they traverse patriarchal spaces. Unlike Khan and Desai Hidier, however, the queer SANA women are able to experience greater mobility while they are in the company of women. Furthermore, though they attempt to evade issues of race, the memory of colonial history still makes a mark on their erotic relations. The illusion is that the limits of the body can be transcended by re-appropriating colonial tropes and evading issues of race, but the reality seems to be that the body is ultimately haunted by the memory of colonial history. Rather than experience a severe “aesthetics of dislocation” as the heterosexual SANA women undergo, the same-sex SANA women try to gain control over the captivity of the body and “aesthetics of dislocation” by attempting to re-work Orientalist tropes. Though I believe such re-workings are more harmful and redolent of imperial complicity than revolutionary, the use of colonial tropes suggests that race does, in fact, play a part in their relationships. What this suggests is that while they are afforded more mobility, and while they can challenge public/private divide, race and Orientalism are still issues that affect same-sex relationships, despite their efforts to liberate themselves from the spectre of captivity.

#### 4. The Simultaneity of Geography in *Flesh and Paper*: Envisioning Alternative Spaces

Namjoshi and Hanscombe's collection of poetry, *Flesh and Paper*, presents the problems and hopes associated with finding a space of possibility. The poets grapple with the desire for normalcy and essentialism, as well as try to account for the differences in their subjectivities. In this subsection, I explore how Namjoshi and Hascombe's perspective of the body shifts from one that is essentialist to one that acknowledges difference. Rather than consider their interracial relationship as utterly doomed as Kayla and Khan suggest, Namjoshi and Hanscombe provide hope that an alternative subjectivity can be forged.

In their introduction, Indian-born Namjoshi and Australian-born Hanscombe write, "words invent the world; and then the invented world invests language with images of itself. In turn, we see and hear the emerging world with words" (3). They add that

a lesbian woman does not inhabit the worlds that make sense to heterosexual men. Nevertheless, ... she most definitely with her words also invents the world. The difficulty, as feminists and others have been showing for a good while now, is that all worlds are not equal. ... It is our lived experience as lesbians that the 'universal truths' of the human heart, which are claimed as knowledge by the male heterosexual literary tradition, are not 'universal' at all. (3)

Hanscombe and Namjoshi suggest here that while there is no universal experience in the male heterosexual literary tradition, they imply that there may be a "universal truth" for all lesbians. Of lesbianism, essentialist feminism, and space Susan Griffin writes that

we are no longer pleading for the right to speak: we have spoken; space has changed, we are living in a matrix of our own sounds; our words resonate by our echoes we *chart a new geography*; we recognize this new landscape as our

birthplace, where we invented names for ourselves; here language does not contradict what we know; by what we hear we are moved again and again to speak. (Griffin qtd. in Blunt 6, emphasis mine)

Through their status as lesbians and essentialist feminists, and by rewriting their ‘worlds’ and ‘words,’ Griffin, Hanscombe, and Namjoshi challenge traditional understandings of space, land, and nationality. Similarly, Dijkstra, and to some extent, Mootoo’s characters Sarah and Lavinia, seem to suggest that writing space for lesbians is not only empowering, but transformational and potentially forges new geographies and categories of nationality that are separate from those enforced by heterosexist Orientalist patriarchy. While Namjoshi and Hanscombe initially suggest there is a “universal truth” for all lesbians and though their poems may be essentialist in nature, their later poems suggest a shifting mentality. In this section, I explore how Namjoshi and Hanscombe come to grips with the body with reference to the simultaneity of geography, and explore how they “chart a new geography” that shifts from one that merely re-appropriates Orientalist tropes to one that tries to deal with postcolonial complexity in a more revolutionary and alternative way. Whereas the poets used colonial tropes in “Christ my Circumspect Heart” and fell into complicity with Orientalism, their later poems suggest their shifting perspective on essentialist lesbianism, as they move to a “queer” perspective, one that tries to separate itself from essentialist claims. Their desire for essentialism dissolves as they come to recognize that patriarchal language, space, and Orientalism pervades their relationship even as they try to escape it. What results from this change of perspective is Namjoshi and Hanscombe’s image of the space of possibility, one that attempts to break



free of the confines of the spectre of captivity at the same time as it recognizes the limits of the body and Orientalism.

Given that the SANA women in heterosexual relationships experience the body and the simultaneity of geography in predominantly negative terms, why is the situation almost reversed in the case of SANA women in same-sex interracial relationships? Whereas Kayla and Khan are trapped and doomed by the limits of their minds and bodies, how can Dijkstra, Sarah, Lavinia, and Namjoshi even begin to imagine alternative understandings of the body and identity? Part of the reason why the queer SANA writers are able to experience the simultaneity of geography and the body differently from the heterosexual ones has to do with the genders of their partners, but also has to do with their marginality.

Certainly, as non-white women in a white privileged patriarchal environment, heterosexual SANA women are marginalized. Both heterosexual and non-heterosexual SANA women experience marginality as a result of their gender and race, as well as their hyphenated subjectivities. As Eng explains, hyphenation can make finding a ‘home’ space and a set identity problematic, since “Asian American identity might well be considered more in conjunction with a discourse of *exile and emergence* than with one of immigration and settlement” (Eng 31, emphasis mine). Claiming a nation-space is thus particularly difficult for diasporan subjects because they cannot fully be ‘authentically’ Canadian/American or South Asian. Though they share common oppressors as racialized and gendered diasporan subjects, non-heterosexual SANA women carry the additional

burden of being excluded from the diaspora space, multiple home spaces, and within the GLBT community. Indeed, Eng argues that non-heterosexual Asian diasporans are “suspended between an ‘in’ and ‘out’ of the closet – between origin and destination, and between private and public space – queer entitlements to home and a nation-state remain doubtful as well” (32).

In addition to being exiled from the ‘home’ spaces of South Asia and North America, non-heteronormative SANA women are also exiled from their literal homes. Gopinath tells us that the preoccupation with the home, “as household, community, and nation - continues to haunt [queer diasporic literature]. Rather than simply doing away with home and its fictions of (sexual, racial, communal) purity and belonging, queer diasporic literature instead engages in a radical reworking of multiple home spaces” (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires* 165). The literal ‘house’ is a loaded space, as the house is often associated with femininity, maternity, and compulsory heterosexism, and is a complicated symbol of ghettoized female labour in the East and West. The ‘house’ is directly associated with the ‘private’ realm in the West, whereas there is a much more socio-political public meaning associated with the home in South Asia (particularly India), since nationalist parties have used female domesticity to fuel patriotism. As “the lesbian can only exist outside the ‘home’ as household, ... whereas the ‘woman’ can only exist within it” (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires* 18), Namjoshi, Hanscombe, Mootoo, and Dijkstra play with the paradoxes associated with queer SANA diasporic spaces. Interested in the complexities surrounding the paradoxes of public and private spaces,

these writers re-conceptualize space to suit their respective subjectivities. It is through the very fissures of the public/private divide, as well as their paradoxical subjectivities in Eastern, Western, and public/private spaces, that these writers are able to envision a ‘space of possibility.’ By restructuring and imagining multiple alternative home spaces, these writers forge a state of normalcy and a ‘space of possibility,’ albeit an imagined state of normalcy and possibility. While the women experience exile in their home and host nations, the literal home space holds the promise of being a potential space of possibility. Namjoshi and Hanscombe are able to forge a home space of possibility in the West, but they discover that carving out a home space is not as simple as they initially make it out to be.

Namjoshi and Hanscombe share a concern for public and private spaces, and appropriate the domestic space to suit their same-sex relationship. The poets are able to create a state of ‘normalcy’ and a habitable home-space of possibility by reclaiming domestic space in ways that resist heterosexist patriarchy. In the poem “I Moved in my House,” Hanscombe discusses her newfound love with Namjoshi in relation to the domestic space. The first stanza reads like a typical housewife’s account of a regular day:

I moved in my house, doing nothing special,  
Just work and pleasure, the usual pattern;  
My son was busy, the garden lay stretched  
As it should; my friends ran their lives.  
It was just a day, like any other;  
You know how it is. (16)

One can certainly find traces of the “feminine mystique” in the above stanza, evidenced by the mundane aspects of housework, gardening, childcare, and the nonchalant, uninspired tone of the poet. In the third stanza, this “feminine mystique” domestic space is transformed by Namjoshi’s presence. Namjoshi is described as knocking on Hanscombe’s door, and upon opening the door, Hanscombe’s traditionally feminized life changes. Hanscombe writes,

I knew when she knocked, when I opened the door;  
I knew when she spoke; I knew when I answered.  
I knew how my son would stroke me with questions;  
I knew how my friends would see me transfigured;  
I knew how the garden had stretched into forest  
And jungle and plain. (16)

Here, the domestic space is transformed from one that is conventional under patriarchal domesticity, to one that reclaims the home-space. Although her son’s interrogation and the gaze of her friends are initially threatening, as is the unknown “forest” and “jungle,” the poet is also attracted to the prospect of a transformed domestic space. The aspects of the everyday, such as her relationship with her son, her friends, and even the way Hanscombe arranges her garden shifts from one that is structured, mundane, and unsatisfying to one that is wild, exciting, and free-flowing. Namjoshi, who literally knocks on Hanscombe’s house door, figuratively ‘knocks’ down patriarchal family arrangements. By opening the door to a same-sex relationship, Hanscombe must rebuild her domestic space from one that is heterosexist patriarchal to one that is a space of the unknown, otherwise known as the ‘space of impossibility.’ The poem ends with a celebration of the new home-space. Hanscombe tells us, “I knew how we’d prosper; / I

knew the conditions, the rites and the stages, / the seamless conjunction” (16). Though they inhabit a ‘space of impossibility,’ Hanscombe and Namjoshi “prosper” in their new home-space, and create their own “conditions, ... rites ... and stages” that negate patriarchal arrangements of the everyday. By transforming the everyday aspects of women’s chores, roles, and sexuality, Hanscombe and Namjoshi actively rebuild the patriarchal home-space into a habitable ‘space of possibility.’

While the private space in the home can be restructured and re-appropriated, there remain realms of the private that are impossible for lesbians to inhabit. Though the poets are able to claim privacy in their own homes, Lorraine York writes that “privacy exerts a much stronger tug, mainly because the two lesbian speakers wish to claim the privacy that has traditionally been vouchsafed to heterosexual couples” (140) that extends beyond the immediate space of the home. Furthermore, “[privacy] is at once, a coercive silencing force and a luxury denied. .... Of course, this paradox has animated and complicated lesbian texts” (York 141). Though lesbians must struggle to claim space in public and private realms, Namjoshi and Hanscombe both paradoxically challenge the impossibility of space and restructure it by the very act of publishing their private “words” and “worlds.”

Although Namjoshi and Hanscombe are able to restructure their literal home in the West, it is not so simple in non-Western spaces. There is no place for Namjoshi and Hanscombe to be together, as they described in “Because of India,” where they explain that they are forever deemed “visitors” (62). For Dijkstra’s protagonist, her lover’s

private property is entered by men (148) and in Lantanacamara, Sarah's household always has the ghost of Chandin looming within it. Chandin dreams of making his home in the model of the reverend and Sarah keeps the house "uncommonly tidy" (67) as her relationship with Lavinia deepens, in order to create the colonial order Chandin finds comforting. The domestic space, then, is ruled by both patriarchy and Orientalism, two oppressive factors that the women wish to escape. The domestic space, then, is ultimately policed by men, suggesting that heterosexual patriarchy and Orientalism dominate the seemingly strict division between public and private spaces, and that lesbians do not fit into the model of domesticity and femininity relegated to the 'home' space in Western or Eastern contexts. Though Namjoshi and Hanscombe are able to envision a home space that is transformational, the reality remains that there are limitations on home-spaces allocated to women in same-sex relationships as a result of the patriarchal Orientalist gaze. This intensifies non-heteronormative SANA women's experience of exile, as the physical home itself (in addition to the 'home' and 'host' nation space) is a space that is monitored and policed by the gaze of Orientalist patriarchy.

Not only are non-heterosexual diasporans marginalized from various home spaces, they are also excluded within the diaspora space itself. As discussed in my previous chapter, South Asian diasporas depend on the production and preservation of the 'authentic' image of the 'pure,' compulsory heterosexual South Asian woman. Gopinath tells us that "queer desires, bodies, and subjectivities become dense sites of meaning in the production and reproduction of notions of 'culture,' 'tradition,' and communal

belonging both in SA and in the diaspora” (*Impossible Desires* 2). Non-heterosexual SANA women, therefore, cause rifts within the ‘traditional’ logic of the diaspora and nationalism, and cannot fully claim space within the diaspora, whereas heterosexual SANA women may be afforded greater space as a result of their sexuality.

Moreover, while Namjoshi and Hanscombe seek “lesbian lands,” suggesting their desire for Lesbian nationalism (Hanscombe and Namjoshi 40), Puar argues that, as non-white diasporans, SANA women cannot claim easy acceptance into the Lesbian nation (Puar 407). This is because

the terms “Queer Nation” and “Lesbian Nation,” ... are indicative of what Gayatri Gopinath terms an ‘uninterrogated assumption of queer citizenship’ (120). Whatever resistance to the state has currently been theorized vis-à-vis queer subjectivities has emerged through a presumed trajectory of named subjecthood – citizenship – within the state. This is a trajectory that diasporic queers trouble and complicate through their critique of the white episteme of queerness. (Puar 407)

As non-white, queer/lesbian SANA women may find themselves in exile within the “white episteme” of the GLBT community. Indeed, Puar argues that while diaspora may be a site of resistance, it can also be oppressive (408-9), as can queer spaces, so “one should not presume that the critiques that they bring to each other necessarily sustain a ... perfect union or ... oppositionality” (409). Furthermore, Puar indicates how “sexuality in ethnic studies, Asian American studies, and forms of postcolonial studies” as well as “gay and lesbian studies, queer studies, and even women’s studies” do not always account for the realities faced by non-heterosexual female diasporic subjects (405-406). These gaps in theory point to the larger problem that non-heterosexual SANA women

face – that of multiple oppression, marginalization, exile, and a lack of space in both theory and within the diaspora, ‘home,’ ‘host,’ and queer communities.

Not only are non-heterosexual SANA women exiled from citizenship and excluded from theory and different communities, they cannot claim status as ‘authentic’ women in either North America or South Asia. As Gopinath argues, the non-heteronormative SANA woman “cannot simply be imagined” (*Impossible Desires* 18) in the home, host, or diaspora space, yet Hanscombe and Namjoshi attempt to imagine space on their own terms, and thus cannot claim status as women in the diaspora or home-space. Similarly, as Namjoshi and Hanscombé suggest, non-heterosexual women, regardless of ethnicity, are not considered ‘real’ women under heterosexist patriarchy. We see this exclusion from the category ‘woman’ in their poem “All Right, Call Them Another Species.” As the title of the poem suggests, their status as lesbians Others them to such a degree that they are considered a different species, one that cannot simply be imagined under heterosexist Orientalist patriarchy. They write, “A tiger, a woman and a man are different. A les- / bian is the fourth.” (41). Not only is the lesbian a “fourth” species after the tiger, in “his [(the man’s)] kingdom / they’re a threatened species” (41). Certainly, being confined to the oppressive category of ‘woman’ under patriarchy has its limitations, and being another species altogether brings with it the promise of an alternative subjectivity. Though there is the promise of the alternative subjectivity, this is a particularly daunting task when spaces and communities violently exclude their participation and their realities as non-white, non-heteronormative subjects.



The first two poems in Namjoshi and Hanscombe's collection signal the non-heteronormative female subject's inability to claim a nation or home space as a result of their sexualities. While describing a fictional Australian sand dune that she and Namjoshi are occupying on which there rests a giant wave, Hanscombe writes that "these slipping, sliding, watery masses make me uneasy" (8). Though Hanscombe is Australian by birth, she feels unwelcome and distant from her own nation, and as a foreigner, Namjoshi asks for Hanscombe for help in order to "inhabit this foreign beach" (9). The title of the poem, *Meru*, suggests that the poets invoke the mythology of Mount Meru. According to Hindu and Buddhist mythology, Meru is believed to represent "the seven stages by which the human personality is enmeshed in the world of matter" (Mabbett 64), in that it is believed to be "the point at which the Creation [of humanity] began" (Eliade 16). Given Namjoshi's foreignness, and Hanscombe's uneasiness on land, one can assume that *Meru* excludes lesbians, a realization that haunts both authors. Instead of claiming and fighting for land as lesbians, Namjoshi asks Hanscombe to "produce a bird, / a musical, marvelous, Australian bird ... you inform me briefly that if I wish/ to inhabit this foreign beach, I shall need/ your help, your active and friendly co-operation" (9). The bird, depicted "on a long lead, / and about its neck – its scrawny neck --/ a jeweled collar," implies the poets' caged freedom of sexuality, as well as their desire to emancipate themselves from the burden of nationality. In the following poem, "Postscript to *Meru*," Namjoshi and Hanscombe speak of scaling a mountain taller than Everest and where they are both on equal terms. The poets write, "I'll tell you an entirely different story about a

different mountain, taller than Everest and unknown to us both, so that, right at the outset, we start up these slopes on equal terms” (10). Rather than rely on the idea of Meru, or a preconceived concept of nationality and geography, the poets imagine land where they are unburdened by ethnicity or sexuality. Though the non-heteronormative SANA woman “cannot simply be imagined” (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires* 18) in the home, host, or diaspora space, Hanscombe and Namjoshi attempt to imagine space on their own terms and do so by imagining an alternative space. Furthermore, rather than ‘conquer this mountain’ and its potential inhabitants as the poets imply patriarchal culture and language does, the poets envision cooperating with the natives (if there are natives), or becoming indigenous themselves in the event that there are no natives. In these two poems, Namjoshi and Hanscombe suggest that as non-heterosexuals, they have no nation, but are intent on finding a space in which they can claim citizenship.

This desire for lesbian citizenship is exemplified in the poem “Under my Eyes,” where they write:

In lesbian lands  
I am supple and brave.  
Like this, every midnight, I’ve stayed  
To catch a blaze  
Of black on sand; of the creature  
Whose creature I am,  
Under her lips, her hands. (40)

Relegated Other by heterosexist patriarchy, Namjoshi and Hanscombe envision a space in which they can live both publicly and privately as the lesbian Self, preferring a ‘lesbian’ nationality to any other nationality that exists under patriarchy. While Namjoshi and

Hanscombe envision an exclusionary lesbian space, exclusion rests within the “Lesbian Nation” itself, as I explained earlier. While it is not made apparent in the first two poems of *Flesh and Paper*, race, Orientalism, and privilege does affect the dream of the “Lesbian Nation,” which is a realization that both poets make in their later poems, particularly in the last poem of their collection, “There is no Undiscovered Country.” As Audre Lorde describes in her essay “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle The Master’s House,” one cannot use patriarchal Orientalist language to adequately resist Orientalist patriarchy (110-113). Namjoshi and Hanscombe come to this realization when they write:

There is no undiscovered country  
...  
There is only an ordinary planet  
...  
    and we must pay for safety  
        with a disguised  
    and difficult deference  
        and the habit of fear.  
And there is only a man-made language  
    With its logic  
    Of need and greed,  
                                Doom, dearth, despair.  
But in spite of a hurtful history  
    shall we speak of a peopled place  
        where women may walk freely  
            in the still, breathable air? (64)

Here, the poets make reference to patriarchal language, which they initially attempted to re-appropriate, and also refer to finding a *terra nullius* and lesbian citizenship. Whereas the poets initially dreamed of “lesbian lands,” eroticized the concept of *terra nullius*, appropriated patriarchal Orientalist language, and dreamed of essentialism, the poets

come to the conclusion that the body and mind do carry the limits of race and colonial history. It is in this realization that I think Namjoshi and Hanscombe move from an essentialist lesbian/feminist perspective to a “queer” perspective, as “queerness... becomes a way to challenge nationalist ideologies by restoring the impure, inauthentic, nonreproductive potential of the notion of diaspora” (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires* 11), as it also challenges essentialist feminism. Furthermore, though they do not expressly use the term “queer” (the term gained popularity in 1990), Namjoshi and Hanscombe’s last poem makes room for the concept of a queer diaspora, which “enables a simultaneous critique of heterosexuality and the nation form while exploding the binary oppositions between nation and diaspora, heterosexuality and homosexuality, original and copy” (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires* 11).

Though Namjoshi and Hanscombe lament that there is a lack of space for queer women, and although they recognize that the spectre of captivity is inescapable, they do attempt to envision an alternative space. As mentioned previously, the simultaneity of geography and the way the body and the aesthetics of dislocation are experienced by the heteronormative and non-heteronormative SANA women differ as a result of the non-heteronormative SANA women’s marginality. Indeed, Namjoshi and Hanscombe write that, despite being “visitors” in patriarchal Orientalist spaces, “We can / - I/you can - press dreams and theories” (62), suggesting that though they are haunted by heterosexist Orientalist patriarchy, they will continue to seek an alternative, liberating space that is not essentialist in nature. Even though there is “no undiscovered place” (64), Namjoshi and

Hanscombe still attempt to dream about an alternative space, whereas Khan and Desai Hidier find it more difficult to do so. Unlike the heteronormative SANA mind/body that reverts to origins and times past, the queer SANA body is more contradictory, and keeps an eye backwards as it keeps an eye open to alternative realities and the possibility of transformation (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires* 3-4). It is precisely because queer/lesbian SANA women are further excluded from spaces that they are forced to imagine alternative realities and ways of understanding the body.

Since Dijkstra, Namjoshi and Hanscombe describe the female body as charted and mapped, a discussion of the Orientalist production of maps will be useful. Blunt and Rose argue that

Maps are central to colonial and postcolonial projects. Mapping operates in hegemonic discourses as a form of mimetic representation – it textually represents the gaze through transparent [essentialist] space – but this form of mapping is contested in discourses of resistance. Mapping thus appears to be a spatial image that directly addresses the politics of representation as they are bound into the politics of location.  
(8)

Though the authors try to escape the spectre of captivity and oppression, they find themselves “bound into the politics of location,” which is evident in the re-appropriation and fetishization of colonial language. Whereas Dijkstra, Namjoshi and Hanscombe re-mapped the hegemonic map of the colonizer onto the body, Namjoshi and Hanscombe also try to forge new maps in a way that attempts to be sensitive to the politics of location. Unlike Dijkstra, Namjoshi and Hanscombe reassess their use of the woman-as-landmass trope, as they reassess their racialized subject positions, evident in their poem “There is no Undiscovered Country.” We also see this in the way Namjoshi and

Hanscombe abandon their woman-as-landmass trope for a more empowering and fluid one: disillusioned with land and the troubles nationality brings, the poets suggest claiming “a lake.” They write,

I found the solution.  
I left them their land,

...

A lake, you said, can

Be any other. (27)

Rather than adhere to colonial imagery, Namjoshi and Hanscombe use the simultaneity of geography to transform the limits of the body to imagine alternative cartographies, identities, and to facilitate their mobility. This alternative envisioning of the female body can also be observed in the poem “Well, Then let Slip the Masks.” Here, one poet makes a comparison between her lover’s body and water, stating “the curve of your breast is like the curve / of a wave” (19). Rather than make the woman-as-landmass comparison, the comparison shifts to a literally more mobile and fluid medium. There is no conquering, discovering, or naming in this instance, in the poem, signaling a different perspective and use of the body and language. We see this comparison again in “Be a Dolphin Then.” Instead of remaining stationary according to the confines of land, their bodies not only embody the ocean, but also transform into other mobile objects. They write,

Be a dolphin then, or be a water woman  
and i'll be a dolphin  
... while you  
my water woman, you'll lie beside me  
or lie on me - I'll be your raft.

...

We'll lie on the sea floor, our hands on one another's breasts. Then, as we lie, dive inside me, and surface splashing; and then, if you like, we'll dive again. (23)

As the women make love, they imagine transforming themselves from dolphin to ocean to raft. Instead of reaching land on their raft, the women dive back into the water, where they remain peaceful rather than trapped on land. What this suggests is that they imagine their bodies as transformative, mobile, and filled with the potential to find and embody an alternative cartography and identity outside the confines of heterosexual Orientalist patriarchy. Indeed, in "Synchrony," they write

if it (might) please  
you my lady of  
                  the  
ocean where we  
ride day-long  
...  
I am  
(was, shall be)  
                  brill  
-iantly consumed by  
your caress (address)  
                  our  
(loving) transforma-  
tions, (24)

suggesting that the simultaneity of geography affords them the psychic hope of transforming their bodies from a place of confinement to one of freedom and mobility. Like the queer body, which is transformative, water, being literally more fluid, is more mobile, difficult to pin down, label, claim, or 'discover' in comparison to land. The map

of the body, therefore, is not so much a map as it is a shifting and mobile object, one that can confine them in the spectre of captivity while in patriarchal spaces, and one that has the potential to transform space and subjectivity, and to challenge nationality and essentialism. The queer diasporic body can potentially redefine subjectivity, nationality and ways of interpreting the body, as it constitutes “the medium through which home is remapped and its various narratives are displaced, uprooted, and infused with alternative forms of desire” (Gopinath, *Impossible Desires* 165). Rather than adhere to preconceived and limiting ideas of the nation, lesbianism, essentialism, and ethnicity, Namjoshi and Hanscombe attempt to envision alternative ways of theorizing and imagining the body. By utilizing the simultaneity of geography, by virtue of her exilic subjectivity, and by recognizing that Orientalism and colonial history do exist and affect relationships, Namjoshi is able to envision an alternative cartography of the queer body.

## **5. Conclusion**

For Khan, Kayla, Namjoshi, Sarah, and Dijkstra, the body carries with it the spectre of captivity, that being memories of colonialism. Kayla and Khan remain perpetually haunted by the confines of their body, and though they do challenge the stereotype of the authentic South Asian woman, and while they challenge identity categories, they find it difficult to envision an alternative subjectivity. The SANA women in same-sex relationships, however, understand the body in different terms, paradoxically, as a result of their marginalization from multiple spaces. Because of their



exclusion from home spaces, the diaspora, theory, and the queer community, queer SANA women must find alternative ways of imagining subjectivity because their marginality forces them to think outside the confines of diaspora, gender, race, and patriarchal spaces. Though the non-heterosexual SANA women whose texts I explore attempt to escape the confines of the body and the spectre of Orientalism, race and colonial history ultimately resurfaces both on their respective bodies and in the language the authors choose to use. While these characters do experience the spectre of captivity, the simultaneity of geography, particularly in the later poems in *Flesh and Poetry*, implies that queer diasporans are afforded some respite from the spectre of captivity, even if such respite is imaginary, which suggests that there is at least hope for a space of possibility.

## CONCLUSION

From the inception of European colonial power to its end, Orientalism has ingrained a rhetoric of difference, one that continues to affect the production of knowledge, categories of subjectivity, and relations between disparate groups of individuals. This rhetoric of difference, best described by Abdul JanMohamed's concept of the Manichean allegory, pervades virtually all realms of public and private life. As a body of theory and practice reproduced by civil and political society, Orientalism seeps its way into the fabric of our everyday lives, entwining painful histories of the past with present-day concerns. Indeed, as the texts I have explored indicate, the phantom of European colonial domination has left its mark on the bodies and minds of the racialized subaltern. Despite the end of European occupation in the South Asian region, and regardless of their status as 'native' to South Asia or as diasporans in a post-colonial context, Orientalism continues to cast its overbearing shadow on the everyday and intimate lives of SANA women.

As Khan provocatively points out in the very title of her text, desire is racially mediated. Far from neutral, Khan suggests that desire is constructed and influenced by Orientalism. Although Khan and Desai Hidier's protagonist Kayla are women of South Asian descent in contemporary North American society, opposed to South Asian women under European colonial rule, and although they otherwise deviate from the mythical authentic 'South Asian woman', they reproduce the role of the racialized subaltern when they are in intimate relationships with white men. What they ultimately desire is

normalcy, or status as the Self, uninhibited by race or gender. This quest for normalcy manifests itself as “colonized desire” as a result of the “Franz Fanon complex.” Though Khan and Kayla’s desire for white feminine normalcy is contradictory and self-deprecating, the fulfillment of their desires allows them to feel some illusion of validation as women in a white supremacist society. Rather than imply that it is the white men inherently at fault for their oppression, Khan and Desai Hidier suggest that Orientalism is ultimately at fault, and claims victims on both sides of the Manichean divide.

The lesbian/queer characters and authors suggest that while Orientalism does affect relationships, heterosexism and patriarchy are their greater concerns. Their desire is not so much racially mediated as it points to a quest for acceptance and equality, regardless of race, sexuality, or gender. This desire for acceptance and a ‘space of possibility’ manifests itself through essentialist desire, which can be as harmful and painful as colonized desire. Normalcy, for Namjoshi and Dijkstra and Mootoo’s characters, includes not only the ability to become the Self, but also involves the ability to escape the confines of compulsory heterosexuality and nationality. Unlike Khan and Kayla who actively seek white men in the hopes of ‘normalcy,’ Sarah, Namjoshi and Dijkstra’s protagonist seek to destroy heterosexist Orientalist patriarchy by interrogating and subverting gender, racial, and sexual codes. Rather than seek white feminine normalcy, the lesbian/queer SANA women attempt to carve out a space and identity that is free of qualifiers. Though they cannot escape their race, the desire for the ‘other’ is more about being able to choose a partner based on character and united oppression than

race. In their attempts to have egalitarian relationships, they eventually find themselves recast into patriarchal Orientalist language. So the queer/lesbian authors/characters imply that desire is also mediated by patriarchy, heterosexism, and Orientalism. Though lesbian/queer SANA women seem to place more blame on heterosexist patriarchy than the heteronormative SANA women, who concentrate more on racism and gender/power differences, both do point out that Orientalism continues to play a part in interracial relationships.

What kind of hope do these SANA authors provide for interracial relationships, and how do they suggest the tensions between race, gender, and sexuality can be relieved? Though issues of domination, subordination, guilt, complicity, and shame play a role in interracial relationships, and while Orientalist history continues to be an unwelcome bed-partner in the intimate lives of SANA women, the texts I explore shed some light on how SANA women and their partners can try to resist Orientalism. Sharmeen Khan argues that both SANA women and white men especially need to learn how to effectively deal with the experiences of oppression, privilege, and knowledge while in interracial relationships. Khan suggests that for heteronormative interracial relationships to work,

there have to be frequent discussions about the sexual ideology between women of colour and white men. To stop the cycle when women of colour feel that they need to work extra hard to prove themselves in order to be respected by white men. To talk openly about the politics of attraction, and to nip it in the bud before they create some weird post-colonial sexcapade. (104)

These discussions and explorations of the constructed nature of desire, the politics of attraction, and the erotics of power constitute what Khan considers the “constant process of decolonization” SANA women must undergo as a result of European colonization.

For lesbian/queer SANA women, Mootoo, Dijkstra, Namjoshi and Hanscombe imply that white women and women of colour must work together to dismantle the many oppressive manifestations of Orientalism (which includes patriarchy and heterosexism), through the reworking of language, and by challenging categories of space and identity. Furthermore, Khan asserts that in addition to these discussions, “an anti-racist framework must always exist intimately and in public” (105). What this anti-racist framework entails is a strategy of decolonization that not only investigates the effects of Orientalism on contemporary society, but one that is bent on the reworking of identity, nationality, race, gender, desire, and knowledge in itself. One way to “nip [Orientalism] in the bud” (Khan 104) is, as Kayla and Khan imply, the rejection of the Manichean allegory. Through her depiction of Kayla and the shards of glass, Desai Hidier implies that one can resist Orientalist constructions of knowledge and subjectivity by rejecting identification dictated by the Manichean allegory, and by seeking out one’s own personal and cultural history.

As an umbrella term that includes patriarchy and heterosexism, Orientalism continues to be a method of hegemonic control. The persistence of the violence of the “aesthetics of dislocation” felt by SANA women is a result of Orientalism. Khan, Kayla, Sarah, Namjoshi, and Dijkstra’s narrator all experience the violence of the “aesthetics of

dislocation” as a function of the patriarchal (heterosexist) Orientalist gaze, which continually Others them and recasts them into the confinement of their racialized and gendered bodies. Though they experience this “aesthetics of dislocation” and remain trapped in the spectre of captivity in both mind and body, there are moments of respite in which these SANA women are able to envision an alternative subjectivity and space. Though there is no easy way out of the confines of the mind or the body, and as the queer/lesbian writers and characters imply that there may be no escape from these limits, there is, at least, the hope that the spectre of captivity can be alleviated. Out of the static category of the gendered and racialized Other woman, they create new subjectivities – ones that in some instances, work to recast them into the oppressive SANA female role expected under colonial rule, but one that always, as a result of ambivalence (Bhabha 85), works to disrupt Orientalism in its mimicry. Even while Khan and Kayla reproduce the image of the subaltern, they cannot fully reproduce that identity. Both the heteronormative and non-heteronormative SANA characters use the simultaneity of geography to attempt to envision an alternative subjectivity, space, and state of mind. Though Khan and Kayla find themselves recast into colonial South Asia as the marginalized Other, in their skewing of time, geography, memory, and nationality, they resist colonial customs and beliefs of subjectivity and space. The queer/lesbian SANA writers and characters also utilize the simultaneity of geography to challenge Orientalist conceptions of subjectivity and space. The body and mind, though haunted by the spectre of colonialism, are considered transformational. As a function of being multiply

oppressed, they have an alternative perspective of the body and identity that allows them to envision the body and space in ways that are transformational. When the mere existence of queer/lesbian SANA women cannot be imagined in the diaspora, home or host-space, Namjoshi, Hanscombe, Dijkstra, and Mootoo provide hope that a subversive subjectivity can be forged, and that a 'space of possibility' can be imagined. Furthermore, instead of reproducing a 'pure' 'authentic' South Asian female identity, Kayla, Khan, Sarah, Namjoshi and Dijkstra's protagonist imagine themselves outside of the dominant paradigm and produce instead a hybridized identity, one that refuses to be pinned down by a set space, time, or national/cultural identity. While there is no easy or straightforward route to achieving a concrete 'space of possibility' and permanent respite from the spectre of captivity, Khan, Desai Hidier, Mootoo, Dijkstra, Namjoshi and Hanscombe suggest that by seeking alternative identities and spaces, and by attempting to reject colonial constructs of identity, culture, gender, race, sexuality, and nationality, Orientalism can be resisted.

### WORKS CITED AND CONSULTED

- Banerji, Rima and Manesha Deckha. "So You Think You Know The Truth About Indian Women?" *Diva* (Summer 1997): 5-7.
- Bannerji, Himani. "Popular Images of South Asian Women." *Returning the Gaze: Essays on Racism, Feminism and Politics*. Ed. Himani Bannerji. Toronto: Sister Vision Press, 1993. 144-52.
- Bannerji, Kaushalya. "No Apologies." *A Lotus of Another Color: An Unfolding of the South Asian Gay and Lesbian Experience*. Ed. Rakesh Ratti. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1993. 59-64.
- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." *October* 28 (Spring 1984):125-33.
- Brand, Dionne. *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2002.
- Blunt, Alison and Gillian Rose. *Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies*. London: Guilford Press, 1994.
- Clifford, James. "Diasporas." *Cultural Anthropology* 9.3 (1994): 302-38.
- Chow, Rey. *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Desai Hidier, Tanuja. "Tiger, Tiger." *Desilicious: Sexy. Subversive. South Asian*. Ed. The Masala Trois Collective. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2003. 17-32.
- Dickinson, Peter. *Here Is Queer: Nationalisms, Sexualities, and the Literatures of Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999.
- Dijkstra, Annie. "Colombo to Haputale." *Desilicious: Sexy. Subversive. South Asian*. Ed. The Masala Trois Collective. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2003. 147-50.
- Eliade, M. *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or Cosmos and History*. Trans. W. Trans. W. Trask. New Jersey: Princeton, 1974.



Eng, David. "Out Here and Over There: Queerness and Diaspora in Asian American Studies." *Social Text* 15.3-4 (1997): 31-52.

Goellnicht, Donald C. "Blurring Boundaries: Asian American Literature as Theory." *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*. Ed. King-Kok Cheung. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. 338-65.

Gopinath, Gayatri. *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005.

---. "Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora: South Asian Sexualities in Motion." *Positions* 5.2 (Fall 1997): 467-89.

Grewal, Inderpal. *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005.

Griffiths, Gareth. "The Myth of Authenticity: Representation, Discourse And Social Practice." *De-Scripting Empire: Post-Colonialism and Textuality*. Ed. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson. New York: Routledge, 1994. 70-85.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Patrick Williams & Laura Chrisman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. 392-58.

---. "Introduction: Who Needs 'Identity'?" *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Ed Stuart Hall and Paul de Gay. London: Sage Publications, 1996. 1-17.

Islam, Naheed. "Naming Identity, Shaping Desire: Tracing the Experiences of Indian Lesbians in the United States." *A Patchwork Shawl: Chronicles of South Asian Women in America*. Ed. Shamita Dasgupta. New Brunswick and New Jersey: Rutgers UP, 1998. 72-93.

JanMohamed, Abdul R. "The Economy of the Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature." *Critical Inquiry* 12 (1985): 59-87.

Katrak, Ketu H. "South Asian American Literature." *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*. Ed. King-Kong Cheung. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. 192-218.

Khan, Sharmeen. "Confessions of a Paki With Colonized Desire: Or How Giving White Men Blowjob Reproduces Colonialism." *Desilicious: Sexy. Subversive. South Asian*. Ed. The Masala Trois Collective. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2003. 99-105.

de Lauretis, Teresa. *Feminist Studies/Critical Studies*. Ed Teresa de Lauretis. London: Macmillan, 1986.

Lee, JeeYeun. "Why Suzie Wong is Not a Lesbian: Asian and Asian American Lesbian and Bisexual Women and Femme/Butch/Gender Identities." *Queer Studies: A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Anthology*. Eds. B. Beemyn and M. Eliason. New York: New York UP, 1996: 117-31.

Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism/Postcolonialism: The New Critical Idiom*. New York: Routledge, 1998.

Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in Colonial Conquest*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995.

Mabbett, I. W. "The Symbolism of Mount Meru." *History of Religions*. 23.1 (August 1983): 64-83.

Mills, Sara. "Gender and Colonial Space." *Feminist Postcolonial Theory*. Ed. Reina Lewis and Sara Mills. New York: Routledge, 2003.

Mishra, Vijay. Mishra, Vijay. "The Diasporic Imaginary: Theorizing the Indian Diaspora." *Textual Practice* 10 (1996): 421-27.

Mohanty, Chandra T. "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses." *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. Eds. Chandra T. Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1991. 51-79.

Mootoo, Shani. *Cereus Blooms at Night*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1998.

Namjoshi, Suniti, and Gillian Hanscombe. *Flesh And Paper*. Charlottetown: Ragweed, 1986.

Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Puar, Jasbir K. "Transnational Sexualities: South Asian (Trans)nation(alism)s and Queer Diasporas." *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*. Ed. David L. Eng and Alice Hom. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998. 405-22.

MA Thesis – S. Das McMaster – English

“Radicalesbians.” *The Woman Identified Woman*. Pittsburgh: Know, Inc., c. 1970.

Razack, Sherene H. “Introduction: Looking White People in the Eye.” *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1998.

Rushdie, Salman. “Imaginary Homelands.” *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta Books, 1991. 9-21.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York : Vintage Books, 1979.

Shah, Nayan. “Sexuality, Identity, And The Uses of History.” *Q & A: Queer in Asian America*. Ed. David L. Eng and Alice Y. Hom. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1998. 141-56.

Sinha, Mrinalini. “Nationalism and Respectable Sexuality in India.” *Genders*. 21 (1995): 31-57.

Srikanth, Rajini. *The World Next Door: South Asian American Literature and the Idea of America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004.

Spivak, Gayatri C. “Diasporas Old and New: Women in the Transnational World.” *Textual Practice* 10.2 (1996): 245-69.

Yegenoglu, Meyda. *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.

York, Lorraine. *Rethinking Women’s Collaborative Writing*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002.