INTRODUCTION: MIGRATORY WOMEN, TRAVELLING FEMINISMS

Kalpana Ram
Research Fellow, Anthropology, School of Behavioural Sciences, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW 2109, Australia

This Special Issue appears at the end of more than 15 years of urgent critique. Diverse groups of women have found it imperative to demonstrate that gender and female oppression cannot be understood as categories autonomous of race and ethnicity.1 Thanks to their efforts, female oppression can no longer be regarded as universalizable in the way once envisaged by second wave feminism in the affluent capitalist enclaves of Europe, America, Britain, and Australia. More than this, such assumptions of universality have themselves been shown to be premature, in that they rely on an unquestioned eurocentrism that has been fed by colonial and neocolonial relations of Western dominance. A complex colonial history marks the politics of European enquiries, both feminist and nonfeminist, into gender subordination outside the European world. It is because of this history that feminist definitions of both “universalism” and “particularity” (or “difference”) have proved equally oppressive to women outside the Anglo-American and European world. Earlier universalistic notions of patriarchal oppression have turned out to be generalizations based on the preoccupations of a comparatively privileged stratum of feminists in the West. Equally, however, an exclusive emphasis on the “local” by members of this privileged group provides little relief to other women. So-called “Third World” women have been made only too familiar with the oppressive experience of having their problems located for them within cultural particularity, in a patriarchy all their very own, typically located in the “premodern” of a Eurocentric teleology.

If it is possible for contributors in this Special Issue to confidently refer to feminism not in the singular, but in the plural—as “many feminisms”—this is in large measure due to this history of prior struggle over the very category of “woman.” Yet, the plurality of feminisms remains marked still by inequalities of class, race, and ethnicity, as well as of metropolitan location within advanced capitalist enclaves. It is a symptom of these unequal relations, that women’s movements outside the West are rarely discussed when non-European gender relations are at issue (John, 1996, p. 144).2 Even less frequently are non-European feminisms discussed for purposes of methodological and theoretical insight.3 The very politics of nomenclature, which distinguishes marked and unmarked forms of feminism, derives from a prior set of inequalities between women. However lovingly and militantly these denominations may be embraced by the “minority feminists” thus addressed, it is revealing of nonhegemonic status that certain feminisms must incarnate “the politics of difference” (Gunew & Yeatman, 1993), must specify their locations as “Third World” (Mohanty, Russo, & Torres, 1991; Sandoval, 1991), and must “color” their feminism as a feminism pertaining to women of “color” (Anzaldúa, 1990) and “blackness” (Grewal, Kay, Landor, Lewis, & Parmar, 1988).4

The critiques by these “minority feminists” required of feminism an effort of imagination and political will that could re-vision the way female oppression is itself continuously redefined through formations of class and race, and through specificities of location and relocation within the world capitalist system. The political tenor of responses has instead led to a certain narrowing of horizons, a tendency for identity to become even more rigid. The term...
politics of location, originally elaborated by Rich (1986), was meant to encourage a practice of reflexivity among white American feminists like herself, regarding the power and privileges of class and race which informed their own speaking positions. While it retains a certain efficacy (for example in Frankenberg & Mani’s [1993] usage), this terminology has been misleading, as Kaplan (1996) has argued recently, in that it has conjured images of static and fixed “positions” (p. 163ff). On the other side of the race-divide, equally inflexible invocations of difference on the part of nondominant feminisms have easily lent themselves to the powerful but problematic “politics of identity,” which permit participation in politics only insofar as actors speak and act from locations that can be verified as corresponding to their “authentic” identities as black, colonized, “Third World” women.

MIGRATORY PERSPECTIVES

In this Special Issue we take a different line of response. In resisting the determinism that can attend the politics of location and the politics of difference, we ask the question: What would feminism look like if we were to adopt a perspective born of movement and mobile trajectories? In this we follow the lead offered by Grewal and Kaplan’s (1994) attempts to conceive of a more carefully formulated transnational feminist perspective. It remains an open question as to how far a currently favored postmodern concept, such as “transnational travel” can be extricated from its orientation toward a celebration of pluralism and hybridity, and instead help us to address the historic blind spots of Western modernity. The articles in this Special Issue indicate some directions in which the concept of transnational travel may be critically refined. The incidence of “travel” across discourses needs to be mapped with an eye to the relations of power that actually constitute the borders across which travel takes place. This is true, not only with respect to “travel” between discourses, and institutions, but particularly for the travel made possible, even mandatory, by the relationships of colonization.

The articles in this Special Issue look at two sorts of migratory movements—first, migrations of women themselves, and secondly, migrations of feminist discourses and politics. In particular, the articles written by our contributors from the Pacific, a region well endowed with traditions of sea voyage and experienced in the use of metaphor as a tool for intellectual exploration, give us a particularly rich store of images and linguistic resources that are “good to think with,” given the intellectual challenges posed by the ever-widening migratory movements of women in the postcolonial global political economy. Thus, Tusitala Marsh effortlessly calls on images of sea travel to evaluate the “seaworthiness” of feminism as a traveller in the Pacific Islands (this issue, p. 665). A sustained intellectual use of metaphor occurs in the article by Kauanui. Writing of Californian Hawaiians like herself who are confronted by the twin political pressures of the US state on the one hand, intent on classifying its Hawaiian “natives” according to biological race criteria, and of Hawaiian nationalists on the other, levying their own requirements on diasporic Hawaiians, Kauanui reworks the nationalist metaphor of the ohana or family, by evoking its etymological richness, and extracting from the etymology the central notion of transplantation involved in the cultivation of the oha, which is none other than the cultivation of the taro plant itself. The image of the new and young offshoots of corn growing from the older root becomes, in her article, the basis for a fresh consideration of the cultural formations of immigrant and diasporic peoples. The people are represented by the metaphor neither as reproducers of the old, nor as completely rootless and disconnected. Rather they are shown as retaining connection with the root and as “emphasizing indigeneity as a central form of identification” (this issue, p. 681).

Neither completely the same, nor utterly different and alien—ohana in Kauanui’s metaphorical use serves to capture the perspective of this Special Issue on cultural identities. We are dealing with identities that cannot be rendered completely fragmented for they retain a certain continuity—but which persist in ways which are productive of newness and singularity. Such a perspective informs, for example, our presentation of the transmission of modernity itself. Differences of gender, race, and the experience of colonialism do not necessarily function only in order to keep groups of people divided and separated from one another. As I have argued in this Special Issue (see this
issue, p. 617), they also become the very conduits through which modernity, of which feminism is one constitutive moment, is transmitted and acquires new meanings.

Collectively, these articles chart the spatio-political location of feminisms, tracing their differential reception and re-articulation in countries such as Japan and India, and in the ambivalent voices of women in different Pacific Islands. Simultaneously, in the manner advocated by Said (1984), the articles in this Special Issue undertake the “task of the critic in relation to theory,” namely to make critical sense of the resistances to dominant versions of theory (p. 242). It is in this spirit that contributors examine the resistances to feminism on the part of women in various parts of the Pacific and among immigrant Muslim women in Australia. These resistant responses toward and rejections of “feminism” typify the struggles women around the world are obliged to undertake in restoring to feminism its local specificity and content. We do not, in this Special Issue, see the received images of Western feminism among the women of the Pacific and Asia as so many simple misrepresentations of feminism, which it is our task to correct. Rather, as Tusitala Marsh suggests, these images and understandings are to be viewed more in the nature of aitia or ghosts that are generated as effects of colonialism, and of the continuing political domination by capitalist superpowers in regions such as the Pacific and Asia. Therefore, rather than setting out to restore Western feminism to its proper fullness, we have taken up the task of charting the nature of resistances towards the hegemonic model.

In this task, we are aided by the tools of postcolonial theory, insofar as it attempts to keep alive a political and intellectual awareness of the colonial past in the present. Postwar immigration, on this perspective, is not to be leached of its political implications and compartmentalized as one aspect of “development,” but is to be related to the historical processes of decolonization—although decolonization itself, in these instances, may be only partial and incomplete. The turn to colonial historiography has generated a new perspective on contemporary gender relations. The juxtaposition of articles in this Special Issue, as much as the content and structure of individual articles, reflects this set of orientations. In our two articles on Japan, for example, we pair the female labor migration born of colonialism, with that born of postcolonialism. Other articles point to the instability inherent in the attempt to consign colonialism to a past era, as peoples such as the Hawaiians and Maoris pursue their struggle in lands taken over by white settler colonialism. In the same spirit of attempting new and novel interconnections, contributors Ganguly-Scrase and Julian compare gender relations in two quite diverse contexts—the one resulting from internal migration within South Asia, the other from the flight of refugees from Laos to Australia.

Such pairings and juxtapositions are not as arbitrary as they may seem at first glance. For many immigrant women in Australia and other Western polities, the experience of being constituted as members of a minority patriarchy comes as a repetition of an older, colonial dynamic. The logic of the postcolonial state, particularly in liberal democracies, constitutes certain communities as “minorities.” The particular mode through which a community is constituted as a “minority” varies in different liberal democratic states, depending on the particularities of colonial history. Thus in India, minorities are constituted along religious lines. In Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom, minorities are constituted by the attribution of ethnic and racial identities. However, in all cases, the state offers to women the same impossible “choice” as that offered by the colonial state: either “equality” or “community,” either accession to the colonizer who offers “reforms” (but whose own patriarchy escapes scrutiny in the process) or the solidarity of a minority patriarchy on the defensive.

These impossible “choices” are not to be understood as purely external and imposed on women. The movement of female aspirations between the axes of equality and of community is itself generative of a kind of female identity that is too ambiguous to be slotted into the official categories of the state. The authors in this Special Issue are not content, therefore, with simply setting up immigrant, diasporic, and refugee statuses as so many subject-positions from which to examine feminist theory. Instead, they explore aspects of female experience and politics that call into question the very categories, “immigrant” and “refugee,” revealing them to be categories that cor-
respond more to the perspective of nation-states and dominant ethnic groups than to the perspective of those they purport to designate. For even after women have been “objectively” located within the boundaries of a new nation-state, their subjectivity often, if not typically, escapes these boundaries. The ties of language, religion, and anti-colonial sentiment, communities born of political organization, of genealogies, cultural festivals, dances, and videos, common memories and the “aerial roots” of communication, bind those that others perceive as “immigrants” and “refugees” to larger imagined communities. These communities may be located in their countries of origin, as with the Korean women in Japan, or the Hawaiian women in California, but they may also be global and internationalist in their character, as among women who identify with Islam rather than with a nation.

**WOMEN AND NATIONALIST-COMMUNITARIAN IDENTIFICATIONS**

If ties and imaginings such as these elude the grasp of official state categories, the aspirations of these women are also in excess of communitarian-nationalist affiliations. West (1997) has argued that we now have a confident breed of “feminist nationalism.” According to her, although “women are still being undeniably victimized by individual men, states, nationalist conflicts, and wars”—nevertheless, “women are taking control,” “juggling the competing activists’ demands of women’s rights with civil rights and national struggles” (p. xiii).

Such an adjudication is far too sweeping, and the evidence in this Special Issue will help to contextualize and to qualify such conclusions. West’s optimistic prognosis works better for women who are located within the geographical boundaries of their own nationalist imaginary, even if these boundaries enclose only a nation-in-the-making. In such instances, the logic of nationalism may well be able to generate and sustain a certain feminist momentum. The evidence for the women’s movement in India that I examine in this Special Issue suggests that feminism and a language of female autonomy emerged quite early and helped set the terms of women’s participation in anticolonial nationalism.

However, one of the crucial questions posed by this Special Issue for even the most “successful” instances of nationalist-feminism is this: Which group of women are to be taken as the measure of its success? Who gets included and who gets excluded from “the nation”? In India, despite a consistent will to address the concerns of women from the laboring classes, the nationalist-feminist imaginary could not tolerate forms of sexuality and maternity that fell outside the middle-class amalgam of Brahmanic and Victorian values. In Japanese feminism, as represented by Mackie and Ryang in this Special Issue, problems of exclusion haunt the Japanese women’s movement. A younger generation of Korean women in Japan are raising criticisms very similar to those of minority feminists in other metropolitan locations, arguing that non-Japanese women in Japan have been “placed outside [the] vision” of Japanese feminism due to its “nation-focussed and ethnocentric inability” to engage simultaneously with issues of gender and ethnicity. It is the socialist-feminist strand of Japanese feminism discussed by Mackie which has been most successful in developing an engagement with these issues. Other, more nationalist strands of Japanese feminism bristle with metaphors of naturalness, prelinguisticity, and maternal love, in their effort to develop an indigenous, non-Western form of feminism. As Ryang has argued in her re-examination of Takamura Itsue, one of the early representatives of this brand of Japanese feminism, such metaphors had the capacity to forge a successful brand of assimilative nationalism precisely through their sympathetic inclusion and identification with colonized minorities (Ryang, 1998).

Many of the articles in this Special Issue, viewing nationalism as they do from the vantage point of immigrant and diasporic women, are able to throw into particularly sharp relief the ambivalent and uneasy aspects of the relationship between nationalism and women. These articles highlight the fact that nationalism, no less than colonialism itself, demands unambiguous affiliations and tidy identities. Women—including immigrant and diasporic women—do become interpellated and shaped by this demand. Indeed, this issue shows how potent the identification can be. It is simply that these women cannot, with the best will in the world, satisfy the requirements. Their aspirations repeatedly exceed the boundaries of the communitarian identity that nationalist...
ideology would have them content with. The Hmong women in Tasmania have taken up driving cars, and they mediate between their communities and the public authorities in health and education matters. The Rabindranath women in west Bengal are acutely aware of the importance of education, and of forms of employment that will expand their horizons, as against the exploitative work they now perform as domestic servants. The first generation of Korean women in Japan utilized the space of the nationalist Korean schools to carve out their own domain as mothers and teachers in a quasi-public sphere.

These kinds of excesses render women constantly suspect to nationalists. Despite the active involvement in sovereignty struggles by Hawaiian women living in California, they can be readily delegitimated by activists “on-island” for not sharing the risks and solidarities of land and community “back home.” Such dilemmas are not resolved by a simple geographic return to the country of origin—there remains always, in nationalism, a suspicion of the contaminations that are the very condition of women’s lives in the contemporary world. Within this generalized nationalist distrust of the place of woman in contemporary modernity, immigrant and minority women are loaded with a peculiar burden. For them—and for many of us who write in this Special Issue, this refers to our own situation—there can be no identification with “nationalist-feminism” that does not bring with it, its own painful experience of being, in turn, rejected.

**UNIVERSALISM, AND FEMINISM AS COUNTER-DISCUSS**

Critical voices raised even within the dominant heartland of “feminist theory” are heard only selectively. An example occurs in Schor’s (1995) thoughtful and complex adjudication of critiques of universalism. After performing several useful tasks, such as disentangling charges of essentialism from the issue of universalism, Schor concludes her argument with a preliminary list of issues which can provide an uncontroversial place to begin revitalizing a universalist feminist politics—namely, rape, sati, clitoridectomy, enforced sterilization, and enforced reproduction. Schor’s article begins by citing black women’s critiques of white feminism. It ends as if they had never been read. The list could not be more breathtakingly designed to bypass those critiques. The politics of sterilization has been explicitly associated by black women with the politics of race. The issue of sati has been the explicit site of intervention for some of the best-known critiques of colonialism by Indian women in the US academy (Mani, 1986; Spivak, 1988). Such attempts to reformulate feminist universalism evidently deliver far less than the “enlarged mentality” that Benhabib (1992) attributes to the ethics of conversation (p. 121).

In response to such obdurate problems in the drive to represent all women’s interests, Ang (1995) advocates instead a “politics of partiality.” Such politics, she argues will “emphasise and consciously construct the limits of its own field of political intervention,” accepting that “feminism can never ever be an encompassing political home for all women” (p. 73). Yet the question of universalism is never quite vanquished by such increasingly sophisticated recommendations, fed as it is by an older, prior understanding of “patriarchy,” which survives and recurs as a “spontaneous” understanding. Should we follow Scott (1988) in attributing what Denise Riley once called “the dreadful air of constancy of sexual polarity” (Riley, n.d.), to a relatively unsophisticated analytical framework that sustained early feminist characterizations of gender subordination? I suggest this would be inadequate. At least some of the monotony of feminist analysis must be attributed to persistent shared features of women’s oppression. For example, the reduction of women’s lives and identities to a few meager sources of value—virgin daughter, chaste wife, and mother of sons—can be attested widely, and not just for the South Asian region where it is now powerfully thematized in the literature (see Jayawardena & de Alwis, 1996). The same, enfeebled categories of female identity emerge all over again in “Islamic” versions of patriarchy. Such versions of patriarchy, argues Rozario in this Special Issue, derive their polemical energy by contrasting themselves to Western modernity. Yet Western feminism has also found it necessary to protest the disappearance of feminine subjects “behind their social and communal persona, . . . as member of a family, as someone’s daughter, someone’s wife and someone’s mother” (Benhabib & Cornell, 1987, p. 12).
I would argue that we may be able to do better justice to both the specificity and the universality of feminist discourses if we attempt to understand them as counter-discourses. Feminist claims to universality return, as in Schor’s list, with repeated insistence, to the seeming bedrock of women’s rights to their bodies. Framed thus, the claim to universality is easily undermined by the arguments informed by the new attention to discourse. In a recent article, Menon argues that “rights over one’s body are not natural, timeless and ahistorical. [They] come into being and have meaning only within discourse” (Menon, 1996, p. 382). Yet discourses are not quite so neatly separable from one another into air-tight, self-contained compartments—if they were, it would be impossible to account for the many instances described in this Special Issue of female solidarity, of attempts at “dialogue across difference” (Mackie, this issue, p. 599).

I suggest that the universalizing thrust of claims such as rights over one’s body obscures a crucial insight embedded in the very claim. The formulation is not merely to claim one’s body, but to claim back one’s body. It enunciates not so much a claim as a counter-claim, a reclamation. A methodological argument is implied, though it is not made explicit. If developed, this argument would run against the grain of any standardizing interpretation of universalism. The argument would suggest that in order to understand the nature of this feminist reclamation, one has to understand the specific nature of the more powerful discourses that appropriate women’s bodies for purposes other than those willed or desired by women themselves. Feminist discourses take their particular shape and form from the nature of the power relations which they resist, and in which they are embedded. My formulation of feminism as a counter-discourse is indebted not only to postcolonial theory, and, in particular, to Chatterjee’s (1986) striking characterization of Indian nationalism as a “derivative discourse”17, but to more than a decade of debate in feminist theory over how best to understand and characterize the specificity of women’s difference. In a vividly ethnographic account of “speaking as a woman,” Stewart (1990) characterizes women’s speech in the coal fields of West Virginia, not “as an expression of a female essence but as a matter of ‘speaking for yourself’ in the conventional genre of women’s back talk” (p. 44). When we turn from women’s everyday speech to feminism, we are no longer concerned with conventionalized genres of “back talk.” Feminism, like nationalism, is a consciously articulated social movement, requiring the specific commitment of creative energy in constantly reforging the basis of resistance. Nevertheless, to characterize the discursive aspects of this movement as a form of “talking back” is a useful means to raise the question: who are feminists talking back to?

I take my cue in attempting an answer to this question, from Indian feminist theory. An enormous literature on south Asia, and on India in particular, methodologically challenges the practice of conceptualizing the oppressions of “traditional patriarchy” and of “colonialism” as two discrete entities.18 Instead, something far more complex is implied. The emergent thesis suggests that all key institutions and cultural features are now subject to a “double articulation” (Das, 1995, p. 53). That is, culture and social institutions now derive their meaning and form simultaneously from two sources: from the legacy of the “modern,” that is, from the colonial-nationalist interactions of the 19th century, and from “traditional” structures of social power relations which antedated the advent of colonialism. Sangari and Vaid (1996), for example, cogently demonstrate that even the horrific revival of sati (widow burning) cannot be understood as an atavistic resurgence of the past. While the ideological ground is well prepared by older notions of honor and virtue which define both caste and gender hierarchy, Sangari and Vaid demonstrate the indispensable contribution of the “modern.” The international economics of commodification (among other aspects of modernity), has politically transformed caste communities over the last 100 years. One can virtually trace the flow of capital through the appearance of temples celebrating the transcendent glory of the burned satis—out of the local Rajasthan region, into the top metropolitan business houses in India, and overseas, to Singapore and Hong Kong (Sangari & Vaid, 1996, p. 267). The capital belongs to the trading caste of the Marwaris, one of the two communities most centrally implicated in this resurgence of widow burning.

These characterizations do not dispense with the distinction between “tradition” and
“modernity,” but they destabilize the Eurocentric basis of that distinction. The thesis has a resonance beyond the Indian situation. It conveys something of the scope of the feminist critical consciousness developed by the contributors to this Special Issue, each in relation to a specific postcolonial location. There is now a sustained attempt under way to explore divergent modernities. Such initiatives no longer claim to represent difference in terms of utter originality. Rather, the terrain is mapped by the structure of repetition, so that “each repetition of the sign of modernity is different, specific to its historical and cultural conditions of enunciation” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 247). There is an urgent need to connect these formulations on modernity to reconceptualizations of feminism, which is after all, one of the key moments of modernity itself. In turn, a focus on feminism may well serve to modify and challenge some of the masculinist formulations of postcolonial theory. After all, postcolonial feminism has to “talk back” not only to the dominant modernity of the colonizer, but to a much more complex reconstitution of both “tradition” and “modernity” that women are now asked to affirm in the name of anticolonial nationalism and community.

ENDNOTES

1. The literature is vast, and I will restrict myself here to the critiques that have emerged within what I have here designated as “the affluent capitalist enclaves.” For examples, see, for the United States, Alexander and Mohanty, 1997; Anzaldúa, 1987, 1990; Chow, 1993; hooks, 1984, 1990; Minh-ha, 1989; Mohanty et al., 1991; for the United Kingdom see Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Grewal et al., 1988; for Australia, see Australian Feminist Studies, 1993; Bottomley and de Lepervanche, 1984; Bottomley, de Lepervanche, and Martin, 1991; Feminist Review, 1996; Gunew and Yeatman, 1993.

2. This is certainly true of the discipline of anthropology, which is where most such enquiries get located within the division of labor characteristic of Western academia. A prospectus for a book on women in Pakistan that I have just reviewed for publishers, sets out to discuss women and religion, and even “indigenous feminism,” without any reference to the organized campaigns mounted by women in Pakistan against oppressive religious laws, against militarization, or their participation in broadly regional feminist initiatives in South Asia.

3. bell hooks makes a related point about the division of labor whereby white women see themselves as making theory, while black women “contribute the experience to validate and document their analysis” (hooks, 1984, p. 114).

4. See Frankenberg’s (1993) revealing exploration of “whiteness” as a set of material and discursive practices that “are usually unmarked” (p. 1). See for example, Leanne Merrett-Balkos’ (1997) exploration of the intellectual use of nonpOCt, or metaphoric aphorisms, by women in highland New Guinea. On the importance of metaphor in expanding the resources of intellectual language, see for example Fiumara (1994).

5. See for example, the selected papers from The Planning Meeting on International Migration and Women (1989).

6. On the political use of etymology as a form of linguistic archaeology particularly useful for subordinated peoples, see Seremetakis’ (1994) illuminating work, especially footnote 1, p. 17.

7. Such an orientation links the Special Issue and, in particular, certain papers such as Kauanui’s, to other studies, such as Gilroy’s (1993) Black Atlantic.

8. Such an orientation links the Special Issue and, in particular, certain papers such as Kauanui’s, to other studies, such as Gilroy’s (1993) Black Atlantic.

9. One of the weaknesses in postcolonial theory is its tendency to collapse narratives of power into the narrative of colonial conquest. Although I cannot treat this theme in the introduction, class emerges as one of the central concerns of this issue—a social division which cuts across any simple binary opposition between colonizer and colonized.


11. For India, see Nair, 1996; Sangari and Vaid, 1989; Uberoi, 1996. For Japan and Korea see papers by Ryan and Raddeker presented at the workshop Colonialism and the New Woman in Japan and Korea—a postcolonial critique, July 1997 (Raddeker, n.d.; Ryan, 1998); Jung’s paper delivered at the 5th Women in Asia Conference, October 1997 (Jung, n.d.); for the Pacific, see Jolly and Macintyre, 1989; also Ram and Jolly, 1997.

12. There is now an extensive literature on the ambiguities and fragmentations of subjectivity associated with diaspora and migration. See, for example, Bhabha, 1994; Chow, 1993; Clifford, 1997; and, at the conjunction of postcolonial and queer theory, see Probyn, 1996.

13. On this, see also general histories of the women’s movement cited in my paper in this issue.

14. Women’s movement stalwarts like Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy, president of the All India Women’s Conference were active in attempts to abolish the devadasi system. In the precolonial polity, the system placed certain categories of women within a domain of sexuality defined by the public sphere of courts and temples rather than by the institutions of marriage and domesticity. This system became redefined, in the colonial-nationalist refiguration, as “prostitution.” See Kannabiran (1995); Nair (1996); papers in Uberoi (1996). For parallels from Sri Lanka, see de Alwis (1996); and for the Pacific, see Ralston (1989) on similar European imputations of prostitution and promiscuity to the sexual practices of precolonial Hawaii.


16. See especially, the paper by Ryang (this issue, p. 581).

17. See Ram, paper in this issue (pp. 617–631), for a characterization of Chatterjee’s thesis.

18. The literature on this is vast, but see the collections by Bagchi, 1995; Sangari, 1995; Sangari and Vaid, 1989; Uberoi, 1996.

19. See, for example, the papers published in the journal Public Culture: Bulletin of the Project for Transnational Cultural Studies, University of Pennsylvania.
REFERENCES


Ralston, Caroline. (1989). Changes in the lives of ordinary


