tion of writing a definitive text for a field that eschews definition," but Zalewski aptly summarizes the value of the effort of this book: "Perhaps telling the story of feminist methodology lies in narrating the process of the search for it, and the practice of it, which, although demanding responsibility, does not allow the comfort of finality or the production of 'comfort texts.'"

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SEX AND FAMILY IN COLONIAL INDIA

Durba Ghosh
New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006

REVIEWED BY ANINDO HAZRA

In *Sex and Family in Colonial India*, Durba Ghosh problematizes the received knowledge of a "collaborative" late-eighteenth-century Company-Raj transformed into a "coercive" nineteenth-century entity. She makes porous the conventional categorization of the eighteenth-century as a time of open interracial sexual relations and of wider cross-cultural exchanges between East and West. Ghosh argues against a Golden Age of co-operation between "coloniser" and "colonised" giving way neatly to Mutiny-era repression and estrangement. According to her, the subcontinent of the former period is as much a site of anxious negotiations over identity and alterity, in both public and domestic realms, as one of harems and hookahs: the colonial state is already "in formation." The elliptical quality of that phrase captures well the muddy reality that, notwithstanding "the process of 'making empire respectable,'" the state faced, repeatedly yet reluctantly, hybrid families made up of British men and local women.[1] In colonial archives, Ghosh's material of choice, these local women are often consigned to anonymity and a fleeting presence.[2] Encountering these tangential references, Ghosh uses Jenny Sharpe to make the case that "a sensitive reading of female subjectivity and agency 'raises the possibility of action without negating the unequal relations of power that restrict the ability to act.'"

Building on the premise that colonial records located women in interracial relationships but kept them in abeyance, Ghosh points out that, while "indigenous household members became objects of the colonial state's concern" and "were made into subjects by the colonial social and legal order," some women were able in turn to make "themselves into subjects" by "negotiating financial provisions, gaining legal privileges, and expressing their [individual] cultural and religious affiliations," from the colonial government.[3] Ghosh is quick, however, to caution the reader against "the facile conclusion that colonialism or the intimate activities it gave rise to benefited native women;" at best, there were "limited social, material and legal opportunities for native women, allowing them some mobility within positions of relative powerlessness." The dialectic of woman subjected and woman subjectivising serves as the core of Ghosh's endeavours: hers is a flexible theory that takes into account the power of the colonial state to disable resistance and "make native women illegible" but also emphasises that "colonial companions [...] did act to defend their interests, particularly when the colonial regime was unsure of its policies." State power is not monolithic, but neither can it be (completely) undermined.

Ghosh also examines the ways in which British men in interracial relationships responded to the regime of respectable colonial conduct in archival documents like their wills.[4] A wide range of upper-middle-class and middle-class men inscribe there a keenness to remain what Ghosh calls "good patriarchs" by ensuring their native companions' financial security. However, these same documents often contain specific instructions about the European education of their mixed-race children, a process usually involving the separation of child from mother, demonstrating, as she points out, the "many anxieties about hybridity and degeneration that threatened to undermine British superiority and the 'national character.'" Less than unconventional, these "patriarchs" were very aware of (mono)racial and social status both in India and Europe. Reading the wills of working-class men or lower-ranking soldiers, however, Ghosh finds a "relative absence of social anxiety based on racial and gender awareness of their superiority over native women" owing, she argues, to their poor material conditions and consequent exclusion from the emergent ruling class.

The careful combining of race, class, and gender adds critical weight to Ghosh's work, but the effort is somewhat undone by the lack of a clear engagement with desire, interracial or otherwise, beyond heterosexuality: her subjects are almost exclusively British men and native women.[5] Even if colonial material like archives relating to marriage, childbirth, widows, and orphans are already rooted in heteronormativity, Ghosh could have attended to the hetero-limits of her study in an extended passage or note. In a paragraph concerning "[f]riendships among men," one of the few references in the volume to a same-sex scenario, there is no exploration of even the possibility of homosexual desire. Ghosh simply argues that English male "networks" sustained British control in the subcontinent. While her point is noteworthy, Ghosh could have drawn attention to the sexual

parameters of her work at just such a juncture in the text. This would have made the absences less glaring to the interested reader.

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[1]Ghosh prefers "local," "native," and "indigenous" to "Indian" when writing about women in this volume, because the time-period "pre-dates a nationalist consciousness or sense of India." While Ghosh's reasoning against using "Indian" is well-argued, her use of "indigenous" may appear too open-ended for readers especially conscious of the origins, movement and displacements of people in the subcontinental region through diverse time-periods. I have avoided the term, except in quotations.

[2]Ghosh lists colonial archives located in diverse locations: New Delhi; Calcutta; Serampore; London. Additionally, she makes the point that "probably because these relationships involved women of the lower social and caste orders … vernacular sources … are scarce." Ghosh, then, also calls for a dismantling of a post-colonial, upper-class/-caste nationalist "image of a pure indigenous culture uncorrupted by miscegenation or interracial sex."

[3]Instances of this partial agency Ghosh culls from sources like the wills of women who shared lives with European men; civil and criminal cases relating to interracial households; records of charitable organisations supporting widows and children of English officers and soldiers. Ghosh devotes individual chapters to each archive: respectively, Chapters Four, Five, and Six.

[4]See Chapters Two and Three.

[5]Ghosh notes one literary representation, in the novel *Hartly House*, of an interracial but non-sexual relationship between an English woman and a Brahmin, which ends with the death of the latter, an event causing racial norms to be reset in the text.

BLACK GEOGRAPHIES AND THE POLITICS OF PLACE

Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, Eds.
Toronto: Between the Lines, 2007

REVIEWED BY SHARON MORGAN BECKFORD

Black Geographies invites readers to consider what it means for black people to live within specific spaces of oppression and white hegemony, and what it takes to develop patterns of resistance that allow them to survive in the face of subordination and difference. Based on several essays that span multiple disciplines, this book offers a number of critical perspectives that not only help to shape our understandings of what black geographies are, but also how we might rethink our understandings of space, place, and bodies. The editors argue that "the continuing legacy of racial-sexual domination" has rendered black peoples "conspicuous 'objects-in-place,' thereby making "black histories, bodies, and experiences disrupt and underwrite human geographies." Thus, the writers examine and present "[a] number of closely related trajectories [that] illustrate how black human geographies are implicated in the production of space."

Twelve scholars engage these trajectories that speak to the intersection of race and space. The opening chapter by McKittrick and Woods introduces the need to theorize subaltern geographies, beginning with the horrific havoc wreaked upon the city of New Orleans, Louisiana, by hurricane Katrina, August 28, 2005. The Katrina experience forms the backdrop against which the editors discuss the ways the themes of race and space in social theory are "fundamentally essentialized." They encourage readers to think about the ways these categories of race and space can be imagined, by "mov[ing] away from singling out the body, the culture of poverty, or the material 'lack' implied by spatial metaphors, … and by suggesting that there are always many ways of producing and perceiving space." They urge scholars to "critically view and imagine black geographies as interdisciplinary sites – from the diaspora and prisons to grassroots activisms and housing patterns – [which] brings into focus networks and relations of power, resistance, histories, and the everyday, rather than locations that are simply subjugated, perpetually ghettoized, or ungeographic."

Certainly, the twelve authors whose works take up this challenge have in multiple and provocative ways engaged the subject of black geographies, raising intriguing and thoughtful perspectives on the intersection of race and space. The second chapter, by Carole Boyce Davies and Babacar M'Bow, situates the discussion in relation to the black diaspora. As the chapter title suggests, the authors consider ways of moving "Towards African Diaspora Citizenship," by discussing "the primary cultural models that have been articulated as well as the various political attempts to counter the various forms of black displacement," oppression, and exclusion globally. The book concludes with a chapter by Rinaldo Walcott, "Homopoetics: Queer Space and the Black Queer Diaspora," which raises questions around the perception of black masculinity and "the spaces for black masculine performance in contemporary North America." As bookends, these chapters create not only the spaces for thinking about black geographies, but also the intersectionality of gender, race, and space.

Overall the book is an impressive