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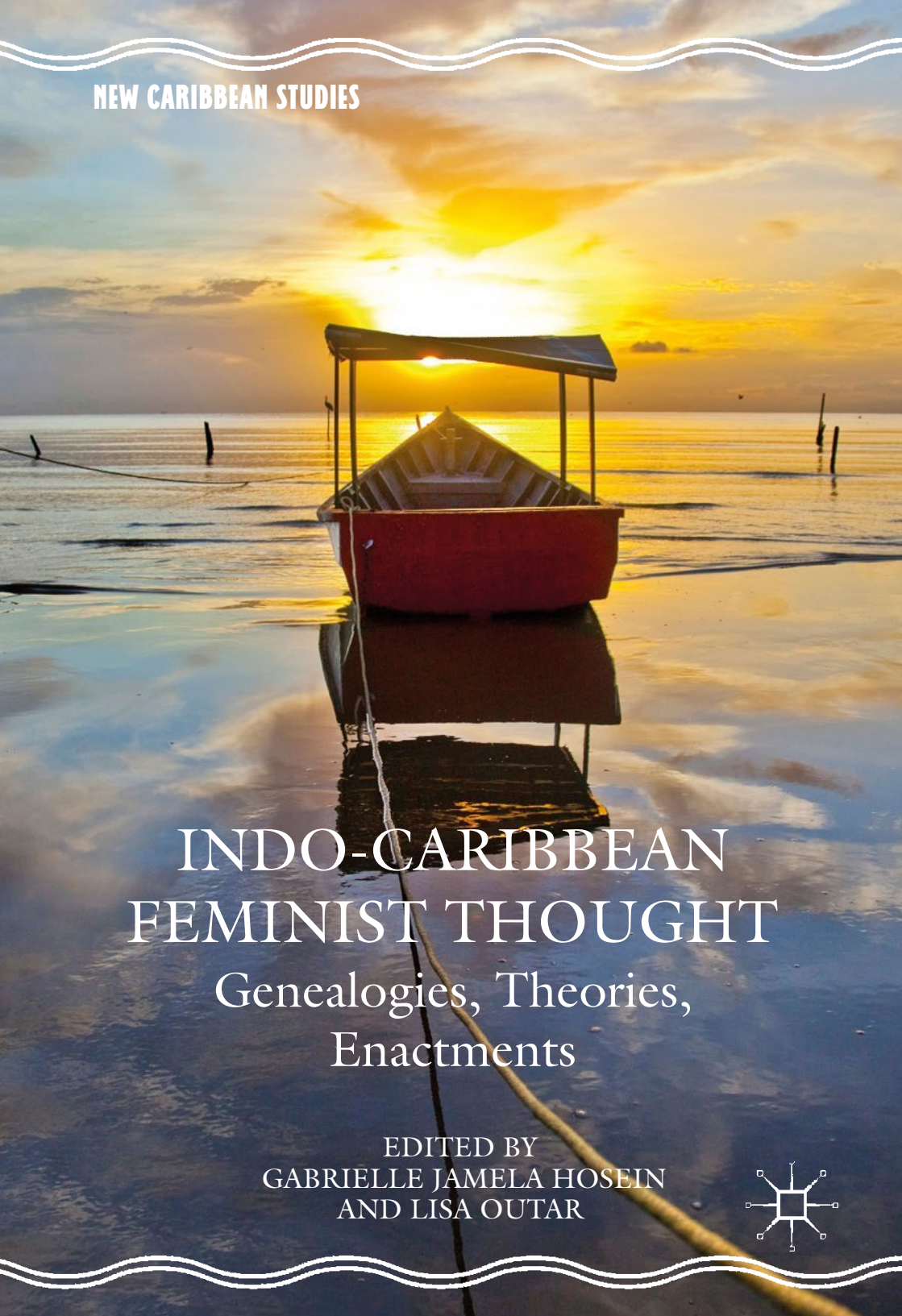

INDO-CARIBBEAN FEMINIST THOUGHT

Genealogies, Theories, Enactments

EDITED BY
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AND LISA OUTAR

New Caribbean Studies

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Editors

Indo-Caribbean Feminist Thought

Genealogies, Theories, Enactments

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Acknowledgments

This collection follows our earlier "Indo-Caribbean Feminisms: Charting Crossings in Geography, Discourse, and Politics" (2012), a Special Issue of the *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies*, the journal published by the Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS), the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine. The Special Issue sought to name an Indo-Caribbean trajectory in Caribbean feminist praxis and explore what it continues to offer to Caribbean feminist scholarship. We began from there to provide a space for both established and emerging scholars to come together in discursive dialogue. Contributors to the Special Issue included Patricia Mohammed, Anusha Ragbir, Mark Tumbridge, Lauren Pragg, Kavyta Raghunandan, Halima Kassim, Ananya Kabir, Rosanne Kanhai, Sarah Nabbie, Brenda Gopeesingh, Andil Gosine, Jennifer Pritheeva Samuel, Jahajee Sisters, Janet Naidu, and Gloria Wekker.

The roundtable "Reflections on Indo-Caribbean Feminisms," held at the 38th Annual Caribbean Studies Association Conference in Grenada in 2013, provided the bridge between that issue and this collection, highlighting to us that there was a conversation in which we could continue to bring together a wider community of scholars, particularly of different generations. In addition to the presenters, who were Patricia Mohammed, Lisa Outar, Preeia Surajbali, and Gabrielle Hosein, our discussant on that panel was Alissa Trotz, and we are pleased that she was able to bring her long support of and engagement with this collection to her endorsement.

On November 5th and 6th, 2015, the IGDS, St. Augustine Campus, hosted a two-day symposium on "Indo-Caribbean Feminist Thought: Beyond Gender Negotiations," in Trinidad. The authors published in this

collection had an opportunity to present early drafts of their chapters to each other as well as to a public audience. Key to this symposium was again bringing together those who first created a body of scholarship which we could later name Indo-Caribbean feminist thought, such as Rosanne Kanhai, Rawwida Baksh, Ramabai Espinet, Aisha Khan, Sheila Rampersad, Patricia Mohammed, Rhoda Reddock, and Shalini Puri, with a generation of younger scholars and graduate students tracing a genealogy of their own identities and solidarities through such writings.

This was a historic symposium that thus brought together three generations of scholars, from around the Caribbean diaspora, in one room for the first time. Krystal Nandini Ghisyawan's review of the symposium was published in Alissa Trotz's "In the Diaspora" column space in the *Stabroek News*. Gabrielle Hosein's reflection was published in the *Trinidad Guardian*, and in her blog, "Diary of a Mothering Worker." At this symposium, we noted both generational legacies and tensions in explorations of what it means to be Indian or Dougla, to become an immigrant, confront historical violence, imagine same-sex desire, read books that connect the Caribbean to Mauritius or poetry to politics, manifest goddess possession, be a man or challenge men, and explore how education expands one's identities and responsibilities to the region.

For both of our publications, the Special Issue and this edited collection, we thank the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus, Campus Research and Publication Fund. The fund supports publication of the *CRGS* and also provided support for the 2015 symposium. Anil Seeterram and the Seeterram family, Vivek Charran, Ekta Rampersad, Lisa Naipaul, and Brenda Gopeesingh also offered financial support to the symposium, providing private sector-university collaboration to produce feminist research, which is a model for the future. The symposium was also sponsored by the US Embassy, Port of Spain, the National Lotteries Control Board, and the National Council for Indian Culture and Caribbean Airlines. Our aim with the symposium was not only to workshop the chapters of this edited collection and to produce dialogue between the separate chapters and the overarching project conceptualizations, but to build community, and we could not have achieved this without all the support we received. Special thanks for the symposium must go to the faculty, administrative staff, and graduate students of the IGDS, St. Augustine Campus, with particular thanks to Media and Branding Officer Kathryn Chan, and graduate students Sommer Hunte and Amilcar Sanatan. We would also like to thank Brigitte Shull and

Paloma Yannakakis at Palgrave Macmillan for taking on this publication and Shalini Puri for her attentive care with the project as evidenced by her attending the November symposium, writing the afterword, and providing encouraging feedback throughout the life of the manuscript. Our gratitude also extends to our blind reviewer for helpful insights and to our endorsers, Eudine Barriteau, Madhavi Kale, and Alissa Trotz for their gracious generosity in supporting this work.

Recognizing the long tradition of creative production, not just scholarly writing, within the genealogy of Indo-Caribbean feminist thought, the symposium was followed by an Indo-Caribbean Feminist Thought Literary Evening, featuring readings by Aurora Herrera, Kevin Jared Hosein, Shivanee Ramlochan, and Ramabai Espinet. Held at the Big Black Box in Port of Spain, we were also able to provide space for the activist group, Conflict Women, led by Asiya Mohammed, to share information about the organization's work with battered women and to sell the jewelry women produce for income generation. Those presentations can be viewed on the IGDS YouTube page and Shivanee Ramlochan's short reflection on being Indo-Caribbean and woman is included in this book. Finally, while we used the artwork of Shalini Seereeram for the cover of the *CRGS* Special Issue, here we have turned to the visual art of Nyla Singh and Danielle Boodoo-Fortuné. The image which we commissioned from Boodoo-Fortuné especially for the November 2014 symposium to include elements from the essays appears with our introduction. We find Nyla Singh's boat image that we use for the cover particularly evocative of the work the collection is doing. For us, the key contribution of the collection is its leadership in theorizing "post-indentureship feminist thought," meaning feminist thought founded upon the gender negotiations that directly came out of plantation life and the class, ethnic, sexual, and other shifts, relations, and identities that emerged from that particular political-economic configuration. This is a move away from "diaspora" and its continued centering of India, instead forging links with other plantation economy indentureship experiences as providing specific feminist genealogies. In that sense, the image of a tethered boat to land that nonetheless looks outward to the sea, signals not the typical "arrival," but instead the potential for departure, for travel, and circulation across oceans—a trans-oceanic theoretical connection that defines post-indentureship studies. The boat seems set to head to sea at some point, much like this collection, and our hope is that it reaches the shores of Mauritius, Fiji, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and other locations, showing a Caribbean leadership in the kind

of feminist thought that we hope to stimulate in these other sites through the collection's arrival there.

Following the 2015 Symposium, we organized a 2016 double panel, entitled "Transnational, Feminist and Interdisciplinary: New Areas of Inquiry in Indo-Caribbean Studies," at the 41st Annual Caribbean Studies Association conference in Haiti. Presenters on this panel were Kris Manjapra, Savitri Persaud, Rupa Pillai, Krystal Ghisyawan and Natasha Mahabir-Persad, Adnan Hossain, Jillian Ollivierre Fernandes, and Suzanne Narain.

Across these efforts, we have sought to provide space for scholars, activists, students, artists, and poets to engage with histories of Indo-Caribbean gender relations and the kinds of feminist enactments that they compel. This collection represents the work of several generations who still draw from those engaged in thought and action throughout the twentieth century and before. It also highlights the dispersed, new waves of scholars whom we hope this book will influence in terms of their contribution to Indo-Caribbean feminist thought.

In all these years of collaborative work, we have been supported by our families, friends, and colleagues. Gabrielle Hosein offers her gratitude to her husband, Lyndon Livingstone, her mother, Patricia Khan, and her daughter, Ziya Hosein-Livingstone, for their abiding love and encouragement. She also gives thanks to Patricia Mohammed and Rhoda Reddock, and staff at the Institute for Gender and Development Studies, where she has had an intellectual home since 1997. Lisa Outar gives special thanks to Jerry Horner for his support and encouragement; to Alessandra, Genevieve, and Freya Horner for the irrepressible wonder they bring to her days and for reminding her always of the importance of this work to trace and enact histories of feminine strength, resilience, and solidarity; to Lance Outar for his unwavering love and support; to Isobel Eleanor Outar, who worked tirelessly in both professional and family realms, providing an exemplary model of principled Indian womanhood; and to Vernon Outar, who, throughout her life, has shattered stereotypes of Indian patriarchy in his unconditional love and support for the highest level of personal and academic achievement of his children regardless of gender.

We hope that readers of this collection will see us as continuing to forge a Caribbean intellectual tradition through our theorizing of Indo-Caribbean, Dougla, and Caribbean feminisms and through our own daily enactments and activist efforts. For while we are scholars, we also come to our understandings of the Caribbean as we personally negotiate and navigate complex political cross-currents and post-indentureship gendered realities.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Interrogating an Indo-Caribbean Feminist Epistemology

Gabrielle Jamela Hosein and Lisa Outar

Over thirty years after Caribbean feminists first began theorizing Indo-Caribbean gender relations, there has not been a systematic examination of an Indo-Caribbean feminist intellectual tradition, its discursive practices, and its relationship to Caribbean feminist theory and activism as well as to Caribbean scholarship and society. While we draw on literature, activism, art, biography, and public sphere practices as sources of knowledge in this collection, in this introduction, we primarily treat scholarship as our cultural and political text and as our site for examining Indo-Caribbean feminist praxis and its politics of knowledge production. Indeed, scholarship has become one of those key sites for another generation to understand what constitutes Caribbean feminist praxis. Thus, the first aim of the collection is to deepen understanding of this underexplored Caribbean feminist intellectual trajectory (Fig. 1.1).

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Fig. 1.1 "Walking in the Lotus Room" by Danielle Boodoo-Fortuné, specially commissioned for *Indo-Caribbean Feminist Thought*

We specifically highlight Indo-Caribbean feminist *thought* as traced through antecedents to scholarship, in a range of writings and forms of public engagement, including in art and literature, as well as in the emergence of later scholarly conceptual contributions, debates, and critiques. Our emphasis on scholarship is a way of pushing further the significant body of work on gendered aspects of Indo-Caribbean women's and men's domestic relations, bodily performances, cultural crossings, literary production, and political engagements, and their implications for Indo-Caribbean feminist epistemology. Therefore, the second aim of the collection is to advance the conceptual terrain offered by an Indo-Caribbean feminist epistemological tradition.

For the purposes of this collection, *Indo-Caribbean feminist thought* therefore refers to intellectual trajectories that include gender analysis, both creative and scholarly, produced by Indo-Caribbean feminist activists, scholars, writers, and artists. It includes analysis produced, regardless of the national, ethnic, and sex/gender identities of those speaking/writing, to make visible and interrogate Indo-Caribbean women's and men's gender negotiations and feminist navigations over Caribbean history. It is defined by analysis which draws on Indo-Caribbean diasporic cosmologies, artifacts, archetypes, myths, and symbols, engagements with embodiment, popular cultural expressions, the sacred and sexual, and intellectual traditions and concepts to articulate a feminist praxis where Indian gendered experiences in the Caribbean are not marginal, while being understood in ways centered in a politics of solidarity across ethnicity, class, gender, sexualities, and nation. It is characterized by epistemological approaches that problematize myths of Indian authenticity, respectability, and purity, rec-

ognizing convergence and dissimilarities with other streams of Caribbean feminist thought.

Indo-Caribbean feminist thought can therefore be understood overall as work that has advanced theorizing of the intersections of Indianness, Caribbeanness, gender, and feminism, with a view toward transforming gendered political, sexual, and knowledge economies and their implications for inequities in the region. Further, we argue that Indo-Caribbean feminist thought is centered in conceptual approaches that consider the transoceanic dimensions of indentureship and post-indentureship, allowing for comparative feminist theorizations and solidarity across borders.

Working with this definition, this project theorizes the gendered experiences of Indians in the Caribbean to interrogate the scholarship that exists, assess its usefulness, track the emergence of divergent feminist epistemologies, and highlight the tensions and intersections of local, regional, diasporic, and transnational politics. Therefore, a third aim is to more widely explore the relationship among Indo-Caribbean feminist theory, Caribbean scholarly writing, and feminist enactments of postcolonial relationality, difference, and solidarity.

To demarcate a tradition that we are naming Indo-Caribbean feminist thought is not to remove ourselves from the larger framework of Caribbean feminisms, though it is necessary to actively engage the inclinations toward a celebratory creolization discourse that tends to elide or misread the specific experiences of Indo-Caribbean women and men. In this sense, the book articulates particularities of feminisms in the Caribbean by claiming

Indianness as multiple, ambiguous, ambivalent, and cross-pollinated, rather than leaving it in the domain of the "pure." Thus, fourth, we want to be clear that the collection engages a politics of knowledge production that builds on embodiment and particularity, but that does not advocate a "separate but equal" feminism. We operate within a recognition of the openness of Caribbean feminist thought, with its multiple epistemological and political traditions.

Rather than merely burdening bodies with ethnicity, the collection explores Indo-Caribbean particularities as a basis for connection. We argue that embodiment is a site for knowing and politics, and see evidence daily that phenotype matters, forcing recognition of the privilege or burden than comes from occupying certain bodies. Within the context of the Caribbean, we recognize the ways in which black bodies are policed and criminalized in relation to Indian and other non-black bodies as well as the ways in anti-black and anti-Indian discourses circulate in explosive ways, demonizing Indianness as another site of anti-black sentiment. Here, we want to emphasize that our continual encounters with expressed fear that we will be coopted into an Indian cultural nationalist and political agenda, or remain trapped within identity politics, is also a distrust of Indo-Caribbean feminist thought and doesn't accurately reflect decades of its politics. In such instances, there is sometimes an assumption that Afro-Caribbean feminism has already cleared space for Indian women and a suspicion of Indian women calling for greater particularity even while there are few attempts at explicitly addressing Indians within an overarching umbrella of consideration of non-white bodies.

What must also be addressed openly is the spoken and unspoken anxiety that Indian women's voices are now dominating conversations about Caribbean feminisms. We suspect this is part and parcel of a sense that Indians in the Caribbean should have assimilated by now and that Indians are taking over economically and politically. Instead of being on a terrain that is about correcting for elision of Indo-Caribbean issues, we have found ourselves coming up against a resistance to too much Indianness, whatever its politics. Nonetheless, we press on with a goal of continuing the conversation about Indian feminisms in the Caribbean, meaning feminist consciousness that is also conscious of an Indian history and presence in Caribbean gender relations. And, we remain cautious of theorizing that positions Indian women's sexuality, politics, and epistemological production as a tool for various political projects and agendas, whether

nationalist or ethnic, with implications for their particularities of expression, whether bodily and scholarly or cultural and familial.

From such a critical position, this collection focuses on the interventions in feminist discourses (Caribbean and otherwise) that Indo-Caribbean scholars, writers, activists, and artists have tried to make. It especially examines historical antecedents to these interventions and how they are important for the feminist scholarship that ensued, particularly looking at the cultural underpinnings and discourses of "difference" that have shaped Indo-Caribbean women's approaches to and articulations of feminism. Resisting a tidy narrative of teleological progression, we theorize and frame the impact of political and economic relations as well as transnational movements and intersections (both new and old) on Indo-Caribbean organizing and politics. Finally, the conceptual terrain available for contemporary theorizing, including the scholarship on Indo-Caribbean masculinities, is examined for the questions and directions it suggests. Throughout the chapters in the collection therefore, you will find engagement with the influential concepts that have emerged from this field of scholarship such as "gender negotiations," "dougla poetics," "kala pani poetics," "bhowji feminism," a "jahaji bhain principle," "matikor," and "bindi" (as theorized by Rosanne Kanhai), "carnival feminism," "coolitude," and so on. The collection reflects a coming of age in Indo-Caribbean feminist thought where we examine contemporary feminist navigations by critically drawing on and extending the last thirty years of Indo-Caribbean feminist scholarship and its conceptual contributions.

We have been attentive to differences across language and geography as well as those reflective of the experiences and perspectives of ethnically mixed Indo-Caribbeans, keeping in mind that even the term "Indo-Caribbean" is a transnational one that many of Indian ancestry do not use to name themselves and their positionality within and outside the region. We have also been reflexive about the ways in which working-class women versus educated women's voices are received and generational shifts in the ways in which relationships to the self, body, community, and politics are imagined. We emphasize the importance of paying attention to the legitimacy of multiple forms of resistance. We see education for example as a significant space of claiming agency, one that allowed women to be feminist while also meeting family aspirations, allowing navigation of values of both autonomy and belonging. In bringing together three generations of scholars to explore a range of personal and intellectual genealogies, we hope the collection thus links to the idea that Rosanne Kanhai puts

forth in "The Masala Stone Sings," that "creativity is developing in an environment of social justice" (Kanhai 1999, 211) and with the work Joy Mahabir and Mariam Pirbhai have done in their book *Critical Perspectives on Indo-Caribbean Women's Literature* where they track "models of feminist activism that [are] deeply embedded in women's plantation histories" (Mahabir and Pirbhai 2012, 40) and "feminist revisioning of the historical and genealogical record" (Mahabir and Pirbhai 2012, 37).

With these foci in mind, we hope that this collection complements those publications that we have drawn on over the last three decades, including *Matikor: The Politics of Identity for Indo-Caribbean Women* (1999), edited by Rosanne Kanhai; Halima Kassim's Ph.D. dissertation on education, community organizations, and gender among Trinidad's Indo-Muslims (1999); Sheila Rampersad's Ph.D. dissertation on douglarization and the politics of Indian-African relations in Trinidad (2000); *Gender Negotiations among Indians in Trinidad, 1917–1947* (2002), by Patricia Mohammed; *Diasporic (Dis)locations: Indo-Caribbean Women Writers Negotiate the Kala Pani* (2004), by Brinda Mehta; *Bindi: The Multifaceted Lives of Indo-Caribbean Women* (2011), edited by Rosanne Kanhai; *Critical Perspectives on Indo-Caribbean Women's Literature* (2012), edited by Joy Mahabir and Mariam Pirbhai; the *Caribbean Review of Gender Studies* Special Journal Issue, "Indo-Caribbean Feminisms: Charting Crossings in Discourse, Geography and Politics" (2012), edited by Gabrielle Hosein and Lisa Outar; *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indentureship* (2013) by Gaiutra Bahadur; and *Islam and the Americas* (2015), edited by Aisha Khan. As with our work here, these collections bring together the historical and contemporary, and the region and its diaspora, in ways that portray neither the region nor the past as backwards when it comes to feminist goals nor the site of real authenticity. In adding to this intellectual legacy, we similarly see ourselves as building a complex field, rather settling definitions and boundaries.

Feminist Navigations

Our contribution is underscored by two overall conceptual contributions to the field of Indo-Caribbean feminist thought. The first is the concept of *feminist navigations*, and the second is that of *post-indentureship feminisms*. For us, the collection is a generational example of both at work.

We suggest the concept of feminist navigations as a complement to the concept of "gender negotiations" as Patricia Mohammed has con-

ceptualized it (2002). Mohammed examined how women "strategize" within constraints determined by patriarchal gender ideologies. In her study of Indo-Trinidadians in the immediate post-indentureship period, Mohammed argued that Indo-Trinidadian women "colluded" with attempts to re-establish the "classic patriarchy" (Mohammed 2002, 32–33) while also challenging the emerging gender system "through their new wage earning status and their sexuality" (Mohammed 2002, 33). Noting the ways in which "patriarchy also smothers masculinity" (Mohammed 2002, 266), she conceptualized gender negotiation as an accretional process of compromises, arguments, collusions, compromises, resistance, and subversions over time, changing circumstances, sites of contestation, and sources of power available to Indo-Trinidadian women and men. The concept of gender negotiations makes sense in the context of the first half of the twentieth century, when feminist ideas were not as widely circulated among women and men and negotiations were by those seeking to make the most of their and their children's lives, "flaunting or following rules when they had to" (Mohammed 2003, 8). This is not to say that a feminist consciousness, that is, active challenges to patriarchal definition and discipline of girls and women's options and lives, was unknown among early Indo-Caribbean women as the work of Rhoda Reddock, Gaiutra Bahadur, Halima Kassim, Lisa Outar, and others makes clear. We are decidedly not painting a teleological narrative where past generations were less feminist but rather excavating the multiple forms that feminist thinking took then and now.

However, in her 2003 article, "Like Sugar in Coffee," Mohammed writes about an emerging feminist wave in the Caribbean, resulting from the efforts of second-wave feminism, which "is no longer a concentrated set of ideas shared by specific groups and individuals who advocated rights for women, but a consciousness of gender which has been internalized more universally and individually and has dissolved like sugar in coffee, throughout society" (Mohammed 2003, 5). As she explains, "Unlike three or four decades ago, a gender consciousness, if not a feminist consciousness has filtered throughout society. I locate a gender consciousness here as the self-awareness and confidence of one's rights and privileges as a 'female' or 'male' in society as well as the limits or oppressiveness which being male or female still imposes on the individual to realize their potential" (Mohammed 2003, 6).

Mohammed argues that many young Caribbean women are aware of and openly express gendered rights within both personal and professional

spaces and that we can define third-wave feminism in the Caribbean as "equally the adjustments or retaliations being made by masculinity and men" (Mohammed 2003, 14), but that we are also facing a problem of a "lack of a feminist consciousness. To admit or embrace a feminist consciousness, by definition, one has to work actively and consciously at dealing with the problem, not just acknowledging it. More to the point to admit a feminist consciousness requires moving beyond the clichéd ideas of supporting gender equity and equality, to more informed and articulated ideas of how these may be achieved" (Mohammed 2003, 23–24).

A feminist consciousness, not just a gender consciousness, defines this collection's own generational positionality and contribution and much of what is examined in its various essays. Thus, rather than just gender negotiations, we argue for the concept of "feminist navigations" as key. Feminist navigations builds on Gabrielle Hosein's (2004) theorization of "gender navigations" which describes the late twentieth century necessity of moving among and choosing from competing prescriptions regarding womanhood, compelling young women to navigate across divergent ideals as well as negotiate the expectations of each. Developed further here, "feminist navigations" draws attention to the shifts feminism has made to the terrain for gender and sexual rights and empowerment and includes maneuvering feminist analyses and activism. We argue that the diffusion of *feminist* ideals of equality, choice, individual aspirations, and personal fulfillment (Hosein 2004), like "sugar in coffee," compels contemporary navigations of both gender consciousness and feminist consciousness, in ways exemplified by as well as explored in this collection. Thus, the concept of feminist navigations directs us to be concerned not only with gender negotiations and navigations but also with negotiations and navigations of *the successes and tensions associated with* late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century feminisms. In this collection, we thus see ourselves as making such a move from scholarship about gender negotiations to theorizing that consciously engages an Indo-Caribbean feminist scholarly terrain definitive of at least three generations—from those feminist thinkers whose scholarship began to establish the field from the 1980s (often encountering resistance or neglect as they sought to circulate and discuss that work) to those of us now mentoring an emerging community of graduate students forty years younger than them who are coming to knowledge of themselves and their academic interests via feminist scholarship from both those earlier moments and now.

Post-Indentureship Feminisms

Second, we argue that this collection is at the forefront of theorizing what we are calling *post-indentureship feminisms*, meaning feminist consciousness, theorizing and activism that traces its genealogy through indentureship and post-indentureship experience rather than through an Indian subcontinental diaspora framework. In dislodging India from being central in the considerations of the forms that Indo-Caribbean feminist thought and praxis have taken, we therefore call for greater attention to the ways that feminist desires call upon and articulate post-indenture culture and cosmologies, which connect seemingly disparate sites such as Fiji, Mauritius, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and the Caribbean in ways that the concept of Indian diaspora does not. Thus, we propose that Indo-Caribbean feminist thought exemplifies the development of a significant intellectual tradition, which has evolved within the specific conditions of post-indentureship and post-slavery societies and is inextricably intertwined in cross-ethnic solidarities and relationality. It offers a conceptual terrain that those working on feminist thought in other post-indentureship societies can look to as they seek their own alternatives to both South Asian and Western feminist traditions and establish what transoceanic feminisms look like and share. Here we follow the work Lisa Outar is doing in her chapter linking Indo-Caribbean and Indo-Mauritian feminist writing and include within our terrain the scholarship and creative work that Indian women are doing within the wider geography of indentureship in order to note parallels, identify different navigational choices, and establish solidarities.

This overarching post-indentureship framework and noting of both parallels and differences within it holds particular relevance even within the Caribbean where indentureship experiences differed based on which country was the colonial master (as in the variations between the Francophone and Anglophone Caribbean contexts). It also provides a conceptual toolbox in our contemporary moment as new waves of subcontinental Indians settle in the region and we and they seek new modes of self-understanding and knowledge production. Finally, post-indentureship feminism offers a theoretical anchor for understanding the contexts for epistemological production and circulation in the spaces of the second or third diasporas of Indo-Caribbeans, as they find themselves in immigrant contexts where their visible Indianness yokes them to subcontinental groupings even as they strive to find the historical and conceptual language to describe their unique specificities as products of indentureship.

Chapter Outlines

Part 1: Tracing the Emergence of Indo-Caribbean Feminist Perspectives

The collection opens with Patricia Mohammed's chapter, "A Vindication for Indo-Caribbean Feminism," which weaves together autobiography and biography to trace the role of education in defining and advancing Indo-Caribbean feminist consciousness, writing, and activism. The story of education, and now scholarship, may appear as non-threatening or less radical than a more confrontational politics with masculinity and patriarchy in the region. Yet, Mohammed points out that within an Indo-Caribbean feminist intellectual trajectory are concepts of gender that enable us to see how Indo-Caribbean women and men chose to transform labor relations and create a new social and political imaginary. "The time has come for comparative histories of feminist consciousness," she concludes, "for heroines from every class to be counted and for their stories and actions to provide us with further role models, for a mature home-grown feminist history in the region, and, with this, renewed strategies for transformation."

Both Preeia D. Surajbali and Andil Gosine pick up on Mohammed's suggestion to attend to histories of feminist consciousness and the emergence of early Indo-Caribbean feminist perspectives. In her chapter, "Indo-Caribbean Feminist Epistemology: A Personal and Scholarly Journey," Surajbali draws upon the work of Ramabai Espinet, Gaiutra Bahadur, Peggy Mohan, Mariam Pirbhai, Shani Mootoo, Shalini Puri, and Brinda Mehta, to note that the emergence of a uniquely Indo-Caribbean feminist epistemology has shaped the identity formation and gender consciousness of younger scholars like herself. It has also opened a new area of exploration for Caribbean feminism, and transformational possibilities that are guided by a *jahaji bhain* challenge to patriarchal and heteronormative constructions of post-indentureship subjectivities.

Somewhat differently, in his reflexive look at his mother's *Baby* album of family pictures and his own experience of growing up in Trinidad, Andil Gosine considers various strategies for negotiating patriarchy, ethnocentrism, and homonationalism. He critiques a teleological narrative in the writing of Indo-Caribbean feminist histories, arguing that indentured subjects and their descendants are always engaged in resistance to the organization and execution of injustice, whatever their historical and geographical contexts. Drawing on Khal Torabully's theorization of indentureship which uses

metaphors of a sea voyage to emphasize the "wrecking work" of the system, Gosine argues for characterization of his mother's representations in *Baby* as illustrative of Indo-Caribbean feminist "wrecking work," for it interrupts dominant narratives, reclaims humanity, and potentially informs future social justice–seeking advocacy projects.

Part 2: Transgressive Storytelling

In the second section of the collection, *Transgressive Storytelling*, Alison Klein's interview with scholar and writer Peggy Mohan also highlights the relationship between scholarship, literature, and the writing of Indo-Caribbean gender negotiations into history, without assuming a teleological narrative nor fetishizing the resistances of indentured Indo-Caribbean women. Peggy Mohan's (2007) novel *Jahajin* depicts the challenges faced by Indian women who indentured in Trinidad as well as the rippling effects of indenture, migration, and colonization on their descendants. In this interview, Mohan discusses her novel and the interviews she conducted with formerly indentured laborers, which were the inspiration for *Jahajin*. She emphasizes the role that Indian women played in formulating a community in the Caribbean, the cycles of violence that these women faced, and the importance of oral narratives in understanding women's experience of gender negotiations over time.

Anita Baksh's chapter, "Indenture, Land and Feminist Consciousness in the Literature of Rajkumari Singh and Mahadai Das," also highlights genealogies of Indo-Caribbean feminist thought. Baksh points to the role of civic and political participation and poetry in nurturing early Indo-Guyanese feminist perspectives and providing conceptual terrain for later scholarly work. Rajkumari Singh and Mahadai Das' careers elucidate the overlap between feminist activism, scholarship, and creative endeavors. Exploring aspects of these writers' political backgrounds and activism, Baksh traces the ways in which Singh and Das were inserting images of indentureship and of Indian female experience into political and imaginative shapings of the nation.

Continuing with the theme of transgressive storytelling, Lisa Outar makes two important interventions in her chapter, "Post-indentureship Cosmopolitan Feminism: Indo-Caribbean and Indo-Mauritian Women's Writing and the Public Sphere." First, she tracks the seeds of feminist thinking present in mid-twentieth-century Indo-Caribbean publications like *The Spectator*, the cosmopolitan impulses implicit in such feminist writing, and the complex and fraught claims that Indian women make

on the public sphere in post-indentureship settings. Second, she offers an example of what Indo-Caribbean Studies might look like if we apply an archipelagic lens. Via comparing the novels of the Indo-Guyanese writer, Ryhaan Shah, and the Indo-Mauritian writers, Ananda Devi and Nathacha Appanah, Outar theorizes a post-indentureship cosmopolitan feminism and enacts a relational, archipelagic approach to assessing Indian women's writing in diasporic settings.

Finally, in this second section, through a critical analysis of Shani Mootoo's *Moving Forward Sideways Like a Crab* (2014), Tuli Chatterji analyzes how a female-to-male crossing does not necessarily confirm to a phallic structure. This new form of body—anatomically androgynous but performatively male—becomes an anti-hegemonic form that shows the need for Indo-Caribbean feminist intervention to combat the intolerance extended toward bodies that do not fit gender and sexual norms, nor norms of their transgression. Chatterji's chapter allows us to understand better the true destabilization of identities that Mootoo advocates and the radical direction she calls for in deconstructing the punitive patriarchal and heteronormative dictums that continue to structure Caribbean societies.

Part 3: Art, Archives, and Cultural Practices

From tracing the emergence of Indo-Caribbean feminist perspectives in scholarship, activism and personal life to transgressive storytelling in forms of creative writing, the collection then moves to explorations of art, archives, and cultural practices. Kavita Ashana Singh, in her chapter, revisits Carnival (a popular site for thinking about Caribbean women's feminist or anti-feminist choices within expressions of national belonging) and puts forward a perspective on Indo-Caribbean feminisms that is not oppositional but is rather keenly attuned to feminist claims and practices that cross ethnic divides and collectively challenge continuing patriarchal nationalist narratives. Her chapter also importantly examines the role of the North American diaspora returning home for women's performances of gendered identity. This chapter argues that Indo-Caribbean feminist thought must engage Afro-Caribbean feminist analyses of women's Carnival performances through a comparative methodology of minimal incommensurability. Ethnographically examining Indo-Guyanese and Indo-Trinidadian women's participation in Trinidad Carnival, Singh

frames the specificities of Indian women's feminism within the *jahaji bhain* concept, both locally and transnationally.

Krystal Nandini Ghisyawan focuses on bisexual identities, agency, and politics by discussing the stories of eight bisexual women, four of whom identify as Indo-Trinidadian and the other four as mixed. This chapter highlights the ways in which Indo-Trinidadian bisexual women actively negotiate the sociocultural minefield of femininity and respectability, engage in protests and sexual rights movements, and use their online presence and personal lives to forward their political activism. Ghisyawan argues that the positionality of bisexual women can be used to clarify processes of identity formation, sexual subjectivity, and political participation, as bisexuals are still a largely invisible portion of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community and engage in a conscious negotiation of their insider–outsider positions.

Angelique V. Nixon brings together a focus on art with the fundamental contributions of Patricia Mohammed in the development of Caribbean feminism, to argue for the importance of the visual in theorizing Indo-Caribbean feminist thought. By offering a specific genealogy of Mohammed's knowledge production that is Indo-Caribbean focused and expansive in its definition of Caribbeanness and pairing it with an examination of the artwork of the Indo-Trinidadian contemporary visual artist Shalini Seereeram, Nixon argues that Seereeram's visual art embodies and visually offers what Mohammed calls for in her claiming of the Caribbean landscape beyond/outside notions of the "Caribbean picturesque" or "tropical paradise." Nixon's key approach in this chapter is to discuss visual art in terms of knowledge production by Indo-Caribbean women. With her focus on moments of intersectionality and formations of solidarity, Nixon sheds new light on the processes of building feminist knowledge in the region.

Finally, in "Art, Violence, and Non-Return," Lisa Outar interviews Indo-Guadeloupean artist Kelly Sinnapah Mary. Her work is inextricably intertwined with the autobiographical as she uses personal spaces such as her childhood bedroom and her own body in her exhibits. At the same time, Sinnapah Mary pushes back against readings of her work as defined by a particular ideology about women or feminism, highlighting the multiple and varied forms that Indo-Caribbean feminist knowledge production takes. While she does not claim this epistemological lineage in the interview, Sinnapah Mary's overall engagement with global forms of gendered violence coupled with her emphasis on processes of reconstruction continually

at work in Indian women's lives in the diaspora suggest connections to the work of Indo-Caribbean feminists like Patricia Mohammed who explore the complex ways in which patriarchy gets reconfigured in the Caribbean by Indian women and men.

Part 4: Dougla Feminisms

In the penultimate section of the collection, three chapters consider the question of dougla feminisms. As Mohammed did for her earlier writings, Gabrielle Jamela Hosein reflects on her own work where she embraced dougla feminism as a way to name transgressive Indo-Caribbean women's practices. Here she explores what such an appropriation of the concept of dougla, by herself and by other feminist scholars, may have meant for both Indian and dougla gendered identities and politics and what it may mean now in a changed/changing atmosphere for claiming Indianness in the Caribbean. Hosein's theorization of her daughter's experiences as a dougla, both present and future, looks forward to a new generation of Caribbean feminists. Taking an approach that is personal, epistemological, and political, she shows the importance of examining openings as well potential displacements in Indo-Caribbean feminist intellectual trajectories.

Also in this section, Sue Ann Barratt leads us boldly into the raucous world of Nicki Minaj to try to assess Minaj's inhabiting of the category of the dougla and the ways in which she plays with notions of sexuality, female power, and success in a hyper-gendered arena of rap music. Barratt's analysis offers interpretations of new unexpected transnational and transgressive feminist practices. She particularly argues that dougla feminism could find itself in a paradox because of multiple and varied ethnic identifications made by douglas or by others perceiving this mixed group.

Kaneesha Cherelle Parsard's contribution puts forth a dougla feminist theory of representation via the object of cutlass as it is taken up in both Andil Gosine's multimedia artwork and Gaiutra Bahadur's nonfiction narrative of Indian women's experiences of indentureship. In looking at these contemporary Indo-Caribbean feminist works, Parsard constructs a dialogue between the cutlass as artistic form and as potential suturer and the associations of the cutlass in the colonial archive with spectacular violence, especially addressing how physical objects at the center of colonial histories draw together violence, racialized histories, gender, and sexuality. Parsard argues that the cutlass is ambiguous and mobile, uneasily traveling

through historical circuits of exchange, spaces such as the estate and the house, and contemporary print and performance. In examining the cutlass, this chapter highlights the politics of narration and the intimacy "at work in the history and present that Africans and Indians share."

Part 5: New Masculinities and Femininities

The final section on new masculinities and femininities offers fresh insights on the forms that Indo-Caribbean masculinities and diasporic femininity take on when refracted through the lens of this feminist intellectual tradition. Noting the absence of an accompanying body of literature on Indo-Caribbean men, Rhoda Reddock attempts to locate masculinity discourses in the larger body of Indo-Caribbean and Caribbean feminist writing and thinks through the implications of those discourses, past and present, for an epistemology of Indo-Caribbean feminist thought.

Michael Niblett explores the pressures exerted on traditional conceptions of masculinity as a result of increasing unemployment in male-oriented jobs following the neoliberal restructuring of the world economy. Given the lack of scholarship focused specifically on the transformation of Indo-Caribbean masculinities in this period, the article takes up Rhoda Reddock's injunction that we look to Caribbean literature and popular culture as a vital repository of information on such changes. Through an analysis of Michel Ponnamah's novel *Dérive de Josaphat* (1991), Niblett considers the relationship between the decline of plantation agriculture in Martinique, the dislocation of masculinist identities, and the reworking of the masculinist narrative trope. He foregrounds the processes of violence and exploitation through which Indo-Caribbean masculinities are engendered and provides a utopian glimpse of how humanness and masculinity might be otherwise imagined.

Finally, Stephanie Jackson's chapter on diasporic Indo-Caribbean Hindu goddess-centered worship highlights how women's trance has become a major point of contention among temple communities in recent years. Emanating predominantly from within Indo-Guyanese-American ecstatic religious groups in New York City, such ambivalence and anxiety rest upon a paradoxical predicament: women routinely undergo trance despite a dominant discourse that women should not. Jackson suggests that gendered anti-trance narratives operate not merely as proscriptions but they undergird multiple multivalent messages constitutive of emergent Indo-Guyanese diasporic subjectivities within the broader context of

a transnational ecstatic religious movement. As with Kavita Singh's chapter, Jackson's work here allows us to see the transnational circuits that ideas about Indo-Caribbean femininity travel and the potentially subversive versions of knowledge and praxis that can emerge in those contexts.

Closing Thoughts

In the afterword, Shalini Puri engages her own contributions to the field of Indo-Caribbean feminist thought to reflect upon the interventions and stakes of the collection. We close with the words that the writer Shivanee Ramlochan shared on Facebook on Indian Arrival Day in 2015, words that resonate deeply with our belief in the necessary flexibility, inclusiveness, intersectionality, relationality, and solidarity of Indo-Caribbean feminist thinking.

Like much of the scholarship from the Indo-Caribbean, the collection is heavily weighted toward perspectives from Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana and their diasporas. While we were unable to secure contributors to discuss the terrain of Suriname, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Barbados, and other sites of the Indian indentureship experience within the Caribbean, we include here work on theorizing being done in Guadeloupe and Martinique as a way of calling attention to smaller Indian communities and the different stakes for operating within a feminist framework as an Indian woman in these sites. We also hope our featuring of comparative work that includes Mauritius makes apparent the unfettered ripples and effects of the epistemological traditions we are tracking here. However, we are aware that there is much more work to be done in the field of Indo-Caribbean feminist thought, not only to bring in geographies left out here but also to include theorizations of how new waves of subcontinental Indians settling in the Caribbean as well as understudied groups such as Indo-Caribbean Muslims may be deploying feminism across their own negotiations and navigations. We want to open rather than foreclose discussions about the multiple meanings of arrival with its particular valences for gendered negotiations among those for whom the rupture from India was generative.

We close with a reminder that our goal and methodology throughout the conceptualizing and compiling of this book collection have been to work collaboratively to track contemporary manifestations of feminist consciousness in creative writing, art, scholarship, activism, and personal life, a tracking that must be as attentive to contradiction, porousness, and