Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms (review)

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tation, perhaps these movies will motivate other films to focus on the characters in their margins. In terms of critique, Gopinath inspires scholars to pay attention to queer subjects. Thus, the main accomplishment here is Gopinath's invitation for us to craft ways of image-making and imagining what has been considered improbable or what has been not quite visible, as she shows us queer South Asian women who craft home and belonging in the spaces where they live.

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Notes

1. Richard Fung, "Center the Margins" in Russell Leong, *Moving the Image*. Los Angeles: Visual Communications, 1991.
2. See Dana Takagi, Maiden Voyage" in Russell Leong, ed. *Asian American Sexualities*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995; David Eng, *Racial Castration*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001; Martin Manalansan, *Global Divas*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003; and Nayan Shah, "Sexuality, Identity and the Uses of History" and Mark Chiang, "Coming Out in the Global System" in David Eng and Alice Hom, eds. *Q&A: Queer in Asian America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.
3. Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1996.
4. Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1995.

Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms. By Inderpal Grewal. Durham: Duke University Press 2005.

In *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms*, Inderpal Grewal further develops the "transnational feminist cultural studies" inaugurated in her co-edited volume *Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices*.[11] She does so by focusing very specifically on how middle-class Asian Indian and American subjects were produced in the 1990s as neoliberal subjects through moments of converging biopolitical and geopolitical interests. While geopolitics signifies the political and economic interests of nation-states vying for global dominance, biopolitics involves analyzing the impact of political power in managing all aspects of life.[22] In each of the chapters, Grewal examines moments when Asian Indians were implicated in the neoliberal discourses created through these convergences as "subjects gendered, classed, and racialized in specific ways" (3). Grewal draws out the ways in which feminism has historically operated in a transnational context by relying on a rhetoric of "choice." She analyzes the many

uses of choice in struggles for full citizenship to illustrate how they have actually narrowed the kinds of social relations available to feminists because of their dependence on consumer culture's inflexible notions of race and gender.

In line with feminist scholars who analyze how race and gender can help us to understand inequalities of the globalization process, Grewal analyzes the market's role in a variety of movements through what she calls "connectivities."[33] Suggesting both "collectivities" and information technology networks with multiple centers, the term connectivities refuses association with a general deterritorialization of relations, or a linear path from product to consumer. Rather, it allows the inclusion of histories of unevenness and inequality built into neoliberal governmentalities (24). Citizenship is one such connectivity that is foundational for democratic participation. Grewal qualifies any uncritical enthusiasm for citizenship by showing how the "privileges of citizenship are extended unevenly – to women, minority religious groups, and racial and sexual minorities," so as to concentrate instead on how citizenship is used to produce neoliberal subjects (10).

In the chapter, "Traveling Barbie," Grewal explores the moment when Barbie became available in India under the nation's liberalization policies of the 1980s. Rather than an instance of cultural imperialism, Grewal writes how the success of Mattel's product relied upon "the transnationalization of the beauty and fashion industry in India as well as the transnational connectivities produced by diasporic Indians" (89). Mattel capitalized on the Indian government's creation of a separate financial category for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) not by distributing a South Asian Barbie, but rather by selling a "white" Barbie marketed as a traveler who could be dressed in a sari and made to be "totally at home in India" (81). By selling this refashioned, cosmopolitan Barbie in five-star hotels, airports, and tourist locations, Mattel and the Indian government produced a class of diasporic Indians invested in their own racial subjugation. Broadening her analysis beyond the multinational corporation, Grewal shows how Mattel tapped into segmented markets of international travelers, adolescents and children organized around gendered and racialized notions of fashion and mobility. This new "Indian transnational imaginary" abetted by multinational corporations strengthened rather than undermined national boundaries by priming citizens to think of themselves as entering a "global" stage in their national development (90).

Grewal also offers a reading of three South Asian authors who write for what might be called a cosmopolitan readership. The "cosmopolitan" functions here as another subject position created by connectivities. In "Becoming American," Grewal highlights how three writers of the Indian diaspora in America tap into their histories as products of a privileged English-educated class born in the age

of decolonization to produce a postcolonial cosmopolitan identity. She analyzes the works of Amitav Ghosh, Bharati Mukherjee, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni to argue that each mystify, albeit differently, a central tenet of liberal subjectivity: the individual as possessor of rights and as a product of international trade (42). Grewal argues that most theorists of cosmopolitanism overemphasize the universal knowledges enabled by globalization without sufficiently analyzing how the neoliberal governmentalities of the nation-state made, and continue to make, cosmopolitanism possible in the first place (44).

Interpreting the works of Amitav Ghosh as nostalgic representations of a pre-colonial, non-national cosmopolitanism, Grewal interrogates the implicit progress narrative within Ghosh's writings. For Grewal, Ghosh's decline narrative is anti-imperialist but ironically only made possible by the histories of transnational trade that has long been central to Europe's commercial and colonial enterprises. If Grewal's analysis of Ghosh is provocative, her analysis of the Bharati Mukherjee and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni are generally derivative. Both writers have long been criticized as dichotomizing "tradition" with modernity in order to narrate the possibilities of progress in a new land.[44] Grewal nonetheless succeeds in including literary analysis as a part of her interdisciplinary approach by exposing Mukherjee's refusal to historicize inequality to a widespread structural blindness to previous South Asian immigrant experiences that also coded progress as an embrace of consumer consumption, not simply for those who flourished during the period of liberalization from the 1980s and 1990s.

In the strongest chapters of the book, "Gendering Refugees" and "Women's Rights as Human Rights," Grewal examines how human rights discourse strategically brings together neoliberalism with feminist practice. It is this convergence that Grewal repeatedly writes is the passage through which "geopolitics and biopolitics" rely on "transnational connectivities" such as the discourse around choice and individuality. In both chapters, Grewal illustrates how human rights regimes are ill-equipped to counter the changes wrought by transnational connectivities. By examining the case of Sikh women from the Punjab who sought asylum in the U.S. during the mid-1990s, Grewal parses the arduous process by which claimants for refugee status were obligated to align themselves with the gendered and raced structures that constitute the nation-state. For a Sikh woman to be granted asylum, Grewal writes, she needed to present herself as "either raped or threatened with rape and then could be rescued by the U.S. state" (190–1).

Grewal makes a strong case throughout *Transnational America* for historicizing the Asian American subject in order to unveil the complexities of our gendered and racialized present. In so doing, she allows Asian American cultural

theorists to counter the notion that increasing visibility and mobility necessarily entails greater equality.

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1. See "Transnational Feminist Practices and Questions of Postmodernity," in Scattered Hegemonies: Postmodernity and Transnational Feminist Practices, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 1–33.
2. Many scholars have taken up the concept of biopolitics in recent years. For recent developments, see Giorgio Agamben's, Homo Sacer : Sovereign Power and Bare Life (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's Empire (Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press, 2000) and Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004); Michel Foucault, Mauro Bertani, Alessandro Fontana, François Ewald, and David Macey's Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975–76 (New York: Picador, 2003); Achille Mbembe's "Necropolitics," Public Culture 15.1(2003), 11–40.
3. See Ann Laura Stoler's Race and the Education of Desire : Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) and Chandra Talpade Mohanty's "'Under Western Eyes' Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles." Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society 28.2 (2003),499–535.
4. See Alpana Sharma Knippling's "Toward an Investigation of the Subaltern in Bharti Mukherjee's The Middleman and Other Stories and Jasmine," in Bharati Mukherjee: Critical Perspectives, Emmanuel S. Nelson, ed. (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993), 143–159.