

**Greedharry, Mrinalini. 'Unhomed Knowledge: The Diasporic Family as Site of Subaltern Pedagogy.' *Subaltern Women's Narratives: Strident Voices, Dissenting Bodies*. Edited by Samraghni Bonnerjee. Routledge, 2021. 60-70.**

In a persuasive account of how we might read the relations between racism and capitalism otherwise, Gargi Bhattacharyya poses a critical question: 'It is worth for a moment considering whether reproduction of the means of life must necessarily lead to the reproduction of the social relations of exploitation'.<sup>1</sup> She poses this question specifically in relation to our understanding of reproductive labour, the labour that is normally considered to be necessary for the continuation of productive labour, but kept invisible, unwaged, and private. Insofar as we understand reproductive labour as only the supplement to productive labour, she observes we do not allow ourselves to imagine 'the range of reproductive practices that go beyond merely making the waged worker ... the other ways of being that exist at the edge of or alongside capitalist formations'.<sup>2</sup> It is not easy either to imagine or theorize the work that many women, usually subaltern, do as anything other than the work that makes 'real' (other) work and 'valuable' (other) lives possible, because this account fits so neatly into narratives of progress, development, and mobility. In narratives of progress, women do reproductive labour until the conditions of their lives, whether structural, educational, or psychological, are changed thereby enabling them to productive labour. We know, for example, that the rise and success of certain middle and upper class women depends on the labour of working class women who take care of their homes and children, not only so that their bosses can progress, but so that, in theory, the working class woman can, through her labour, provide the conditions of that life to her own daughter. It is for exactly this reason that Bhattacharyya's question is so important. What are the conditions in which the reproduction of life does not simply reproduce racist, sexist, colonial, capitalocentric relations?

In this chapter I pursue some answers to this question through an autobiographical investigation into my own family. On the paternal side, my family is composed mostly of descendants of Bihari farmers who were indentured in Mauritius in the nineteenth century. On the maternal side, my family is composed entirely of Tamil farmers, who moved from rural to urban Tamil Nadu during India's pre-Independence years. Taken together they constitute a useful case for thinking about the nuances of transition from subaltern to elite because the ways in which they fit into narratives of progress, development, and mobility vary. Although the different trajectories of these Mauritian and Indian families are not especially unusual in themselves, the convergence of those trajectories in one family is not commonplace, which means my lived experience as a member of this family gives me a useful vantage point from which to think about how the conditions of subalternity might be lived, produced, and reproduced. My aim, however, as described below, is not to describe my experience of this family, but rather to think differently, in a subaltern way, about what a family does. As Didier Eribon puts it in his memoir, 'only an epistemological break with the way in which people spontaneously think about themselves renders possible the description of the mechanisms by which the social order reproduces itself'.<sup>3</sup>

*Subaltern Autobiography*

As scholars of subaltern studies and postcolonial life-writing remind us, the autobiographical impulse often camouflages the elite's desire to recover and restore a subaltern subject that the colonizer's history or anthropology proper cannot achieve. For example, my initial aim in writing this was to recover something of the life of Shanti Moonsasing<sup>4</sup>, my paternal grandmother, because I wanted to do justice to the reproductive labour she did that made first my life and eventually my productive labour possible. However, as Bhattacharyya's analysis suggests, believing that Shanti Moonsasing's labour had value only insofar as it could be used or exchanged into productive labour is thinking imbued with elite logic. To speak about her in order to turn her life, retrospectively, into something useful to racial capitalism would not be a subaltern studies project at all. As John Beverley characterizes it, the aim of subaltern studies is actually not to speak 'about' the subaltern, however intimately one might think one knows them. Instead a subaltern studies approach "registers rather how the knowledge we construct and impart as academics is structured by the absence, difficulty, or impossibility of representation of the subaltern".<sup>5</sup> Keeping Beverley's characterization in mind, my aim here must differ from what a postcolonial life-writer sets out to do, which is to craft a narrative form and style that "sutures a social and conceptual gap".<sup>6</sup> Although postcolonial life-writing is frequently characterized by narrative styles that foreground gaps and disjunctures, it also has recourse to narrative strategies that incite emotion for or on behalf of the subaltern. Inciting empathy for the subaltern functions as another way of assembling the fragments in subjectivity that are produced by power/knowledge, evoking feeling for a subject who cannot be represented. Although a subaltern studies approach is committed to the subaltern, it must do so by focusing on exposing these gaps rather than recovering a voice.

Instead of seeking to produce a narrative about the subaltern women in my family, then, I want to register the absences and difficulties of thinking about their lives, by thinking about them in relation to each other as quite differently positioned and enabled social actors. In doing so I am also drawing on my own experience as a diasporic woman who was supposed to either reproduce or ignore their example in her own life as their direct descendent. This reflection draws on the lives of four women: my paternal great-grandmother, Chinta Bundhoo, my paternal grandmother, Shanti Moonsasing, my maternal great-grandmother Sellammah Samuel, and my maternal grandmother, Mercy Yesudasan. As will become clear in what follows these women were not all subaltern in the same way or to the same degree, but it is the fundamental 'conception of subalternity as relational and fluid rather than as an absolute category'<sup>7</sup> that frames my attempt to think about their lives.

Although it is not my intention to write an autobiography here, it is autobiography as a genre that provides a grid for thinking about some of the silences and absences that construct my ancestors' subalternity. As one of the foundational critics of autobiography himself observes 'this conscious awareness of the singularity of each individual life is the late product of a specific civilization'<sup>8</sup>, namely modern European civilization. Gusdorf's argument is that only Western individuals are *capable* of thinking and writing autobiography, but postcolonial scholarship has revealed instead the many ways in which autobiography is a crucial genre for producing normative definitions of both self and valuable life in Western knowledge systems. The canonical autobiography 'prioritizes authenticity, autonomy, self-realization, and

transcendence—Western Enlightenment values that ... associate autobiography with essentialist or romantic notions of selfhood and the sovereign subject'.<sup>9</sup> In fact, Lisa Lowe argues that autobiography could be considered 'the liberal genre par excellence. It is the modern narrative expression of the individual subject providing evidence of not only the imperatives and privileges of subjects, but also its aesthetic form'.<sup>10</sup> The self that chooses to and is successful in transcending their circumstances is the proper autobiographical subject; and their conformity to certain autobiographical criteria gives us the proper form for a life.

In addition to the clear importance of criteria such as autonomy and transcendence one further criterion is a self defined within the context of a nation. Although an autobiography may not necessarily foreground the nation, it is frequently through reference to a nation's past and future that an individual life becomes understandable and valuable, a circumstance that brings the genre into a productive tension with the Enlightenment drive towards universals. One way in which this becomes obvious in canonical Western autobiography is the preponderance of nationally important figures who write the story of their lives, such as statesmen, explorers, scientists, and artists as contributions to the nation. Autobiography as a genre, thus plays an important role in creating and populating histories of the nation itself. In the case of postcolonial writing, again, this question of nation is vexed, since colonial subjects often struggle to articulate their subjectivity in terms of a nation that has yet to come into being. But since autobiography also does important nation-building work, the autobiographies of anti-colonial figures such as M K Gandhi's *The Story of my Experiments With Truth* have an important discursive role in constructing the post-colonial nation.

Although consideration of a number of other criteria for autobiography could illuminate the question of whether the reproduction of life must necessarily reproduce relations of exploitation, given the scope of this chapter the focus is more narrowly on autonomous choice, nation-building, and transformation from subaltern to elite. In the sections that follow I will reflect on the presence and absence of these three themes in the lives of subaltern women in my family in order to sketch out some possibilities for a subaltern pedagogy.

### *In Place of a Choice*

Amitav Ghosh's historical novel *The Sea of Poppies* follows the pathways to and from indenture out of India with close attention to the historical conditions of possibility. Nandini Dhar argues that Ghosh's skill lies in his dramatization of what would otherwise be lost in a sheer description of the indenture contract. Indenture did involve a contract, an agreement to undertake specified work, but it was not, according to Sudesh Mishra, a contract in the sense that liberal contract law would have it. This is because although it was enacted through paper and involved a proper name, it did not constitute a signature but was simply a name entered as text into a contract. As Mishra puts it, the indentured labourer was, thus, not 'in agreement or disagreement, but *girmit*'<sup>11</sup>, and as Dhar highlights 'the act of signing a *girmit* never quite becomes the moment of signing an agreement wherein the Indian labourer enters into an equal, conscious, and contractual relationship with the plantation authorities'.<sup>12</sup> Ghosh's use of the word *girmit* in his novel is thus highly deliberate, one that places the subaltern subject's ability to choose into question, both in the novel and in history. He is careful, in other words,

not to create a narrative of choices retrospectively and thereby subjectify the subaltern through the mode of literature.

As an emblem of subaltern life, the *girmit* foregrounds the fundamental difficulty in describing most of the lives of the women in my family, on both maternal and paternal sides though only the paternal side is actually descended from indentured labourers. It is arguable, however, that in a historical context where marriage was not an individual choice to enter into a contract, it also functioned as a kind of *girmit*. Thus, my maternal great-grandmother, Sellammah Samuel, who was born at the end of the nineteenth century in Tindivanam, South India, had a marriage arranged by her father. As the family grew and her husband's work as a government official took him to bigger, urban centres, she moved with him to Ranipet, and eventually ended her days in Madras (now Chennai) in her son-in-law's home. By contrast, her daughter, Mercy Yesudasan, stands out among the other women I describe here because her life seems to be marked by pure, individual choice. She married for love, she chose her own career in medicine, she pursued her education travelling alone to Edinburgh, Scotland to train as a post-graduate in the 1950s, and then worked and lived with her two youngest children in Jaffna, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) apart from her husband during the 1960s.

Shanti Moonsasing's life was almost completely devoid of the choices that characterized Mercy Yesudasan's life. Her marriage was arranged for her by her father when she was only fifteen years old. She had no secondary education and never worked outside the home, having three children during the first ten years of her marriage. When she was in her 40s, her husband decided to move the family to England in the late 1960s. Her husband died very soon after the family emigrated, leaving her without a means of supporting herself in a foreign country, and from this point onwards, she was dependent on her children to provide her with a home. There was almost nothing, from an elite way of thinking, that Shanti decided about her own life.

But Shanti's mother, Chinta Bundhoo, though so little is known of her<sup>13</sup>, is another kind of exception. She left the marital home shortly after giving birth to Shanti and never returned to the family or appears to have done anything else that might be historically noteworthy. One can describe this as a choice, but unlike Mercy Yesudasan's life, it is almost impossible to say what this choice expressed. Did she decide that married life and motherhood were simply not for her? What were the conditions under which it was possible for her to choose not to do her reproductive labour in 1920s Mauritius as a woman without education or other relationships, sexual or familial, to provide a means of living?

Sellammah Samuel and Chinta Bundhoo were contemporaries, but the ways in which they negotiated *girmit* in their lives had very different consequences. Samuel Sellammah was a rural, uneducated, woman, and a Christian by birth, but she lived her life within the normative form of the family. One cannot describe her life as filled with autonomous choices, but it certainly seems to be one that made choices possible for her daughters. Just as I initially sought to retrieve my paternal grandmother, Sellammah Samuel can be assimilated into quite legible autobiographical accounts of her daughters. Chinta Bundhoo was also a rural, uneducated, woman, but belonged to the Hindu religious majority. Her life actually seems to be marked by

something more than *girmit*, but it does not, like Sellammah, progress into greater choices for her daughter as the contrast between Mercy Yesudasan and Shanti Moonsasing makes clear. Is the conversion of *girmit* into choice across the generations thus only possible through properly, normative reproductive labour? What did Chinta's refusal of reproductive labour do?

### *Nation and Nurture*

In 1965, three years before Mauritius finally acceded to independence from British rule, Shanti Moonsasing's husband decided to emigrate to England. The timing of this migration is, in several ways, unexpected since Shanti and her children were exactly the type of Indo-Mauritian family who could have benefited significantly from independence if they had stayed on the island. Independence meant the rise of the Indo-Mauritian majority into positions of governmental and social power on the island, so much so that there was a panic about what this shift in majority-minority relations would mean post-Independence. Having worked a respectable job as a teacher all of his working life, with his eldest son already studying for a medical degree in India, it is an open question why Shanti's husband decided to move the family to England, but what is curious is the decided disinterest in the work of building the new island nation. Shanti's oldest son did return to Mauritius upon qualification as a doctor, but within a year decided to rejoin the rest of the family in England. Her youngest son never sought to return to Mauritius. The significance of this decision to leave the country before Independence is even more pronounced in a context where, for example, one of the witnesses at Shanti's wedding was Dr. Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, the future first prime minister of independent Mauritius. Or that the Bissoondoyals, of whom Basdeo and Sookdeo were leading figures in anti-colonial resistance and the Mauritian Labour Party, were longstanding family friends.

None of the men or women on the paternal side of my family was engaged in or notable for any kind of paid or unpaid work that furthered anti-colonial resistance or helped to build the independent nation of Mauritius. At the same time, neither were they staunchly imperial loyalists who helped to defend or build the colony or the empire. Not untypically for this first wave of indentured diasporic Indians, there was not a strong attachment to the India their ancestors had left, despite the firm retention of many cultural practices and values. Shanti's father was born in a village in the Punjab and had migrated alone as an adult to Mauritius to work on the sugar mills. Shanti's husband's parents, a labourer and housewife, were both born in Mauritius, but they died when he was a child, leaving him to be raised by distant relatives. During her lifetime Shanti and her family travelled to India just once, stopping in the port of Bombay (Mumbai) on the ship voyage out from Mauritius to England. Her eldest son's years studying in South India did not modify this attachment to the homeland either. Though it was not the part of India his ancestors had come from, the mere fact of living and working in India did not change these cultural affiliations. There were few people or institutions to keep Shanti, her husband, or their children attached to any nation.

Their generational counterparts in the Samuel and Yesudasan families were deeply involved in the project of building the independent nation of India, both before and long after 1947. As Christians, rather than Hindus or Muslims, the Samuels and Yesudasans were also enrolled in

the nation-building project in a particularly deliberate way, working through Christian mission organizations, for example, to advance the lives of their fellow citizens and cultivate transnational relations.<sup>14</sup> Several male members of the immediate and extended family also had long, active careers in the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force. Since most members of the Samuel and Yesudasan families remained within easy distance of their ancestral land, living in one of three points that formed a roughly equidistant triangle between Madras (Chennai), Vellore, and Tindivanam, this nation-building work was also profoundly regional. If they were invested in nation-building projects, this was also partly, perhaps, because they were never far from a place in which they immediately recognized themselves as belonging.

The diasporic nature of the Moonsasing family, in contrast to the strongly local-national character of the Yesudasan family, highlights the way in which national capital, rather than nationality as a legal status, entrenches subalternity. What I mean by national capital is that the succession of displacements and detachments from the nation--India, Mauritius, or England--in a diasporic family like the Moonsasings makes it more complicated for any member within that family to use the nation's capacity to reproduce valuable lives. Mercy Yesudasan's descendants, when they leave India, certainly become subaltern in a new way, which is the way that migrants are subalterns within the nation in which they arrive. But both Shanti Moonsasing's ancestors and descendants, are arguably even more deeply subaltern since they always seem to be in the process of leaving a nation to which they never really belonged, for another nation where they will not belong. Shanti was born in one country (Mauritius) and died in another (England), which was also true of her father (born in India and died in Mauritius) as well as her eldest son (born in Mauritius and died in Canada).

Earlier, I argued that autobiography only becomes legible in relation to a nation, which has always made postcolonial and migrant life-writing a particular challenge but makes this kind of diasporic life—one in which there is a new migration in every generation--almost impossible to write. One could argue, from a more conventionally individualist perspective, that the two sides of this family represent people with more or less psychological capacity for effective socialization, cooperation with others to accomplish goals, or building collective identity. While this would not necessarily be inaccurate, I think it does not fully capture how the continuation of subaltern-elite dynamics of power relies on reproducing people with normative attachments to nations. Can you reproduce the social relations of exploitation when you and your family are not and cannot be written into the story of the nation?

### *Transformation*

As suggested within the logic of transfer from the subaltern to the elite, the value of the reproductive labour a woman performs inevitably rises in estimation in direct proportion to the capitalocentric success of the children and grandchildren she raises. Sellammah Samuel raised six sons and daughters who, without exception, all became highly productive workers and securely national citizens. For example, her youngest daughter, Sulochana, Mercy Yesudasan's youngest sister, became the first woman in India to earn a doctoral degree in nursing, travelling alone to Columbia University to pursue her studies, and eventually becoming a professor of nursing in Delhi as well as a national representative for India in organizations such as the World

Health Organization. On the paternal side of my family, by contrast, Chinta Bundhoo, gave birth to Shanti Moonsasing in 1924, and then left the marital home. By all accounts, Chinta did not enter into any other relationships or bear any more children, neither did she express an interest in the three grandchildren who were born during the 1940s.

The success of Mercy Yesudasan's reproductive labour was certainly complicated by her own process of transformation from subaltern to elite. She spent several years of her life separated from her oldest two children while studying and then working abroad in order to advance her career prospects in India. She gave birth to four children, two of whom became educated professionals, somewhat like their mother, and two of whom did not complete tertiary education or become employed in skilled professions. Among Mercy's ten grandchildren, their paths through education and employment closely resemble that of their respective parents. Shanti's reproductive labour was also complicated, but in her case the complications arose because of diasporic life, as described in the previous section. Once she had migrated to England and become widowed, she was highly dependent on her eldest and youngest child, neither of whom married or had children. She was the centre of the household until her death, but it was a household that did not expand far beyond its original size. Although both of her grandchildren completed tertiary education in England and became professionals, like their father, neither one of them have children. The Bundhoos and Moonsasings, at least through this branch of the family<sup>15</sup>, will come to an end with the current generation. The Samuels and Yesudasans, by contrast, have not only successfully reproduced, but in doing so have firmly established their position as elite, rather than subaltern.

If autobiography as a form depends upon a successful transcendence of circumstances, then the Samuels and Yesudasans, in their constellation as family, are clearly proper autobiographical subjects. It is much less clear what narrative one can make from the lives of the Bundhoos and Moonsasings, which brings me back to the limit of how we can write the subaltern life and the question of a subaltern pedagogy.

#### *The diasporic family as subaltern pedagogy*

What is puzzling for me, as a scholar as much as a granddaughter, is that it would not be straightforward to say what I learned from my paternal grandmother, Shanti Moonsasing, though she was the person who shaped my everyday life from the time I was born to my early teenage years. And yet, neither would it be straightforward to say that my maternal grandmother Mercy Yesudasan taught me by her example, because I never encountered her as a live person. But in some sense, her live presence was not necessary because she was already legible within the elite order of things as someone I *ought* to emulate. Just as her eldest children learned to become professionals; live and work within established familial, religious, and national frameworks; and maintain their transfer to the elite in the lives of their children, without her everyday presence in their early lives, so did I. Is there, nevertheless, something that one learns about subalternity from the living presence of subalterns in the midst of an elite life?

In fact, there are many things that I learned from my Mauritian grandmother, but they are hard to articulate and describe precisely because they were of little use to me in securing or sustaining my ongoing transfer to the elite. Like almost all Mauritians, the language we spoke at home was Mauritian Creole, a French-based language that includes words borrowed from African and Indian languages as well as English. On the island, the ongoing legacy of colonialism manifests in the fact that you will have to learn English to become educated and French to be represented in media and public discourse. People continue to speak creole to their children, but they will have to learn standardized European languages to effect or maintain their transfer to the elite. The persistence of creole as an everyday language is in fact a remarkable instance of subaltern life, since it retains its vigour as a practice without standardization or institutionalization (though recently, both have been attempted). What is required for this is subaltern *presence*; you have to be there with your children to speak creole because it is not something that can be learned other than from other living beings.

A subaltern pedagogy, then, may not be an alternative to elite pedagogy, imagined as a set of strategies for surviving domination or overthrowing the oppressors, but a way of living with others that cannot be extracted from the relationships themselves. Whatever set of conditions and understanding that enabled Chinta Bundhoo, for example, to refuse her reproductive labour was not something that she could or did teach her daughter, simply because she had no relationship with her or her grandchildren. In Chinta Bundhoo's absence, her daughter could not learn about subalternity; whereas in the absence of Mercy Yesudasan, her children and grandchildren could learn about and even reproduce the elite order.

It is through this kind of presence that I would argue the diasporic family becomes a particularly rich site of subaltern pedagogy, not because it is a family but because through its relations it distributes and preserves subaltern knowledges that would be gradually dissolved by the transformation of the family, over successive generations, into the elite. In this sense, a diasporic family is not the kind of Bourdieusian family that functions as a set of strategies of social reproduction; instead, it is more like the colonized family Fanon describes in *Black Skin, White Masks*. As he notes, in European psychoanalytic circles 'the family represents in effect a certain fashion in which the world presents itself to the child. There are close connections between the structure of the family and the structure of the nation'.<sup>16</sup> The analyst's focus on the family as both the foundation and the context of the individual is thus justifiable. In the case of colonized and racialized people, however, Fanon argues that the presumed alignment between family, society, and nation does not so obviously secure the analysis. Instead, he argues quite categorically 'A normal Negro child, having grown up within a normal family, will become abnormal on the slightest contact with the white world'.<sup>17</sup> Even in Fanon's text it is not clear what happens inside the subaltern family that allows it to function as a space that is organized differently from the society and nation around it, but his critique opens a space to reconsider the colonized family as something other than inevitably reproducing the racist, colonialist relations of exploitation in which its members exist.

The absence of strategizing for social reproduction becomes particularly pronounced when the colonial or racialized family is also on the move and becomes a diasporic family. Diasporic life,



as distinct from transnational lives where transfer to the elite is the aim of being on the move<sup>18</sup> acquires and develops knowledge about what Dai Kojima calls 'mobilities-in-difference'.<sup>19</sup> Diaspora subjects are typically either seen as fully agentic in their movement from one place to another, such as choosing to make a better life through carefully planned migration; or completely dependent on dominating structures, such as being forced to migrate for political or economic reasons. Kojima proposes the concept of 'mobilities-in-difference' in order to think about diaspora experience as something that is not just about escaping subalternity. In doing so, he captures fleeting moments in which his subjects make queer, diasporic life in imaginative and unexpected ways. One man, an East Asian migrant whose body does not conform to any of the prevailing gay ideals in urban Canada, develops relationships with men in Asia by broadcasting his everyday life in his Canadian apartment over the internet. Such actions might not be recognizable as building 'real' relationships, but they allow queer diasporic subjects to find and build relationships with others in which they do not have to relinquish their subalternity. They also allow the knowledge of being on the move to retain its own value, not of being from one place or settling successfully in another but knowing how to live with others beyond the normative forms of family, society, or nation.

The subaltern pedagogy to be found in the diasporic family is neither a secret set of tactics about how to resist elite power, nor a strategy for reproducing itself otherwise. Instead, it may be the small, ordinary things we learn by living together without wondering what use they will be in the future or whether the family will go on beyond us.

### *Postscript*

Shortly after I was born my father went in search of Chinta Bundhoo, the absent grandmother he had never met before, to see if she might be interested in her prospective great-granddaughter. She consented, it seems, to have a photograph taken of her holding me in her arms, and then, once again, returned to her unproductive life.

### **Notes**

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<sup>1</sup> Gargi Bhattacharyya, *Rethinking Racial Capitalism: Questions of reproduction and survival* (London, Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), 55.

<sup>2</sup> Bhattacharyya, 55.

<sup>3</sup> Didier Eribon, *Returning to Reims* (London, Allen Lane, 2018), 47.

<sup>4</sup> I have elected to refer to the women in my family by the names they were given at birth to clearly distinguish the different generations within one family from each other.

<sup>5</sup> John Beverley, *Subalternity and Representation: Arguments in Cultural Theory* (Durham, Duke University Press, 1999), 40.

<sup>6</sup> Beverley, 36.

<sup>7</sup> Anuradha Ramanujan, 'The Subaltern, the text and the critic: Reading Phoolan Devi,' *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 44.4 (2008): 368.

<sup>8</sup> Georges Gusdorf, 'Conditions and Limits of Autobiography,' in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, trans James Olney (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980), 29.

<sup>9</sup> Gillian Whitlock, *Postcolonial Life-Narratives: Testimonial Transactions* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2015), 46.

<sup>11</sup> Nandini Dhar, 'Shadows of Slavery, Discourses of Choice, and Indian Indentureship in Amitav Ghosh's *The Sea of Poppies*,' *Ariel: a review of international English literature*, 48.1 (2017): 26.

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<sup>12</sup> Dhar, 26. See also Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (London, Hurst and Company, 2013) for an account that also offers a very careful analysis of what kind of choice, materially and historically, indenture represented for women in particular.

<sup>13</sup> Chinta's parentage is not known because my genealogical research has not yet uncovered her birth certificate. It is thus not possible to say whether she was born in Mauritius or how her parents came to be on the island. She does not seem to have had any other family on the island because she did not return to her parents after she left her marital home.

<sup>14</sup> I have not explored the question of religion in greater depth here for reasons of space, but it is worth observing that the Samuels and Yesudasans were religious minority subjects within India and never having been members of a high caste remained subaltern in this respect. The Bundhoos and Moonsasings belonged to the Hindu majority in Mauritius.

<sup>15</sup> Shanti Moonsasing had an elder half-sister, who also married, had children, and has great-grandchildren still living in Mauritius.

<sup>16</sup> Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans Charles Lam Markmann (New York, Grove Press, 1967), 141.

<sup>17</sup> Fanon, 143.

<sup>18</sup> Lily Cho, 'Asian Canadian Futures: Diasporic Passages and the Routes of Indenture,' *Canadian Literature*, 199 (Winter 2008): 185.

<sup>19</sup> Dai Kojima, 'Migrant Intimacies: Mobilities-in-Difference and *Basue* Tactics in Queer Asian Diasporas,' *Anthropologica*, 56.1 (2014): 34.

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