

Curriculum Vitae

GAYATRI GOPINATH

Current Position

Assistant Professor of Women's Studies, University of California at Davis (as of January, 2000).
Areas of Specialization: Asian Diaspora Literatures and Cultures, Anglophone and Postcolonial Literatures, Feminist Theory, Queer Theory, Popular Culture.

Education

1998 Ph.D. in Literature, Award of Distinction, Department of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University, New York, NY.
1994 M.A. in Literature, Robert John Bennett Memorial Award, Department of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University, New York, NY.
1991 B.A., Phi Beta Kappa, in Latin American Studies, Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT.

Book Project

Title: Queer Diasporas: Gender, Sexuality and Migration in Contemporary South Asian Literature and Cultural Production

Queer Diasporas examines South Asian literatures and cultural practices in various diasporic sites: Canada, Britain, the United States, the Caribbean and South Asia. Taking the South Asian diaspora as paradigmatic of transnational literary and cultural production, the dissertation demands that we locate the formation of racial, sexual and gender subjectivities both across multiple national spaces as well as in specific localities. I pay particular attention to the intersections of various diasporas (Indian, African, Caribbean) and the cultural forms that emerge from overlapping histories of slavery, indentureship and immigration. By engaging both lesbian and gay studies and postcolonial feminist scholarship on gender and nationalism, I argue that the notion of diaspora offers a potent critique of dominant nationalisms and their narratives of purity, patrilineality and organic heterosexuality.

Fellowships and Prizes

1998-99 University of California President's Postdoctoral Fellowship, University of California at San Diego, CA. (Renewed for 1999-2000).
1998-99 American Fellowship, American Association of University Women (AAUW) Educational Foundation, Washington, DC. (Declined).
1997-98 Josephine De Karman Dissertation Fellowship, Josephine De Karman Trust, San Dimas, CA.
1997-98 President's Fellowship, Columbia University, New York, NY.
1997 Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Summer Fellowship, United States, Department of Education.
1994-96 Winchester Alumni Fellowship, Wesleyan University.
1994 Robert John Bennett Memorial Award for Best M.A. Essay in Interdisciplinary Scholarship, Columbia University.
1993-4 Marjorie Hope Nicolson Fellowship, Department of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University.

Publications

"On Fire," film review of Deepa Mehta's *Fire* in *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 4:4 (Fall 1998).
"Homo-Economics: Queer Sexualities in a Transnational Frame," in *Burning Down the House: Recycling Domesticity*, ed. Rosemary M. George (New York: Westview Press, 1998).

- "Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora: South Asian Sexualities in Motion," in "New Formations, New Questions: Asian American Studies," eds. Elaine Kim and Lisa Lowe, special issue of *positions: east asia cultures critique* 5:2 (Fall 1997).
- "Bombay, U.K., Yuba City: Bhangra Music and the Engendering of Diaspora," *Diaspora* 4:3 (Winter 1995).
- "Funny Boys and Girls: Notes on a Queer South Asian Planet," in *Asian American Sexualities: Dimensions of the Lesbian and Gay Experience*, ed. Russell Leong (New York: Routledge, 1995).
- "Letters and the Law," book review of Mari J. Matsuda's *Where is Your Body? And Other Essays on Race, Gender and the Law*, in *A Magazine* (Dec. 1996/Jan. 1997).
- "From Margin to Center," book review of Zia Jaffrey's *The Invisibles: In Search of India's Eunuchs*, in *A Magazine* (Oct./Nov. 1996).

Invited Speaker

- "Homes and Migrations in Deepa Mehta's *Fire* and Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*," "Rethinking South Asian Imaginaries" Speaker Series, Department of Asian Studies, University of Texas at Austin, February 25, 1999.
- "Diasporic Mediations: South Asian Popular Culture in a Global Frame," University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN, May 8, 1998.
- "Macho Mems, Sissy Sahibs: Diasporic Sexualities and Cinematic Representation," SUNY-Stony Brook, Stony Brook, NY, April 21, 1998.
- "Indian Popular Cinema and the South Asian Diaspora," American Studies Speaker Series, New York University, New York, NY, February 27, 1998.
- "Queer Diasporas: South Asian Scholarship on Transnational Sexuality," The CUNY Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies Speaker Series, New York, NY, September 18, 1997.
- "The Gendered Politics of Home and Nostalgia," keynote address, Queer Regional Conference, SUNY-Binghamton, Binghamton, NY, October 25, 1996.
- "Homo-Economics: Misreading Lesbians in a Transnational Frame," "Queer Theory on Location," New York University, New York, NY, April 26, 1996.

Conference Presentations

- "Rethinking Deepa Mehta's *Fire*," paper delivered at the Modern Languages Association, San Francisco, CA, December 27-30, 1998.
- "Cartographies of Violence in Contemporary South Asian Diasporic Literature," paper delivered at the American Studies Association, Seattle, WA, November 19-22, 1998.
- "Heat and Dust: Postcolonial Indian Sexualities," paper delivered at "Queer Globalization: Local Homosexualities," CUNY Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies, New York, NY, April 23-25, 1998.
- "National Audiences, Diasporic Film: Deepa Mehta's *Fire*," paper delivered at the Society for Cinema Studies, San Diego, CA, April 3-5, 1998.
- "Homes and Migrations: Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*," paper delivered at the Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI, October 17-19, 1997.
- "Global Movements/Local Cultures: Diasporic Dimensions of Popular Indian Cinema," paper delivered at the Association of Asian American Studies, Seattle, WA, April 17-21, 1997.
- "Theorizing Transnational Sexualities: Nostalgia, Desire, Diaspora," paper delivered at the American Studies Association, Kansas City, MO, October 31-November 3, 1996.
- "Strange Smells, Roving Hands: The Shifting Surfaces of Ismat Chughtai's *The Quilt*," paper delivered at the Association of Asian American Studies, Washington D.C., May 30-June 2, 1996.
- "A Very British Music': Diaspora and South Asian Popular Culture," paper delivered at "Rethinking the South Asian Diaspora," University of Iowa, Iowa City, June 3-5, 1994.

Curatorial Work

- "Alternative Sexualities in Popular Indian Cinema," video clip show and lecture presentation commissioned by the 1997 New York Lesbian and Gay Film Festival.
- "Raat Ki Rani: Experimental South Asian Film and Video," co-curator, MIX: The New York Experimental Film and Video Festival, 1993.

Courses Taught

Spring 1998 "Contests and Controversies in Feminist Analysis: Race, Sexuality, Migration," Women's Studies Program, University of California-San Diego, La Jolla, CA.

1995-97 "Logic and Rhetoric," Composition Program, Columbia University, New York, NY.

Languages

Spanish (speaking, reading, writing).

French (reading and writing).

Hindi (speaking).

References

Professor Rosemary George, Department of Literature, University of California-San Diego.

Professor Lisa Lowe, Department of Literature, University of California-San Diego.

Professor Anne McClintock, Department of English, Columbia University.

Professor Rob Nixon, Department of English, Columbia University.

Professor Robert O'Meally, Department of English, Columbia University.

Paper Titles for National Central University

1) Queer Diasporas: The Transnational Trajectories of Deepa Mehta's *Fire* and Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night*

In December 1998, movie theaters in several major cities in India were stormed by hundreds of activists from the Shiv Sena, a Hindu right-wing organization that forms the militant wing of the Hindu nationalist government currently in power. The activists set buildings on fire, tore down movie posters, and physically prevented audiences from entering the theaters. The Shiv Sena were protesting the screening of *Fire*, a 1996 film made by the Indian Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta that depicts a lesbian relationship between two sisters-in-law in a middle class, joint family household in contemporary New Delhi. The Shiv Sena justified their actions by claiming that lesbianism is an affront to Hinduism and "alien to Indian culture," thereby using the charge of inauthenticity (the notion that the film wasn't "truly Indian") to disavow both its queer content and its diasporic origins. It is this conflation of "queer" and "diaspora," and the construction of both as impure and inauthentic within a hegemonic nationalist imaginary, that I interrogate throughout this paper. I will read Deepa Mehta's film *Fire* against a 1996 novel by the Indian Canadian writer Shani Mootoo entitled *Cereus Blooms at Night*, in order to identify the ways in which these diasporic cultural forms challenge nationalist constructions of "home" as a site of purity and heteronormativity.

2) Queer Bollywood: Alternative Sexualities in Popular Indian Cinema

India is the largest film-producing country in the world, and films made in India, especially in the huge film factories of Bollywood (as the Bombay film industry is known) are circulated throughout an ever-expanding network of South Asian diasporic communities throughout South Asia, North America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, East Africa and elsewhere. Given the vastness of its reach, surprisingly little work has been done on the reception and consumption of Bollywood cinema in various diasporic locations. This clip show and presentation traces the influence of popular Indian cinema among queer South Asian immigrant communities, and suggests that Bollywood provides queer diasporic audiences with the means by which to reimagine and reterritorialize the "homeland" by making it the locus of queer desire and pleasure. By examining a series of popular Indian films made between 1960-1995, I identify the ways in which popular Indian cinema encodes alternative sexualities and desires, and makes certain spaces available for their representation.

