

# NEW SOCIOLOGY

## JOURNAL OF CRITICAL PRAXIS

Vol. 4    NARRATIVES OF ALIVENESS:  
SURRENDERING TO OUR INNER WORLDS



# New Sociology: Journal of Critical Praxis

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## EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

The theme for this issue is foregrounded in Kevin Quashie's (2012) concept of "the quiet", a term he coined to capture the limitations of blackness as a public discourse that privileges resistant expressiveness as a singular framework. Grounded in African American culture, Quashie asks, "is it possible to engage in public discourse of black identity beyond the imperative of resistance?" (p. 27) With this, Quashie offers us another way of reading Black life beyond defiance and unlivability that welcomes the whimsy of the interior—describing a space of personal inwardness, aliveness, that allows for the unexpected to be possible.

In conversation with Quashie, our fourth issue, *Narratives of Aliveness: Surrendering to Our Inner Worlds*, aims to explore the inner life worlds of racialized and Indigenous folk who in comparable, but varying ways, are denied capacities beyond dominant ideologies that usher in a subjectivity that is not quite human. The issue asks us to move beyond the reading of racialized and Indigenous subjectivities as sites of resistance, and instead, as sites of variability, offering a different kind of expressiveness—one that embraces the everyday subject, whose interiors are wildly their own. This is where the quiet emerges, as an inescapable state of being, and a reminder that we have other capacities too—we have ambitions, we desire, we pray, we hunger, we dream, we cry, we fear; quiet and interiority holds all that in. Quiet is inevitable; it is essential to humanity.

As we sit here writing this introduction, we are reminded that, as racialized individuals, we may share similar experiences, yet our everyday realities share many differences. Quiet compels us to explore the beauty of the quality of being

human—the messiness, complicated aspects of our interior that have greater human texture and specificity; that rubs against solitary cultural frameworks that make easy conclusions possible. We are appreciative of the authors for writing such poignant pieces that remind us that our intersectional identities contain a vastness of understanding and knowing from within that is beyond sight or reach of the public's limited imagination. These pieces unveil the range of terror and gorgeousness of vulnerability that mark the realities of being alive.

The pieces in this issue are meant to highlight and celebrate the everyday, mundane lifeworlds of racialized and Indigenous persons and we hope that they will resonate with you as they have with us. It was an absolute privilege to read these pieces and to witness the powerful expressions of interiority and selfhood that they bring forth. We hope that readers will engage deeply with these works and be encouraged to move beyond logics solely determined by hegemonic narratives to restore a broader, fuller picture of the humanity of racialized and Indigenous peoples exploring the complex intersections of inner self, identities, and lived experiences. This is our first time writing an editor's introduction. We thank the authors for their works, which have welcomed us with the chance to share a glimpse of their wondrous and wayward lives. Thank you for trusting us with this.

The issue contains three themes: *Inner Worlding*, *Affectual Worlding*, and *Mundane Worlding*. The first theme, *Inner Worlding*, begins with our featured piece, "Care Full Living," written by Kanishka Sikri, who reads Audre Lorde's "An Open Letter to Mary Daly" in conjunction with the practices of violability that take place in the absence of care full living. Sikri reflects on three realms of care: reading, citation, and living. The author suggests that in search of

knowledge, we should mine for concepts, ideas, visions, desires, and questions that engage in a tender, mutual exchange of knowledge(s) that our ancestors, communities, networks, and mentors have developed from the margins. This piece invites readers to consider the role of care in our academic and personal lives, and to imagine ways in which care full living can be integrated into our scholarly and creative worlds to embody writing and reading more fully as praxis.

Next in the issue is “Care Living: The Poetics of Jamaican Women’s Aliveness”, a poetic essay by Shanique Mothersill. In a delicate blend of poetry and theory, Motherstill, uses Quashie’s (2021) exploration of “Black aliveness” to articulate the liveliness, vitality, and multiplicity of a Caribbean feminist praxis and ethic. In forging their analysis through poetry, the author presents and formulates care ethics and aliveness among Jamaican women as dual sites of joy and intelligence; resistance and creativity; belonging and becoming; inner and outer worlding.

The third piece under *Inner Worlding* is written by Ali Aslan. Entitled “Quiet Disquietude”, Aslan uses fiction as a site of scholarly exploration and quiet contemplation to form a rich and messy narrative of inner life. The author’s narrative exploration of the quiet allows for the space to reflect on doubts, predispositions, failings, and misgivings. Aslan imagines a different beginning, where skin colour, one’s birth country, or one’s name, are not entirely political, so that space for the existence of a joyous or liberatory metaphysics becomes possible.

The final piece in this section is a spoken word poem, “The Reticent Revolution of Sexual Daydreams”, by Annalissa Crisostomo. Using brown’s (2019) concept of *Pleasure Activism*, Crisostomo creatively shows how sexual fantasies can provide spaces for social change and radical healing. This piece pushes the reader to approach sexual fantasies, not as taboo or that which cannot be publicly spoken, but as sites of liberation where parts of our “(sexual) selves from within” no longer need to be repressed, as they are always already celebrated.

The second section of this issue is *Affectual Worlding*, where stories of grief and vulnerability are explored in tandem. Grieving is not something

that is linear, and it looks, feels, sounds, and tastes differently for everyone. Not only do the pieces of this section uniquely capture this, but they are deeply moving, and provide a glimpse into the complex and multifaceted nature of emotions and the affectual worlds of the supposed racial Other. Through their powerful writing, these authors create a space for readers to reflect on their own affectual worlds and to feel seen and validated in their emotions. The first piece, “a line that connects the void”, is by tram nghiem, and it is a collection of stills from nghiem’s film of the same name, accompanied with the film’s script. Composed in a non-linear storytelling format with fragmented images, this piece explores interior spaces and domestic life within the city colonially known as Toronto. Both the piece and the film follow the artist’s family and the precarity experienced around the time of death of the artist’s sister through the poetics of grief. Through the use of images, nghiem captures the void that grief and the processes of grieving entails by moving back and forth between various time periods.

The second piece, “Dreaming of Fragments of Home Left Behind”, by Mehwish Mughal, is a captivating narration that takes the reader on a journey of self-discovery. The author shares their personal experience of living abroad for almost two decades and the various triggers that evoke memories of Pakistan and their mother. It is the author’s dream of reuniting with their mother, which serves as a powerful symbol of their longing to return to their roots. This piece is a deeply personal account of the joys and struggles of living between two worlds, and the enduring power of love and family ties to sustain us through even the most difficult of times.

The third piece in this theme is titled “For my friends who speak to me in quiet”, by Nishhza Thiruselvam. In this eloquently written poem, Thiruselvam describes the loss of their Uncle Kumar, and how visits home to Malaysia without his familiar face greeting them at the airport will never be the same. It is a reminder that, among the quiet, there is also a remembering – that subtle expressions and moments are a symbol of generations passed and those yet to come; that in living in grief, we bring our memories of that which has been lost into the present and allow the

spirits of our kin, our people, to continue to nurture the world around us.

The final piece in this section is “Alive in Love”, a collection of diary entries by Vidya. This collection offers a rich exploration of heartbreak, grief, positionality, ontology, and love in various contexts, questioning who gets to experience love, grieve heartbreak, and what kinds of heartbreak and love are ‘valid’. The three journal entries included in the piece offer a perspective on the nature of love and its various and complex forms beyond western categorical understandings of the romantic, platonic, or affectionate.

The final theme in this issue is *Mundane Worlding*, which combines pieces that focus on the quiet amid everyday life. First is a piece by Namitha Rathinappillai, “Mumbai Mangoes”, a short but powerful poem that reminds the reader how, even the simple and mundane act of eating a mango, can return us to our ancestors; how, outside colonial constructs of space and time, eating a mango invites the space and place of care, joy, and pleasure back into our everyday lives.

The second piece of the final theme is entitled “I Have Nothing to Say...”, a poem by Mautushi Dutta that delves into the struggles that an Indian woman faces in her pursuit of education and self-fulfillment, reflecting on the speaker's struggle to pursue their academic dreams while also facing various obstacles and abuses from family members and loved ones. Dutta's use of vivid language allows the reader to feel the raw emotions and injustices that the speaker goes through, making the poem a rich and thought-provoking read.

The final piece is “the fridge”, a poem by Sehar Moughal. This artful and embodied poem offers an introspective look into the exhaustion and emotional turmoil experienced by the author, a mother, graduate student, mental health worker, and university teacher. Through the seemingly mundane task of cleaning the fridge, the author finds a moment of relief and reflection. The imagery of the neglected fridge, housing a dead fly and various stains, becomes a metaphor for the chaos and instability of the author's world. Through a vivid and almost visceral depiction of a neglected refrigerator, Moughal explores the chaos within and around them, as well as the state of instability that is sometimes necessary for the quiet of stability to follow.

The issue concludes with a book review of Ali Meghji's *The Racialized Social System*, written by Vindra V. Moonilal. Moonilal explains how Meghji challenges the idea that theorists examining Critical Race Theory have (CRT) “overlooked the racialized social system approach”, while concertedly encouraging the emergence and enactment of racism both theoretically and empirically within the field.

We would like to thank the authors, creatives, and dreamers who contributed to our fourth issue, *Narratives of Aliveness: Surrendering to Our Inner Worlds*. A special thank you also goes to Alireza Gorgani Dorcheh, of our editorial board, for creating the cover photo for the issue, along with the Instagram graphics for the issue's social media release. Most of all, we want to thank Beatrice Anane-Bediakoh for so beautifully and masterfully conceptualizing the magnificent theme of the issue. We also want to thank Beatrice for diligently editing this introduction and for re/writing much of the front end with art and precision.

A celebration of the quiet is a reminder that our capacities as racialized and Indigenous persons are far beyond public discourses; that we cannot be subsumed nor fully understood through registers that deny our innerlives/worlds. In this issue, we celebrate the unrefined, mundane, fragmented expressions of our inner worlds. Finally, we would like to thank Jade Crimson Rose Da Costa for designing all the proofs for this issue. We would also like to thank Jade for continually supporting us as we learn about what being an editor entails, for always being kind, patient, supportive, accommodating and welcoming of any questions or concerns we might have. As we continue to grow, we are reminded that this growth would not be possible without them. This introduction is an example of that. Thank you.

Ritika Tanotra & Faezeh Esmaeili, NS Chief-Deputy-Editors, with Beatrice Anane-Bediakoh, NS Chief-Deputy-Editor, and Jade Crimson Rose Da Costa, NS Founder and Editor-In-Chief.

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# Inner Worlding

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## Care Full Living

**Kanishka Sikri**

### **Abstract**

I am stuck with Audre Lorde's "An Open Letter to Mary Daly" in *This Bridge Called my Back* (1983), particularly the following passage: "Have you read my work, and the work of other black women, for what it could give you? Or did you hunt through only to find words that would legitimize your chapter...?" (p. 96). I will come back to this letter for as long as I continue to do the same: mine the text for connections...I am thinking about how I would answer Lorde's question, as I carry the work and words of my citations, deciding what is worthy of writing into the archive, to whom my work is answering, why and for what reasons my writing exists, and where I place my hopes and desires.

### **Keywords**

care work, citation, livingness, reading, writing



## care full reading/

I am stuck with Audre Lorde's, "An Open Letter to Mary Daly" in *This Bridge Called my Back* (1983), particularly the following passage: "Have you read my work, and the work of other black women, for what it could give you? Or did you hunt through only to find words that would legitimize your chapter...?" (p. 96). I will come back to this letter for as long as I continue to do the same: mine the text for connections. Mining is important; it lets us take the work forward so that we can continue to nourish and develop it. But mining the text—with its roots in colonial taking, the ability to extract from another—implies there are only certain figments of the text worth taking (uprooting and codifying), and it can often culminate in an echo chamber, in which we mine for the sake of having "evidence"—seeking for somebody else who agrees with what we have already said. I think of the work of mining: how we enter these writings, and then extract—maybe in context, maybe not—to make and connect certain claims. It is not that I think this mining is unimportant. In all the texts that I have read over the years, mining has always been a part of my praxis. I am curious, though, how, rather than mining for quotes or textual figments that simply support our ideas, we can move towards mining for concepts, ideas, visions, desires, questions that engage a mutuality of knowledge and a tenderness for how these writings can be enveloped in our own? How might I accrue new nodes of thinking while still recognizing the specific stories and persons from which these new nodes emerged? To do this, I need not "agree"—I think a better term is needed here—with the writer from whom I draw. Nor am I required to critique the parcels of their thinking that I may not like. I am only required to take the node of knowledge for what is and to answer the constellations of nodes that form in my work; answer the writer as I generate deeper nodes of my own. I am thinking about how I would answer Lorde's question as I carry the work and words of my citations, deciding what is worthy of writing into the archive, to whom my work is answering, why and for what reasons my writing exists, and where I place my hopes and desires.

## care full citation/

How do we trace the theoretical imprints that our ancestors, families, communities, and networks have developed across and through their generational selves? How do we care for those lineages through our work, through our citations? I believe citation to be a generative space and method through which we do the feminist work of care and tenderness, a site in which we can carry the voices of those who came before us into our theoretical inquiries. If citational practices are indeed a form of care work, how do I make my practices more tender, more loving for myself; more loving for bell hooks, for instance, whom I cannot, maybe ever, get out of my head—who has shaped so many of my citational legacies? These are questions I have not found answers to—nor am I really looking for them. But let me try to engage a few possibilities: I am asking myself, what powers lace my citation; what accountabilities does my citation hold; to whom is my citation speaking to; what relationships is my citation breaking or creating from; how am I reconciling the self of theory, both the selves of the theorist (including the selves that their citation creates) and my own?

## care full living/

I am deeply moved to change many of my seemingly apolitical practices to be more care full. Not just my reading and citational practices, but the ways that I organize my task and project lists—do I name my actions with love and care for the future kanishka, who will be receiving these notes from some prior-current-kanishka whose email inbox said that this task was important? What about my files? Are they named in ways that evoke a nostalgic familiarity so that my desire to find the things that I am looking for, when I am looking for them, is met? Are my physical spaces, such as my writing space, or eating space, or glamour spaces—though these can often feel like the same—designed in ways that envelop me in warmth and an accessibility to be able to make words, food, and glitter that can nourish me and my loved ones? I want to be culling the divide between what seems personal and what seems structural, entangling the very lines through which practices of care full living can ripple into a world full of care.

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## Author Biography

Kanishka Sikri is a writer and scholar thinking about violability: the practice that marks certain lives, bodies, and lands open to the possibility of violence. They are currently a PhD candidate at York University speculating on the ways that violence becomes synonymous with and inhabits the flesh. Kanishka asks how we may speak about violence, lay it bare, grieve and mourn its many insidious faces without replicating the notion that certain lives are violable and capable of being violated. To learn more, please visit: [kanishkasikri.com](http://kanishkasikri.com).



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# Care Living: The Poetics of Jamaican Women's Aliveness

**Shanique Mothersill**

## **Abstract**

My inquiries into the poetics of Jamaican women's aliveness enter through the space of care ethics and the dimensions of my own poetry. In my work, I syncretize Caribbean feminist praxis, resistance, creativity, collective catharsis, spirituality, imagination, community, friendships, kinships, and knowledge. In this crucible of being, care ethics and aliveness are not simply experienced as forms of decolonial resistance. Nor are they reduced to a mere disruption of intersecting oppressions. Rather, they are resources, continuously connected within and around each of us, forming the basis of our flesh, blood, spirits, and dreams. While aliveness and care ethics challenge *inter alia*, our most chaotic, tense, and violent experiences, they also go beyond these forces to become deep expressions, of what I call, the poetics of Jamaican women's existence, healing, and release. To develop this framework, I draw on Kevin Quashie's (2021) exploration of "Black aliveness" (p. 1), to argue (in poetic form) that Jamaican women's aliveness is not simply the antithesis to death, but that which can address vital questions about the ethos of Caribbean feminist theory and praxis. As Quashie explains, Black aliveness is "the invocation of a black world [and] is the operating assumption of black texts, a world where blackness exists in the tussle of being, in reverie and terribleness, in exception and in ordinariness. This black world is not one where the racial logics and harming predilections of antiblackness are inverted but one where blackness is totality, where every human question and possibility is of people who are black.... Since blackness cannot exist fully, humanly, in the world, we will imagine a world where the condition of being alive is of us. In a black world, the case of our lives is aliveness; not death, not even death's vitality, but aliveness" (p. 1-2 & 12). Guided by the above statement, I articulate this concept in the context of Jamaican women's lives, illustrating how, through a poetic reflection on care ethics and Jamaican women's aliveness we can "imagine a black world so as to surpass the everywhere and everyway of black death, of blackness that is understood only through such a vocabulary," (p. 1). I argue that we can experience this through the, as Quashie puts it, "quality of aliveness notable in the worldmaking aesthetics of poems...in how those poems...can be read for what they tell us about our being: about how we are and about how we can be" (p. 2). The questions guiding my poetic inquiry are as follows: 1) What is the role of care ethics in the context of Jamaican women's multiple acts of living? 2) How can the concept of "care" support and/or challenge our efforts to analyze the role of religion, ancestry, motherhood, land, and food in Jamaican women's lives? 3) What are the possibilities of studying this association between care ethics and aliveness through poetry?

## **Keywords**

Black aliveness, care ethics, poetry, Caribbean feminist theory, praxis

***Island Care***

Island care is ancestral, a present past that Mama passes on  
 Where we remember that the plantation did not care but we cared for the uncared for who labored  
 through those uncaring hours  
 We remember the nappies of care wrapped on the baby's bum, where we reimagined how to  
 Care feed  
 Care clean  
 Care read  
 Island care is an ethic of the bed, a place from which bodies are worshipped while they laboured in  
 sickness and in health  
 A care that called for the gathering of the community to sing, dance, and chant a care hymn  
 For our lives – made in the organics of community care, kept by connections of water care and loved  
 in the respect of mountain care  
 This care, a Caribbean, survives despite the neglect and unfulfilled promises of the creative mind

Island care is real, a flow so rich – it flows from the Caribbean Sea –  
 The salt that continues to care for the bones flung from the uncaring ship  
 which continues to unlove us  
 but we love us – says the Caribbean feminist placard

Island care searches for a better practice of care  
 A search for resources inside the baptism of the market, farm, reggae, and the church  
 Where care exists in a familial home that the island recognizes–  
 Mapping the erasures, and reorienting our communities  
 Whose echoes on the river hold hands in the possibilities of a rediscovery of care  
 Island care is armed, militaristic, and triumphant  
 A resistance in the revolutionaries of our everydays  
 Against Babylon toward justice–  
 An ownership of the land that cares  
 To provide food that cares for the caring carers that the island loves

***Caribbean Seas Care Ethics***

As the seas rush to the shore, Jamaican women rush to care  
 Bubbling with their sisters like the foam on the sand  
 Extending to the farthest point on the land  
 A cooling that takes all the pain away  
  
 Toes in and blanketed under the wave of Jamaican women's embrace  
 You swim against any current  
 Gripped by the hands of swim lessons and diving practices  
 Their hands care-y you to the boat of rest and restoration  
 Disguising you in the sand of protection  
 They colour the sky with the rod of the seas of care  
 A mirroring which rises tides and sails us ahead



In the Caribbean seas care ethics, Jamaican women  
Bathe us – and them – a romance  
in the crystals of care – a rubbing and shining that keeps us in good health  
Where the sounds from seashells echo the cares that the seas floods on the land  
A sound that roars as Jamaican women listen  
And watch  
As the island dances a care song like the coconut trees rooted in the seas

From the Caribbean seas care ethics comes care writings messaged in the washed-up logs and rocks  
Where Jamaican women await, then mediate, then takes  
Away from the seas  
To the land of care where they share the care  
That the seas fair

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## Author Biography

Shanique Mothersill (she/her) is a Jamaican born Black feminist poet, Graduate Teaching Assistant, and PhD student in Gender, Feminist & Women's Studies at York University. She completed her second MA in the Center for Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies at Florida Atlantic University after completing her first MA in Pan African Studies and a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Women's and Gender Studies at Syracuse University. Shanique focuses on theorizing (via poetry) Jamaican women's aliveness and how their multiple acts of living help us to understand gendered and racialized "beingness" and existence in the Caribbean.

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## Quiet Disquietude

**Ali E. Aslan**

### **Abstract**

In describing our ideals of dignity and the like as fictions, I reflect on and uphold a non-pejorative understanding of fiction and how that stance is abused by power, which is unable to recognize any interiority except its own. To allow for that narrative of inner life, I accept the negative charge of the dialectic I am already thrown into; only then can I author my particularity/interiority and respond to the master enframing scheme which conceals our inner lives. All this movement and recognition of disquiet requires a certain quiet, a nothingness as fictitious and factful as the ideals that will spring forth from it. Not without that reflection can I step into my own being, to take account of where I might be wrong, to truly inhabit and entertain that which fascinates me, and to maintain a metaphysics wherein I am not only other but also open to the call of another. This is a reorientating quiet, an invitation to a creative *nihil*.

### **Keywords**

nothingness, interiority, enframing, fiction, Other, incommensurability, paradox, despair



In thinking about aliveness and surrendering to our inner worlds, I begin with the opening excerpt from one of my short stories:

Time is running out; very soon I will disappear like a small animal in the night, my existence a shrinking wild space in the middle of the electric suburb.

He awoke in the middle of the night with this thought in his chest, and found that, for the first time in his life, he had experienced a cold sweat. His shirt clung to his frail physique like cling film on abandoned produce. But the tragedy was yet to come; he knew this, just now. He had already been unable to sleep, his consciousness not willing to let go. It had marshalled itself into this final stand against the coming onslaught of oblivion. And it was certainly coming. Of this, he couldn't be more certain. Even as late as only a few days ago, this thought was only an abstraction, something that might materialize at some distant point in the future. But now, tonight, the enemy had reared its head out from the cover of the frost and the fog. Perhaps it was a mistake on its part, but it was undeniably visible now.

Removing his shirt and replacing it with an old tunic he hadn't worn in a while, he flipped a switch in the little kitchen and leaning against the counter struck a match. Soon, the familiar smell of coffee and cigarettes animated the floor and walls of his flat. He had already awakened into a heightened clarity that urged him onward in the momentousness of his task at hand, and the caffeine-tobacco double-bill was an affirmation of it, a silent bow to the prophetic visitation that he and he alone had been granted that night (Aslan, 2022)

I begin with fiction for at least two reasons. For one, all our ideals of equality, dignity, compassion, love, and the like are naught but

fictions; these are not calculable *things* that can be objectively studied, not facts like the fact of the molecular composition of water being two molecules of Hydrogen and one of Oxygen, or that of global climate change and evident catastrophe. Our ideals are not facts; nevertheless, we still hold them to be true, which lends them the appearance of being non-fiction. It is in the midst of this fiction-non-fiction paradox that we live out and navigate our everyday lives.

Power, too, is cognizant of the fictional nature of our ideals; it knows this because it has trampled on them for as long as it has existed. Its existence is tied intricately with the genealogy of our morals. It sees me calling those morals *fictions* and it celebrates, as this admission allows it to maintain an ironic understanding of them, of my morals as fiction.

This leads me to the second reason why I began with fiction: Power is eager to treat me as fiction, to fictionalize my being and abstract away from my existence, which is drowned out in its cantankerous babble and self-righteous adulation. I am always, by virtue of the colour of my skin, my name, my place of birth, and before I have even said anything, a hair's breadth away from being labelled a "terrorist". That's what it means to be a minority that's reported on: our names and our skin colours speak thoughts not of their own, but of those who are in the business of building walls, making bullets, and plundering the earth for profit and for burying those who get in their way. My parents did not know that I came into this world on the "wrong" side of history, already a pariah to borders, and that by naming me thus they were introducing me to a confrontation with power, that abstract universal that perpetually holds us in a static negative dialectic, unable to become a person except through its own telos.

Even if my whole life were to become politicized, and my very existence a resistance, the machine, the master enframer would still win. I need a different beginning—one rooted in the factual standpoint of my being—to be able to maintain a metaphysic that isn't entirely political. I need the audacity of the invitation to "explore what it means to be alive" (Anane-Bediakoh,

2023), which is a gift, an unexpected rupture in the enframing telos, to begin to narrate interiority.

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Inner life is both finite *and* infinite; each of these has its own hermeneutic circle as it imagines different relations between the self and the world. In thinking, for instance, of the persons whom I have adored romantically, and then of their rejections, my finite self, desperate for a quick analysis, is eager to suggest that I was rejected on account of the colour of my skin and the cultural baggage it invokes or is tied to. As distressing and hopeless as this analysis is, and as much as it would be in my favour to disavow it, I cannot easily dismiss it.

Moments such as these led me to further appreciate the masking mandates in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; I didn't stop wearing a mask even when those mandates were relaxed because the factness of my face is a constant, regardless of my wish to escape that fact. However, as Kierkegaard (1998) emphatically states in *The Sickness unto Death*, trying to evade oneself in order to be something else is its own kind of despair. Failing that, my self-hatred has manifested in my avoidance and suspicion of those who look like me, whose tone of voice and, more particularly, whose language resonates with my memory in a certain way. Learning – albeit not exclusively for this reason – different languages has allowed me to slip into other cultures, other histories, other memories that I do not, unfortunately, possess. I resist those others who already look as Other as me. So much so that when someone assumes my history, I respond with the negative of the abstract universal I was born into by saying: “¡Que no! Soy de allá, del abismo” or “من نیستم”. This is my finite self, made up as it is of evasions, elisions, and ellipses...always those beautiful ellipses that postpone the ending of that sentence wherein I am sentenced to an all too immediate identity.

My infinite self, having suspended and overstepped (what with my already being a pariah to borders) the abstract one-sided “ethical” dictated by power, draws a different and larger

circle. It is different because it hosts a dialectic of incommensurables (a paradox rather than a contradiction), and thus the circle can never be closed; it is larger because it allows for the interiority of the other. Rather than assuming the other's reason for rejecting me, it prompts me to imagine them and the circumstances as more complex. This hermeneutic of compassion draws me into its fold, allowing – no, compelling – me to practice that compassion with my own self, my own history, my own immediate facticity. Only with that necessary compassion, in the embrace of a generative quiet, can I begin to acknowledge that my failing at relationships might have less to do with my biology than my finite self had led me to believe. Only in that space, when I am allowed to begin again from nothingness, can I recognize and participate in that which moves me, that which intrigues and fascinates me, and which allows me to create meaning in the process. All these verbs and phenomenological reckonings are made moot by a prefigured ontology, by a world where I am naught but a means to an end with no claim to dignity. It takes quiet to navigate my disquiet, to portion it out and introduce the positive charge of the imagination, of fiction, to turn each contradiction into a paradox. With enough contradictions dialectically engaged in equilibrium, I will even overstep the self-limiting categories of being, as Fanon (1982), that brave soul, had dared to imagine.

The quiet disquietude, a creative paradox, is a step and space away from the domain of logical necessity wherein I am a finite addition to a chain of being always and forever mediated by power. I can have no claim to a free history in such a chain of events; it is only by virtue of this paradox that I can step into a history of my own, a history of failures, anxieties, prejudices, doubts, and the reconciling miracle of the company of friends. There can be no inner world without that absurd paradox, and thus no recourse to a free submission, which itself is paradoxical.

While thinking of how best to say all this here, I stepped out in the middle of the night and found a beautiful fog enveloping the neighbourhood and beyond, blurring the edges and borders of

everything, connecting everything with its delicate hold. In a way, the fog fictionalizes the world, revealing each phenomenon to be both distinct and yet open and linked to another. Everything is infinitized by virtue of that paradox.



If, in the end, all this is somehow proven to be “wrong,” I will still take hope in the words of Gandalf to Pippin in *The Lord of the Rings*. In response to the hobbit’s question about whether there was hope for Frodo and Sam, the wizard smiles and says that there was never much hope to begin with, only “a fool’s hope” (Tolkien, 2007, p. 94). I vow to be such a fool to the end of my days, inciting the paradox of quiet disquietude and inviting other fools to join me, on this bench in the fog, in making and celebrating the fictions we live by and for.

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For many years now I have enjoyed the singular privilege of studying, of pursuing an understanding of the ideals that we pursue and constantly fall short of. In the course of these years, my teachers have introduced me to a variety of worlds, to some of the most profound conversations ever recorded. And just as importantly, they taught me how to carry doubt and disagreement with grace. While I often fail them, they can never be forgotten. It is because of them that I am more than my own finite history.

## Author Biography

I am a third-year PhD student in the Humanities fascinated by a wide range of concerns, but my studies are primarily and always born out of existential inquiry. Outside of academia, I enjoy classical, folk, rock, and '80s electronic music, along with relatively slow cinema and literature, and the occasional RTS videogame. I like to geek out with people, especially over rounds of coffee and cigarettes.



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# The Reticent Revolution of Sexual Daydreams

Annalissa Crisostomo

## Abstract

*Daydreaming* is a spoken word poem that captures the intimate moment in which a woman fantasizes about having sex with her 'crush'. Although romantic and tender at times, this piece is not a snapshot of 'everlasting love' between two people, but of the reticent revolution of self-love, self-indulgence, and self-surrender that invokes sexual daydreams. brown's (2019) 'Pleasure Activism' observes the sensual imagination as a private and safe place where we develop fantasies of what we desire – what we want to *do* to others, or what we want *done* to us by others or what we want to *witness*, while acknowledging that these fantasies are heavily influenced by cultural social norms and intersecting systems of hierarchy that can perpetuate the disempowerment of ourselves and others. This leads brown to recognize sexual fantasies as sites for radical healing and liberation – as a quiet space where we get to intentionally work on developing new fantasies and generate power in and/or out of the bedroom. Inspired by brown's work, *Daydreaming* challenges androcentric and suppressive cultures of sexual exploitation and repression by (re)imagining and (re)claiming sex as something full of reciprocity, rapture, and vocality, thus disrupting the long-standing history of silencing survivors of sexual trauma and the patriarchal view that sexual pleasure is primarily for white straight cis men. As such, the poem embodies counter-hegemony, not only offering us an opportunity to see, feel, sense, and imagine differently, but to also (re)shape "our real-life desires and practices", as brown (2019) puts it (p. 222). By creating space to envision new imaginary landscapes of sexual healing, sexual empowerment, and sexual liberation, *Daydreaming* reminds us of the power and potential of the radical sexual imagination to liberate a part of our (sexual) selves from within. It seeks to celebrate the political and liberating process of shamelessly luxuriating in our own erotic imaginations to activate our inner sexual worlds, and thus to produce social change.

## Keywords

poetry, sexual fantasy, sexual revolution

## **Daydreaming**

I picture us at the park -  
blanket picnic talking about books and art,  
eating grapes and tarts,  
while whispering in my ear  
how much you'd rather taste me instead.

I think of us in bed -  
moans and groans that feel like a sedative,  
your hugs and kisses are reparative.  
attentive to my wants and needs,  
the only time we'll admit  
that we don't mind begging on our knees.

I picture us on a boat -  
our bodies afloat the bed we rock.  
my knees by your waist side,  
as our insecurities fall wayside  
to the waves we ride.  
like the sea crashing into the shore,  
making me crave the pounding of your....  
heart. beat. even more.

I picture your body pressed up to mine -  
your head rested upon my chest,  
my arms wrapped around your neck.  
Baby, *please me.*  
*squeeze me.*  
vow to *never leave me.*

use the tip of your tongue  
to trace every line of my body to read me.  
appease me with your literacy.  
be author to all my notions of intimacy.  
Don't say a word.  
just use sounds and verbs to translate how much you like my curves.

let our bodies converse like musical instruments -  
playing in my mind all day, pressing rewind and play,  
because I love how gentle your voice always kisses me.  
like when the tip of your nose grazes mine.  
as gentle as when I lightly scratch the back of your hair line.  
in the same way brown autumn leaves gently hit the ground when it's due time.

I like when your eyes lock in;  
in the same way our legs lock intertwined when you grab hold;  
like your arms grip-locked tight around my torso as we lose control;  
I like the way that we unfold.  
the thought of "*my turn*" gets me excited.  
maybe while Miles Davis is playing,  
I can blow. your. horn. –  
show you just how much I like it  
when *you adorn me*,  
how much *I adore you*,  
how much *our bodies speak volumes*.

there are no better thoughts than this.  
I think that you might just be my favourite daydream.  
the best kind of distraction to sweep me off my feet and take me.  
oh baby, you *elate* me.

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**Author Biography**

Annalissa Crisostomo (she/her) is a first generation Canadian and mixed-race woman of colour with Filipina and Afro-Indo Guyanese roots. She is a PhD student in Adult Education and Community Development (AECD) at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE), University of Toronto (U of T). She holds an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy from York University, and a Master of Education in AECD from OISE, U of T. Her work and studies have focused on the transformative power of creativity and imagination to ignite and foster learning, leadership, healing, and social change. At the heart of her praxis is the belief that ‘dreaming’ is some of the most important work we can do as individuals and as a collective. She is inspired by artists, activists, and scholars who have instilled in her a relentless devotion to (re)imagine and (re)create new worlds full of colour and magic. As an artist, her creative work touches on themes such as radical love, loss, redemption, identity, healing and dreaming.



# Affectual Worlding

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## This Line Connects the Void

Tram Nghiem

### Abstract

The following piece is the script and a selection of still frames of an experimental 16mm film that considers the space of grief and absence held in the everyday. Filmed in the artist's family apartment on the edge of Parkdale in the city of Toronto, this work follows in the tradition of woman artists depicting interior spaces and domestic life. It explores the poetics of grief and precarity for the family around the time of death and dying regarding the artist's sister. With non-linear storytelling and fragmented images, the work moves between speculative fiction, documentary, and experimental film. Referencing Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée* (1982) and Anne Carson's poem "On Walking Backwards" (2015), it considers the space and metaphor of a void and the desire that moves between the dead and the living. This work is funded by the Canada Council of the Arts.

### Keywords

grief, family, film

At some point in my pre-teen years, my father painted the walls in the living room and some bedrooms, toothpaste green. He then painted the radiators in these rooms pepto-bismol pink. I don't know why he chose those colours, but I imagine he got the paint for very little. Everyone in the household was upset. We never had many guests but since then, we have had even fewer.



Before she left us, my sister went to Iceland with a friend. She'd been meaning to go for years to walk the open terrain and swim in the hot springs. After she left, we didn't hear from her for a while, but she sent a polaroid home. In it, she's staring at an iceberg from the shore, with her back to us.



In 2019, my sister spent a lot of time in the dark.

She asked my father to board up her bedroom window so she could be in perpetual darkness. He tried to refuse but did what she wanted. She stopped eating and suspended herself in near-constant sleep with drugs. Day after day. It was in this void, which was a kind of shelter, that she went away.



I light incense and lay at her small altar: two apples, two oranges, bananas, and a bottle of water. According to my mother, when you light incense the spirit comes out and eats whatever food you leave. When the incense finishes burning, the meal is over.





My uncle bought my sister a puppy because he read online that having a puppy improves mental and physical health. It was the first time our family had a dog, and my sister was thrilled. She took it everywhere and named it “Marin”, meaning “of the sea”.



In her mother’s womb, my sister was part of an exodus. In the summer of 1989, over a decade after the end of the war, my pregnant mother, father, half-sister, and uncle, like thousands of others, illegally fled Vietnam. Spending days at sea in a crowded boat, they headed to a refugee camp built in the Philippines by the U.N.

After my sister was born, my father had to figure out what to do with the placenta from birth. He couldn't throw it out with the garbage fearing the un-holiness of dogs eating it. So, under moonlight, he found a quiet section of the beach, he dug a hole, and buried the organ.



Anne Carson (2015) writes "the dead after all do not walk backwards but they do walk behind us. They have no lungs and can not call out, but they would love for us to turn around" (p. 49).



My mother, following custom, made an altar with a photograph, incense, food, and water. Weeks later, she visited my aunt in Cincinnati and my father took down the home memorial and threw away everything in my sister's room: her bed, linen, books, and clothes. He also throws away 4 paintings she made when she lost her ability to express language, when she lost her words before they reached the cavity of her mouth.

My father leaves behind my sister's porcelain cups with their gold detailing because he doesn't know they are hers.





At three months, a vet recommended my sister get Marin spayed and so she did. I don't know if it was too young, but the puppy suffered cardiac arrest and died right after the surgery. Upon hearing the news, my sister asked my father to go pick up the dead dog and bring it home to our apartment. That night she locked herself in her room and laid with her body. My mother tried to talk her out of it through the door but got no answer. The next morning, she emerged, and gave the dog to my dad to take back to the vet.







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## Acknowledgments

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## Author Biography

Tram Nghiem (they/them/she/her) is a queer Southeast Asian cultural programmer and artist working with stills and moving images. Trained in digital video, their art practice uses process-based inquiries, digital/analogue methods, and explores the relationship between people and their environments. They are currently working on an experimental video work funded by the Canada Council of the Arts. When not working around film culture, they can often be found walking their dog, Stella, around the city.

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# Dreaming of Fragments of Home Left Behind

**Mehwish Mughal**

## **Abstract**

I have been away from Pakistan for almost 20 years now and only have been able to go back four times. I have daydreamed of reuniting with my mother since I stepped into the airport to leave her behind. I experience the constant longing to return to my mother, to home, when I am watching a sunset; from the sudden whiff of jasmine flowers on the footpath, from the smell of ittar I wear; while making biryani from shaan spices packed in Pakistan; on Eids, on birthdays, on my leaving home anniversary date and month; on labels on towels reading made in Pakistan in our local supermarket shelves and in the pages of Urdu novels and poetry; from the lyrics of songs; from twirling between my fingers the locket my mother gave me to ward off evil; when I raise my hands to pray at the end of the fajr prayer; when I get sick and want my mother to nurse me back to health – when living. I have a powerful unshakeable spiritual bond with my mother. The dream I share in this piece, as interpreted by my mother, is a desire to return home and the testimony of my love for her.

## **Keywords**

longing, diaspora, home, kin

*The sun is losing its hold, and the night is approaching fast. We are out in the wilderness, camping in a log cabin. There are 10 or perhaps 15 of us. No one is sitting still. They are picking up leaves, walking in and out, discussing if they want to follow the stream adjacent to the cabin, lighting the fire in front of the cabin and debating the nutritional value of onion soup versus pumpkin soup.*

*I am the outsider. I am watching them and growing restless. They must all go inside so I can leave before the night completely devours everything around it.*

*I politely ask them to retire for the night. They have their minds and fail to notice that the wind has stopped, and the birds no longer have a song. They ignore me. I must warn them of something I do not know and cannot explain. All I know is that they must all go inside and lock themselves for the night.*

*I must get out of there to follow the other group as they have some information about my journey.*

*I cannot wait any longer. I try one last time. No effect. I pour the onion soup on the fire, throw the bowl, and walk away from them. I know they have taken heed and have started moving like a herd towards safety.*

*I am terrified. Should I have just stayed the night there and perhaps taken the journey in the morning? I know that I had to keep moving. The map of the whole area flashes in front of my eyes. It is infinite. The magnanimity of the forest reaffirms my doubts and spreads a shadow over my resolve. I realise that I am underprepared, wearing jandals and carrying a satchel which has one book and a red pen. Nothing else.*

*I should start marking the trees—the first reasonable thought. Something inside me warns me against it. The trees have life, and I should not disturb anything around me.*

*I start walking. It is a straight path until I reach an intersection. Is it left from here or right? Does it matter? I am lost.*

*Something begins to guide me. I am not sure who or what. I just know. I have to take a right turn. Time has stopped now, so I do not know how long I have walked. I just keep walking.*

*I eventually come to a clearing. I see an outline of a wooden built place with a veranda.*

*As I get closer, I find that it's a café. Three young people are engrossed in a conversation, oblivious to anything around them. Who are they? Why are they here in the middle of nowhere?*

*As I ponder these questions and decide to ask one of them, a cold, refreshing mountain breeze goes right through me and silences all these irrelevant questions.*

*I don't ask them anything, and they do not notice me. I keep on walking.*

*I reach a town. A deserted town. I come across a shopping centre, a school and a hospital—all abandoned and with no sign of life. It feels like a scene from an apocalyptic movie.*

*What happened to that second group? It does not matter anymore.*

*I finally see the boulder. It is huge. I climb to the top and want to sit there and be one with what is around me, but there's a nagging sense of urgency. I must get somewhere.*

*At the edge of the boulder is a rope ladder. I climb down, feeling the climax.*

*Descending into something I do not know.*

*I reach the bottom, and it is a clear green vast field. In the middle stands a tiny square house built with straws or wood. I start to move towards it. I do not know what is inside this house. All I know is that I have to get there.*

“Remove your blanket NOW”, I hear my mother shout.

I am jolted back to reality in my bed, shivering and burning with fever. I remove the blankets immediately.

My mother does not live with me. I live alone.

## **Acknowledgments**

I am blessed to have a beautiful friendship with Mengzhu Fu. I see them as an integral part of my redemption and healing. Their love, protection, encouragement, support, and solidarity is boundless. They shared the callout for submission and encouraged me to write—so much love for them. I am grateful to my sister, Sehar Mughal, who provides my soul with the necessary balm when I miss home, and my world fails to make sense. I extend my deepest gratitude to Jade Crimson Rose Da Costa for their kindness and respect throughout the editorial process—an empowering experience.

## **Author Biography**

Mehwish Mughal is a sister to five siblings, a daughter to one of the strongest women alive, a 1.5 generation Pakistani activist, a feminist, and a researcher based in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Driven by a strong sense of social justice, her main areas of interest are mental health and gender justice. She has recently been awarded her Master's thesis in Sociology titled *An exploration of social construction of mental health: perspectives of Pakistani diaspora in Aotearoa*.



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# For My Friends Who Speak to Me in Quiet

**Nishhza Thiruselvam**

## **Abstract**

Last year, I was grieving the loss of my dad's little brother, my Uncle Kumar. I wrote this poem the night that I attended his memorial service over Zoom. My uncle will always have a special place in my heart. I moved to New Zealand from Malaysia in 2004 when I was 14 years old. A year later, my parents and my little sister followed. Every visit back home to Malaysia for the next 15 years, Uncle Kumar would be there to greet us at the airport. His familiar face would be the first to greet us when we landed, and the last to see us off when we left. I miss the feeling of seeing his warm smiling face in the KL airport's arrival area. Climbing into the familiar comfort of his car in Malaysia's thick humid air was always my first warm welcome home. In this poem I remember my Uncle Kumar, with whom I enjoyed sharing space with in both conversation and in quiet; The quiet tears he tried to hide while driving me back to the airport at the end of my visits home; The quiet meals I shared with him while scrolling through my phone; The quiet drives home during my childhood, when my parents were busy at work and weren't able to pick my sister and I up from school that day. He loved being our uncle. He never outright said so, but he showed us how much he did. Uncle Kumar always showed up and I am so deeply blessed to have known and loved him. He is a person I learned so much from, and whose demeanour and temperament I so often see in myself. My world changed when you left us, and we miss you so much.

## **Keywords**

poetry, ancestors, unspoken understandings, magic

I find closeness in moments of unspoken understanding,  
moments of mutual appreciation of the unsaid,  
moments when our silence allows us to speak with our eyes and with our smile,  
and in those moments,  
it's like we start to hold each other close without physical touch.  
Sometimes we speak to one another  
without looking at each other,  
when we sit in silent appreciation,  
and in our silence there is an exchange.

In these moments we seem to know  
that who we are  
is who we ever were,  
and who we ever were  
is everyone we ever knew  
and everyone we ever knew  
are all those who ever meant something to us  
and when you and I,  
when we share our moments of this lovely quiet,  
a space clears for the wholeness of our existence.  
We are so much.

When I think about our ancestors,  
You see,  
when I think of who I ever was  
and who you ever were,  
I think of the way we carry in us all who came before us.  
The most subtle of our gestures,  
subtleties in expressions when we speak,  
intricacies in our lines of thought,  
paths taken by our minds when we think.  
Our ways precede us in our lineage and  
that is how they continue to exist in us now.  
Magic.  
And you and I, we exist in each other  
because we mean something to each other.

You exist in me,  
and in my mind,  
and in the way I hold my head up high,  
and every time you make me smile  
you continue to linger in the creases of my face  
and I like that you stay there for time to come.

When I gather with family elders,  
these subtleties in expression,  
they take on explicit relevance.  
My elders, as we speak,  
connect these subtleties in my expressions  
to my grandmother or to a great uncle I never met;  
They say,  
the way my dad rubs his head when he thinks,  
that's the way his grandfather used to do it.  
And as my elders speak,  
I can't help but marvel  
Because traced inside me I will always find them  
and in finding them I find the universe,  
and in spending time with my elders,  
A picture of who and where I come from  
becomes a little more clear.  
What is this if not the most marvellous existence?

And in our quiet my friends,  
when you recognise something in me without me  
needing to speak, you have acknowledged  
and welcomed an ancestor into our space  
and I love you for how you honour them.

## **Acknowledgements**

For my family who taught me collectivist values, so much so that neoliberal individualism is jarring in its isolation and over valuing of the individual.

## **Author Biography**

Nishhza Thiruselvam is an Auckland based Malaysian born Tamil whose ancestry traces back to Jaffna, Sri Lanka, and to Tanjavour in India's southernmost state of Tamil Nadu. She is the proud daughter of migrant parents, and a grateful older sibling for her brilliant big hearted little sister. When she is with her family back home, there is no place else she would rather be.

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## Alive in Love

**Vidya**

### **Abstract**

Alive in Love is a compilation of three journal entries from different moments in my lifetime when I have experienced immense heartbreak due to experiencing immense love. These narratives explore my understanding of love over the years, how it factors into both my work as a PhD student and into my overall positionality on love as a queer woman of colour, bringing into question the notion of love as ontological—as a singular, all-consuming reality. The piece questions whether the nature of my love - the way I experience and understand love from my subjugated standpoint, is graspable through the structure of colonial language, or any language, for that matter. Each entry formulates love within and outside the western categorical understandings of love as either romantic, platonic, or affectionate as simple, raw, unrefined expressions of the different forms of love that exist and the heartbreak that follows.

### **Keywords**

love, heartbreak, grief, positionality, ontologies, ontology

## Prelude

What is the status of love and heartbreak in the contemporary world? What do love and heartbreak do? Who gets to give love, experience love, and receive love? Who gets to grieve heartbreak? What kinds of heartbreaks and love can we grieve? This collection of journal entries explores various kinds of heartbreak caused throughout many years, in vastly different contexts – heartbreak that adds up, piles up; heartbreak that questions love, heartbreak that brings into understanding whether love is rational, beyond reason; heartbreak that breaks in and out of reason; heartbreak that is of a nation. As a South Asian queer woman who studies the Partition of India<sup>1</sup>, heartbreak is an everyday experience for me. However, in this multi-sited narrative, I write of one narrative of heartbreak: the stories of which that go in and out of the past, present, and future. Stories such as this rupture the presumed linearity of experience to create a sense of the anarchic potential of love and heartbreak. How it transgresses everything.

As a site of this temporal transgression, my journal entries are written in the order of the most recent to the oldest. As I move back in time in my memories, the length of each entry reduces. This is a creative choice. The reduction in length and depth allows me to express the newness of the heartache, the temporality of it, along with the degree of it. Temporality as a concept here denotes both my heartache and love through/over time, but also how time in its past, present, and future articulations are tied together through heartbreak (Gokmenoglu, 2022, p.644-645). The oldest entry, the shortest one, is the heartache that is the deepest. I continue to lose parts of myself to that heartache as I live. With this, I evoke temporality to highlight the connection between time and the pace at which my heart beats in love and through heartbreak. The faster my heartbeats, the slower the time passes.

## *One. Love of a Lifetime, All Gone!*

*December 22nd, 2022*

The dark of 4 a.m. is settling. The silence of 4 a.m. is unsettling. The hurt of 4 a.m. is heartbreaking. In the dark, unsettling, hurt, you lay next to me, I hear voices, I see words, I hear your words that will remain unsaid, forever. I want you to hold me. I want you to hold me forever. I want you to hold me so you can understand me. I want you to hold me through the heartbreak, the heartbreak you have caused. I want you to see me. I see your eyes closing at 4 a.m., I see you turn your back to me. The eyes closing and the back turning like a metaphor.

A metaphor for dismissal, disrespect, for unending hurt. For you taking me for granted. I want to touch you even though all the disrespect, the hurt, the crudeness is telling me not to. I want to feel safe. I think to myself - how can I feel safe with the one person who has caused me so much hurt, who has broken my trust? How can I forget all the pain in just one moment? I want you to hold me, despite that. I want you to hold me with care, hold me with love, hold me with respect. Hold me back with everything you stripped me of, in one night. I slowly, nervously move towards you. I touch you; I caress your back. I have known my touch to have calmed you, to have opened you up to me, but now, I see you shrug my hand away. I am crushed with shame. Days later, I will realize that I have also caused you hurt, I have caused you some pain. Days later, I will realize that the hurt led me to learn and unlearn things about myself. I hope to share those and take accountability for what I did with you someday. I hope I can. I do. Excerpts of our phone conversation are copied below.

I want to do this with care. I want to do this with a lot of acceptance and kindness. I also want to remind you again that I am going to talk about how I felt during and after the conversation from a week ago and I will mention feelings of hurt, pain, heartbreak even, but none of them have led to resentment of you or hatred of you. I do not at all, for once, blame you for it. They do not stem

<sup>1</sup> Learn more: [www.1947partitionarchive.org/library](http://www.1947partitionarchive.org/library).



from your decision. I respect it, I understand it, I, to an extent, agree with it, and I do not want to talk today to convince you to change your mind or induce guilt. I want to talk because I realized that somewhere in the last few months, we forgot what we mean to each other and how much love we have for one another. I want to talk today so we can start again with so much knowledge about the other person, start again with care, without expectations, with understanding, without restrictions. Is that okay, how are you feeling so far? I also want us to keep checking in. And, at any moment, if you feel that this is turning into a game of blame, please tell me to stop and I will take a step back to reframe. There are parts where I want you to take accountability for wrongdoing, and I will too, where needed.

I want to tell you how I really, truly understand your positionality. I agree. Over the last few days, I spent a lot of time thinking, reading, writing. All to understand why we had a disagreement. I felt very unsettled, incredibly sad, very hurt. But I knew that I didn't feel all of that because of you or your decision. So, I did a very deliberate, intentional digging, deeper and backward, to understand the how, the why, and the what next. I read about love, philosophically, chemically, anthropologically. I read Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Martha Nussbaum, bell hooks. I read papers on the anthropology of love, I read Deleuze and Sara Ahmed as the contemporary masters of love in affect theory.

I really dug deep into my heart and brain. I asked myself questions like; do I even love you? Am I just attached to you? Is it just physical or sexual attraction? Is it just convenience - as once you had deduced it was - had I loved you for the proximity and convenience of it? And, now, I have come upon the answer - I do love you, I love you beyond what words can describe. What kind of love then? Platonic, romantic, purely sexual? My love for you is affective, spiritual. It is beyond all of it and therefore it encompasses all of it. I love you beyond friendship, romance, or relationships, and I love you as kin, as a kindred spirit - it surpasses any categorization, it surpasses distance, time, everything. I have love

for you at any given moment, on any given day.

Even when I was so deeply hurt, I could not physically stop loving you. My love for you both precedes and exceeds any love that I have had before. It precedes and exceeds relationship, friendship, it is a cellular, deep love. That depth is the very reason I have struggled with its expression, with conveying it in the past and now. So, it is a love of affective, spiritual relationality, not romantic relationships as we know it, it is about the connection that occurred even before I had met you, frankly. You were someone familiar to me in September 2021, and I knew I loved you on Jan 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022. My love will always be there, relationship or not. friendship or not.

You can decide to walk away from any connection, and I will still love you. The lack of expression of it will cause sadness and deep heartbreak, but the love will not go. I think of it as a universal miracle that I met you, someone who understands my bones, my cells, my spirit, and my soul. Someone who resides in them even, as cringey as this may sound. Saying I love you to you, holding you, kissing you, having sex with you are all expressions for the kind of depth I experience. Sex, especially, is so much about vulnerability, connection, and nurturance. I will feel this way, the connection, with or without a relationship because I have always felt this with you. I think I was trying to hold on to a notion of commitment towards a relationship because I was acting from a place of fear and scarcity. Because I learnt over the summer that you will not be comfortable with expressions of love, if not for a relationship. It is what you wanted.

So, this is where I stand. I want it all with you, so I will be here. Not waiting and pining, but as an old tree that stays for a long time. You take what you want from it. Because I don't agree with societal restrictions of when I can love you, how I can love you, I will always love you, however you want me to. If you need rebound sex, I will be here, if you need a shoulder to cry on, I will be here, if you need sex because you haven't had any in a long time, I will be here, if you need to vent about your partner, your parents, I will be here.

My only condition is, I get to express my love

for you, how I want. I cannot be shamed for it. I cannot be ridiculed for it. Just because we do that, does not mean we are in a relationship. Sending you hugs or squeezes means you are in my thoughts, and I want my warmth for you. When I say I am thinking of you, I mean it as I am grateful for you in my life. I have spent too much time trying to bind my love for people, to reduce it, to categorize it, to dial it down. You are far too important for me to do that. So, I will fight for you, I will fight for your love for you. Fight against societal norms. I wish you would fight for me, your love for me. But you do not. You break my heart, again. But, my love stays, again.

Yours,  
Vidya.

*Two. Heartache of a Nation, for a Nation.*  
May 28th, 2020

I am 24 today. I am happy about that. I am heartbroken, very deeply, about the Partition. I am heartbroken about the split of a nation, a people, of togetherness that happened seventy-three years ago. I am only now fully reconciling with it. I am only now understanding the degree of heartbreak that occurred decades ago. The heartbreak that has never healed. I lay in bed, on the 28th day of May, the day I turned 24, thinking about the heartbreak, learning it, feeling it. How did I not know about the Partition? How did I not know about the millions of deaths, the violence, the cries? How can I be happy today? How can I ever be happy? My heart started peeling away, peeling slowly like the petals of a flower would. Almost three years later, I still haven't found the words, the feelings, the emotions to express the pain, the grief, the love. Love for a nation unknown, yet so familiar. Love for Pakistan.

On the 28th day of May, while lying in bed, I decided to learn everything there is about the Partition. Today, as I rewrite aspects of this journal entry to submit for a journal, I am exploring the Partition through an anthropology of love, looking at the cultural politics of heartbreak and love for my PhD thesis. This is my way of learning, articulating, and healing through

the heartbreak of the Partition. A heartbreak that generations of families in two nations share. Some of us have never experienced the Partition itself, having only experienced the effects of the heartbreak. None of us being allowed to publicly acknowledge or express the heartbreak.

A heartbreak that connects and divides us. My heart aches for my country, for the country that became the other, for the people of my country, and for the ones in the neighbouring country. The love for my country, for the country that became the other, is just as powerful. So is the shame for my country, her politics, her government, and the divisive, fascist propaganda the government is spewing. I promise myself that I will always keep the heartache close to my heart, I will keep it with me every day. I promise to feel it every day. For almost three years now, I felt it every day. I have been with heartache every day.

Yours truly,  
Vidya.

*Three. No Love to Live For!*  
June 13th, 2006

I am jolted awake at 2 a.m. It is the kind of jolt that is ominous. I am 10 years old, I still co-sleep with my parents. I do not see them around, and immediately, I know. I know that it is you. I dreamt of you walking away from me. I run to your room and see you sleeping, very very still. I know you are gone, but my parents and my grandfather cannot muster up the courage to tell me that, to confirm or actualize it for me.

They know how much I love you. I wish you know how much I love you. You are gone. My world has torn apart. I want to scream, I want to cry, I want to die. What is the point of life and living if you are not in it. It has been 17 years since you are gone, and my heart has never healed. My world has not been put together. I have had the desire to die, every single day. And yet my love stays. You stay in my love.

Yours forever,  
Vidya.

## Postlude

These entries lead me to ask if I love so deeply, and continue to love so deeply, because I am expected to always care, love, understand, as a woman of colour? Is my love, or my ability to love, a consequence of colonization? I will explore these questions in future entries.

### *Collaboration Request*

*To continue the journalistic nature of these entries and my explorations of love and heartbreak, I ask the readers, if willing, and interested, to write their thoughts on love and heartbreak or to offer their thoughts on some of the questions I pose. I plan/hope to create paintings/montages out of the entries in a shared, co-curated manner, to celebrate the ambiguous, ever-expanding nature of love. If interested in the collaboration, email [vishjo@yorku.ca](mailto:vishjo@yorku.ca) with your responses, thoughts on love, and/or more questions. I will also add any paintings/montages provided through these explorations to my professional website, with credit.*

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**Acknowledgments**

None of this would be possible without someone I call 'bug' - lots of gratitude for/to them. Some days I am alive because of them, so I owe this work and often my life to them. Thank you for keeping me alive, for loving me, and for believing in me. You teach me to keep loving and that is the key to being alive.

# Mundane Worlding

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## Mumbai Mangoes

**Namitha Rathinappillai**

### **Abstract**

In speaking about the gentle and measured experience of consuming a simple mango, the questions of how we might return to the roots of our ancestors through an act as basic as fulfilling our need for sustenance, and the myriad of possibilities for how we may intertwine joy, pleasure, play, and care into our daily lives, are posed. Ultimately, this poem aims to explore notions of what it means to engage in genuine and unadulterated mindfulness, outside of colonial constructs of space and time.

### **Keywords**

food, mindfulness, ease, sun



These golden suns in the palms of our hands,  
I hold this lesson before my lover,  
as they grin with delight.  
I prepare the meal.  
I dig my fingers under its skin and it peels off clean,  
and I smile with the delight that this feeling,  
this sink and strip,  
feels like home.  
The sun never sets  
when I hold it in my hand.  
Its juices slipping through my fingers,  
like rays of sunshine.  
I hand my lover their naked fruit,  
and teach them how to treasure it.  
The only sound in the room is the soft landings of our teeth in this fruit,  
for what greater prize is that first bite,  
and the knowingness that the pit is soon to come?  
I gesture to my lover as I see them reaching the seed's protector, the pit of the mango.  
I teach by example,  
sticky fingers swiping the dribbles down our lips,  
how to make this moment go on like ellipses.  
We later learn that to eat a mango while high is to make the high last longer--  
to stretch out this moment like chewed bubble gum between fingers,  
this experience seemingly going on forever.  
I learn again and again that the mango is the fruit of winding down,  
knowing that mangoes are older than the construction of time.  
I want to paint my walls this golden hour fruit colour.  
Rip down every clock and replace it with an oblong gamboge thing, instead.  
Instead,  
I sit in this moment,  
full with the sun in my belly.

The discarded carcasses,  
the only reminder that time has passed at all.

**Author Biography**

Namitha Rathinappillai (she/they) is a fat, disabled, queer, Tamil-Canadian spoken word artist, organizer, and workshop facilitator. Though currently based in Toronto, Namitha was the first female and youngest director of Ottawa's Urban Legends Poetry Collective (ULPC). Performing spoken word nationally, they are a two-time Canadian Festival of Spoken Word (CFSW) team member with ULPC and finalist at the Canadian Individual Poetry Slam (CIPS). They published their first chapbook titled 'Dirty Laundry' with Battleaxe Press in November of 2018. She holds a Masters in Sociology from York University and a Bachelor of Arts in Criminology and Criminal Justice, with a concentration in Sociology and a minor in English Language and Literature from Carleton University. You can find more at [namitharathinappillai.com](http://namitharathinappillai.com).

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# I Have Nothing to Say...

**Mautushi Dutta**

## **Abstract**

I Have Nothing to Say... is a poetic feminist discourse analysis that explores the feelings of an Indian woman who has been subjected to, and now struggles against, the constant familial and societal obligations of womanhood. Despite her talents, she has been repeatedly denied what she deserves – what she is owed. After having, not only her self-worth, but the very meaning of her existence repeatedly challenged by her loved ones, she eventually chooses the path of silence and unspoken words. But deep within her, she continues to fight the rising tide of emotions. The poem paints a picture of the many people who stirred these emotions – who sought to prevent the woman from pursuing her dreams, from society writ large to those who have tried to kill her, to her very family.

## **Keywords**

Prose poem, society, self, feminist, discourse analysis

Oh Baba!

I was a medical aspirant... so happy; I cleared the entrance after graduation...

You said not to continue MBBS as it would take a long time...

I protested hard but in vain... You all said No!

My teachers and friends were so shocked...

They asked again and again... I had nothing to say...

Oh my dear Family!

You said I should do my master's instead...

I agreed and joined...

But after the second semester as I came home for vacation, you decided to marry me to the groom of your choice, I knew nothing...

I could not return to hostel...

When my lecturers and friends asked why... I had nothing to say... You blocked my sim...

Oh In Laws!

You promised to allow me to study but never kept...

I could not finish masters, as you didn't allow...

I read at night, doing all the overburdened work you give to stop me...you inviting guests, at least five each day in addition...You told me to put the lights off in my room... As your son was sleeping... I had nothing to say...

Oh Baba!

You knew everything... But told me to go with the flow... Everything gonna be fine...

When I decided to do my masters again... In laws, said only via distance... I agreed and joined... They started torturing more...

When I called you crying, they burnt my hand with boiling water while I was kneading flour for morning roti, saying it should be softer...

You said it might be a mistake, and to ignore... After that when they started abuse everyday... You always supported them and not me... I had nothing to say...

Oh husband!

You never uttered to the cruelties... You knew everything... You shush me down as I wanted to explain... I had nothing to say...

Oh Brother in law!

You never be free with me... Always supported your family...I tried hard to make you all happy and like me but in vain... It was always me who was trying but you all didn't wanted it... I have nothing to say...

Oh in Laws!

When father in law and brother in law grabbed me hard from back... One pressing my neck hard... Mother in law, burnt my thigh and belly with a hot iron rod and plastic... I shouted and fainted...I opened my eyes at the hospital...

You all standing outside in fear... I thought you changed and care...

You explained all fake... I saved you from jail... Before the police, I had nothing to say...

Oh Baba and my family!

When I returned, you took good care of me... I started healing fast... You all supported me... But after few weeks, you suggested and decided to send me back... They also agreed... You forced me to go... I asked why??? Do I have to die to get rid of them... You said they have changed and would not repeat... Do I have to put my life in danger to have the proof?

I denied... You said what would the society say... They also explained the same... What about my life and feelings? I said I would live very far from you all, where no one knows me... You said you all have relatives all over... I found one place where is none... I decided to go... Thanks grand paa, to give me property and money... I could not able to make the decision otherwise...

Oh Baba and Mr. husband!

You two are the gems of my life! You always supported me, Baba... This time you were confused but agreed at last... You took me to the new place and stayed with me, until your son in law, had the courage to leave his place and stay with me... I had seen the tensions on your face with each passing day...

Finally, Dear husband, you arrived... You supported me... I didn't want to leave your parents but... But I know each time you go to visit them, you wish, I would also go...

You are free to leave me if you wish...but I could not go...I won't stop you... You know better... I have nothing to say... I am happy you stayed and supported me...

Oh baba, my family in laws!

Now, more than a year, I haven't seen you... I am fine but lonely without you... Trying to find a closed one among the strangers...People love me so much here, though I am a stranger to them... Close bonds are built with some... When I was severely ill... Many people came...But my husband and I had to manage it all... Without you all, life is... I have nothing to say...

Oh Experts!

When I was late to do my tasks and asked you for an extension due to health issues... You granted me... Thank you wholeheartedly... Though, I am unable to explain my feelings to you fully... But you are the only extended family of me now...I like and respect each and everyone of you so much... You are the only support of my life now... I enjoy each and every moment with you...

I have sacrificed all for the sake of study... If I leave my studies and do the marital household tasks, everyone in my family would be happy, besides me... Only my baba (half heartedly) and my husband supports me...

But I never let these things impact my studies... But I couldn't help it when I was severely ill for two months... I had done all the given tasks with sincerity and full priority... Your decision could decide my future... I have nothing to say...

Oh myself!

You have done and tried to do everything in life perfectly... But some things are not in your hand... When suffering happened and people asked, why me? Instead, they should ask why them. No need to worry anymore... Be strong... Continue to live... Relax... You can survive... I have many things to say...

With all the hiding scars and smiling face... I have nothing but many things to say...



## **Author Biography**

Mautushi Dutta is a Sociology Research Scholar who is currently studying Leisure and Gender in India. They have attended, and presented at, numerous seminars and, in March 2023, they completed the Master of Philosophy in Sociology. The title of their dissertation is “Leisure and gender during Covid-19 outbreak among the working women of Assam”. Dutta is also an artist, storyteller, and lover of arts and crafts, as well as cooking, nature, and birds. They enjoy travelling and adventure, but education is their top priority. Dutta believes that leisure is essential for maintaining a high quality of life and a healthy work-life balance. They wish for a more beautiful future.

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## the fridge

**Sehar Moughal**

### **Abstract**

'the fridge' portrays the unattended parts of my soul, my being. Most days, I am exhausted because I do too much for too many people: I am a mother, I provide for my family financially, I am a graduate student, I work in the mental health sector, and I am a teacher at a university. People tell me that I have it all, that I am "passionate", and I am a "force to reckon with". But some days, I am just tired. On those days, I want to hide away, be "normal", neither *passionate* nor a *force*, but merely human. This poem was written on one such day, a day where feeling more than, being more than, was not enough and too much. 'the fridge' is not just a poem; nor is it just a metaphor. It is my reality of how exhausting it is to try to live up to whom I am meant to be, never carving enough space for who I am. 'the fridge' is my surrender and also my (be)coming of home.

### **Keywords**

poetry, reflections, BIPOC, Brown exceptionalism, trauma, hero worship

**the fridge**

must be revelling in the attention

given that

it hasn't been cleaned in months

housing a dead fly

was it licking the spilt milk?

ignoring the cold

being greedy

a shrivelled-up broccoli

sauce stains

dried herbs

am i ashamed?

for not doing what i am meant to do

no not really

but today was special

as i wiped away the grime

and fuzzy fungi

i thought about the chaos

within me

around me

the instability

needed

surely

for stability

for order to ensue

i watched the movement of my hands  
wiping  
washing  
squeezing  
how easily  
performing  
fitting into their roles  
my eyes dancing  
from one spot to  
another  
my mind scanning for  
any leftover stains  
easier to spot when there are not many of them  
standing out  
being shamed  
wiped  
eliminated  
for being the minority  
and  
and as i wiped the last remnants  
of a chaotic year  
i started to breathe  
a little easier  
pausing in between  
thanking my lungs  
my cardiovascular system

and everything in between

for doing it's job

letting me come back home

after a hard day

or a week

maybe a year

and as i put the half-empty milk bottle

no no

half full

does it really matter?

back into its space

i swear i heard it sigh

it was home

and so

was i

## **Acknowledgments**

Thank you to my sister, Mehwish, for encouraging me to be brave and show my vulnerability to others.

## **Author Biography**

Sehar Moughal is a 1.5-generation Muslim immigrant born in Pakistan who has resided in Aotearoa, New Zealand, for the last two decades. Sehar is a registered psychologist, a board-certified behaviour analyst, a doctoral student, and a professional teaching fellow at the University of Auckland. Sehar's doctoral research explores a therapeutic model for people of Asian ethnicity with family violence trauma using a feminist and contextualist methodology. Sehar is also a mother to a 4-year-old. Sehar's passion for work and research stems from her own lived experiences.

# Book Review



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# The Racialized Social System

**Vindra V. Moonilal**

## **Abstract**

Ali Meghji's *The Racialized Social System* (2022) examines the study of critical race theory (CRT) as a "practical social theory" that examines the micro, meso, and macro dimensions of race across time and space.<sup>1</sup> Meghji sectionizes his analysis into four chapters, the first of which adapts Pierre Bourdieu's theory of "social space" to link the inequitable distribution of resources to the social construct of racial hierarchy at the macro level. Then, in the next chapter, he explores the racialization of emotions on a micro level, detailing how dominant racial ideologies politicize emotions. In the third chapter, Meghji introduces the concept of interactional order and interactional risk(s)/right(s) as a measure of inequitable racial distribution and emotional regulation. Then, in the last chapter, Meghji examines how meso-organizational spaces (schools, workplaces, industries, etc.) are designed to restrict the agency of racialized individuals, while giving agency to their white counterparts. Through this multileveled approach, Meghji illustrates how the "practical social theory" of CRT is a viable tool for analyzing and understanding racism both theoretically and practically.

## **Keywords**

critical race theory, racialization, racism

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<sup>1</sup> Meghji (2022) defines micro (small) and macro (large) as intertwined, writing that "the racialized social system approach – offers a framework which links the macro structure of racial hierarchy to the micro workings of everyday life, emotions and perceptions" (p. 55). Regarding meso (middle), Meghji refers to this level as "those in-between *organizational* spaces – education, workplaces, industries and so on – that are worthy of analysis in their own right" (p. 90).

*The Racialized Social System: Critical Race Theory as Social Theory*

by Ali Meghji, 2022, vii+175 pp., \$20.19 (Kindle). ISBN: [15095399489].

Ali Meghji is an Associate Professor in Social Inequalities at the University of Cambridge who propels the scholarship of critical race theory (CRT) by examining the “racialized social system” as a nuanced approach to racism amid a broader societal spectrum. His book, *The Racialized Social System*, reveals how theorists in CRT scholarship have overlooked the paradigm as a sophisticated “racialized social system approach” (2022, p. 2). Meghji specifically reveals how CRT can be used as a tool to examine the multifaceted systems through which racism has been produced and maintained within modern society, both theoretically and practically. He first unpacks how “theorizing about race contributes to understandings of the social at large” (p. 19). He then argues that “it allows us to think of how CRT is a practical social theory . . . focusing on the social in defense of economic and social justice . . . This dynamic is captured in the racialized social system approach” (p. 19).

Meghji (2022) gives substantive focus to two “waves” within CRT scholarship: legal studies and educational studies. He highlights scholars from each wave who have contributed to the study of CRT.<sup>2</sup> In reviewing these two overarching currents within CRT, Meghji effectively situates the core argument of his book: that the racialized social system approach of the paradigm can potentially be posed as a “third wave” that analyzes racism theoretically and practically through a universal paradigm, encompassing the micro, meso, and macro levels of a transnational society. He writes that this wave of CRT allows: “different things to be known in a way that is more or less practical depending on the person’s objectives” (p. 31).

Meghji (2022) contends that the study of CRT is not a one-dimensional theory, but rather, constituted by various approaches that can all contribute to the understanding of how racism is structured globally. In each of the book’s four

chapters, he highlights specific aspects of the malleability of his racialized social system approach. First, he analyzes social space(s) to understand how “racial interests” are (re)produced by those of the dominant race (white), who have an interest in reproducing the social order, versus those of the subdominant race (non-white), who have an interest in contesting it (p. 45). Second, Meghji applies terms such as “colorblind ideology” and “racialized emotions” to the current examples of Trump’s America, Brexit Britain, and Bolsonaro’s Brazil.

Third, Meghji discusses two important theoretical concepts to the study of CRT: limit interactions and interactional making. These concepts are linked to the racialized interaction order, as it controls how images of racialized persons are perceived within the structures of society. Lastly, Meghji engages the idea of “social mechanisms” and frames them as a primary way to “think about the reproduction of social relations *and* social action” through “structures” and “racial grammars,” whereby he uses the examples of the US health care system and the Brazilian sugar mills to do so (p. 91, 94).

Meghji’s book re-establishes the positionality of CRT, introducing a “third wave” that aims to investigate racism on a global scale theoretically and practically. Since I am an emerging scholar within the field of CRT, I found the book useful for two reasons. First, Meghji references and explains past scholarships within the field of CRT, rigorously outlining prominent scholars who have contributed theories and concepts to the study of CRT. Second, Meghji builds from and expands previous scholarship, indicating how and why social change regarding race and racism, as well as other intersecting structural factors and realities need to occur on a multilevel scale. To conclude, I strongly recommend this book to scholars in the Humanities or Social Sciences.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to the Reference List to view other scholarships.

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## Author Biography

Vindra (Vanessa) Moonilal is a PhD student in the Humanities department at York University. Her research interest is in Caribbean literature.