Afrindian Fictions

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Published by The Ohio State University Press


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1. Meer’s exact words were: “[W]e Indian South Africans have had to struggle hard to claim our South Africanness, and that is something we jealously guard. . . . We are not a diaspora of India” (quoted in Waldman).

2. Even though Indians in South Africa are also referred to as Indian South Africans, I refer to them as South African Indians in order to preserve the integrity of an identity that sees South Africa as a primary affiliation. Also see n27. I use the term “Indian” rather than “South Asian” to respect the self-identification of the Indian community in South Africa. I have never observed South African Indians—both in fiction and in “real life”—identifying themselves as South Asian.

Part of the title of this chapter—“When Does a Subcontinental Become a Citizen?”—is adapted from the title of Mahmood Mamdani’s essay: “When Does a Settler Become a Native? The Colonial Roots of Citizenship.”

3. In her reading of Ahmed Essop, Arlene Elder argues that “native-born Indians, both in East and South Africa, are shown to have been treated as full citizens, neither during nor after colonialism” (138). Similarly, Sangeeta Ray uses the South African Indian context to discuss the “deteritorialization of borders that seek to withhold access to ‘citizenship’ for some of its members on the basis of the lack of certain credentials” (3). Also see Agnes Sam’s introduction to Jesus Is Indian: “Indians may have been excluded from South Africa’s history because of the temporary status intended for them. They may even have considered themselves temporarily resident in South Africa (9). This erasure from the national consciousness is precisely what drives the desire for citizenry in South African Indian fiction. As Parvathi
Raman points out in context of “the struggles over urban space,” Indians have historically contested their lack of citizen rights (230), a struggle we can also locate in Indian fiction. I must also emphasize that my reference point is always fiction and not the so-called reality of South African Indian life, however much fiction and reality may influence each other.

4. Recently, I searched for the word “Afrindian” on Google. I found that it had been used in an unpublished PhD political science dissertation by Kumi Naidoo entitled “Class, Consciousness and Organisation: Indian Political Resistance in Durban, South Africa, 1979–1996” (Oxford: Magdalen College, 1997; available online at http://www.sahistory.org.za/pages/library-resources/thesis/kumi-naidoo/kumi-naidoo-index.htm, retrieved on July 14, 2007). Naidoo’s use of the term seems similar to mine. She focuses on “the need for a development of an Afrindian identity, which encourages Indians to indigenise themselves to Africa without necessitating a need to negate their historical heritage.” However, her work focuses on “political resistance” rather than on literature.

5. The term “contact zone” is Mary Louise Pratt’s designation for intercultural exchange. See Imperial Eyes (6–7).

6. For an excellent analysis of Asian-black relationships, see Vijay Prashad’s Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity.

7. For example, Crane and Mohanram assert that the “canon . . . is continually questioned and opened up afresh by the postcolonial novel” (xiv).

8. In that vein, Loren Kruger argues for the “literary exploration of fictions that deconstruct or transform the ‘major’ or master narratives and the accompanying physical and political forces that have shaped South African lives to the present” (“Minor” 70). See also Barnard (8).

9. South African Indian self-expression can be traced back to newspapers such as the Indian Opinion, established in 1903 by Gandhi, and Colonial News, a competitor to Indian Opinion that was published from 1901 until 1904. These were followed by publications such as the Natal–based Leader, the Graphic, and Indian Views (Y. G. Reddy in Arkin et al., 196–97). In terms of cultural production, I base my assertion on the assumption that Indian indentured laborers sustained themselves on a rich body of myth and legend that they carried with them from the homeland in addition to testimonies of indentured labor found in texts such as Documents of Indentured Labour by Y. S. Meer, Marina Carter and Khal Torabully’s Coolitude, and Surendra Bhana and Joy Brain’s Setting Down Roots: Indian Migrants in South Africa, 1860–1911.

10. I am certainly not claiming that only Indians occupy this middle place between black and white. Groups such as the “Coloureds” and the “Cape Malays” also disturb the black-white paradigm of race relations. Each of these neglected communities deserves its own academic space. My project here is to study Indian literary production in South Africa and the impact that body of writing has on postcolonial studies. For a study of Coloured literature, see Grant Farred’s Midfielder’s Moment. Farred also focuses on how the Coloured community blurs racial binaries as well as on its contested relationship with blacks and whites. I should also point out that though I use the terms Coloureds, blacks, and whites throughout this book, I am
aware of their problematic connotations as well as their continued deployment by South Africans themselves.

11. The middle space occupied by Indians in the non-Western world has also been described by writers such as V. S. Naipaul and M. G. Vassanji. Ralph Singh in Naipaul’s *The Mimic Men* (1967) claims that Indians in the fictional Caribbean island of Isabella (Trinidad) are “the late intruder, the picturesque Asiatic, linked to neither” [“slave-owner” or slave] (93). Vikram Lall, the narrator in Vassanji’s appropriately titled *The In-Between World of Vikram Lall* (2003), is an Indian keenly aware of being caught between the black indigenes and the white settlers of Kenya.

12. V. S. Naipaul (Trinidad, England), Samuel Selvon (Trinidad, England), and M. G. Vassanji (Kenya, Tanzania, Canada) are examples of this phenomenon.

13. What follows is a summary of literary scholarship on South African Indians. Work has been done from ethnographic (Hansen, Radhakrishnan), historical (Dhupelia-Mesthrie, Ginwala, and Ebr.-Vally) and political (Desai, Ebr.-Vally) stances. Work has also been done on South African Indian theater (Hansen, Naidoo). However, there is a paucity of scholarship on fiction/literature.


17. South African Indian writers such as Farouk Asvat, Shabbir Banoobhai, Achmat Dangor, Ahmed Essop, Reshard Gool, Farida Karodia, Indres Naidoo, Deena Padayachee, Essop Patel, Shobna Poona, and Jayapragna Reddy are listed in the bibliography of South African literature provided at the end of this text.
18. I am summarizing published work only. Two unpublished dissertations have been written on South African Indian literature: Madhavi Jaiswal’s “Writing the ‘Ordinary’: Indian South African Writing as Womanist Prose” (Ahmed Essop, Jayaprana Reddy, Farida Karodia) (MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1991) and Ronit Fainman-Frenkel’s “On the Fringe of Dreamtime: South African Indian Literature, Race and the Boundaries of Scholarship” (PhD diss., University of Arizona, 2004). While Fainman-Frenkel also analyzes writers such as Dangor, Sam, Reddy, Karodia, and Coovadia, and uses the Indian presence to think beyond racial binaries, my focus is much more on diaspora and citizenship. Additionally, Afrindian Fictions also attempts to chart the themes and generic shifts in South African Indian literature, providing the reader with a broad overview of this body of work.


21. Emmanuel S. Nelson’s Reworking and Ralph Crane and Radhika Mohanram’s Shifting Continents, Colliding Cultures are examples of this tendency. Some very recent scholarship has examined the Indian diaspora in non-Western areas in comprehensive ways. See, for example, Shanthini Pillai’s Colonial Visions, Postcolonial Revisions: Images of the Indian Diaspora in Malaysia (Newcastle: Cambridge

22. Also see Michael Chapman’s thoughts on “South/South, South/North conversations” in his essay by that title (15) and Loren Kruger’s Post-Imperial Brecht.

23. Much of the scholarship discussed above is necessarily circumscribed by the geographic or thematic range it sets for itself. In terms of literary study on South African Indians, I have found only a few essays that explore the cultural consequences of migration from the Indian subcontinent to South Africa. Some of these include Smith (1985); Munson, Page, and Johns (1987); Freed (1988); Van Niekerk (1992); Elder (1992); Ray (1994); Flockemann (1992, 1998); Hope and English (1998); Kruger (2001, 2003); Reddy (2001); Fainman-Frenkel (2004, 2008); Govinden (1995, 2000, 2004). These are mostly author-based studies—other than Reddy, who focuses on apartheid-era writing—and none undertakes a comprehensive analysis of South African Indian fiction as I do here. Rajendra Chetty’s South African Indian Writings in English (2002) is a groundbreaking book, but it consists of anthologized extracts from South African Indian writing, even though it contains useful interviews with most of the South African Indian writers I study in this project.

24. See Empire Writes Back for more details; also see Jolly for a critique of this formulation.

25. This is not to claim that nonwhites do not interact with each other in complex ways in Western geographies. However, the interaction with whiteness often dominates race relations because whites are not only the most powerful group but also the most numerous. Moreover, this model of racial interaction (white/nonwhite) is very much the central paradigm in diaspora scholarship.

26. Thomas Hansen suggests that some of the additional concerns animating the South African Indian community are “imaginings of the motherland, the erosion of proper cultural practices, inter-generational conflicts, crime, worries about the westernization of youth and the corruption of sexual mores, internecine struggles between Tamils and Hindi speakers, and so on. Today, these debates revolve around how, and whether, a cultural ‘we’ can be maintained after the external imposition of a racial identity has disappeared” (“Melancholia” 302).

27. A poll conducted by Ebr.-Vally corroborates this assertion. Ebr.-Vally interviewed seventy South Africans of Indian origin for her research. One of the questions she asked was: “Which of the following would you use to describe yourself?” followed by a list of descriptive labels such as “Indian South African,” “South African,” “South African Indian,” “South African of Indian origin,” etc. Thirty-four percent of the interviewees identified themselves as “South African,” 20 percent as “South African Indian,” and 13 percent as “South African of Indian origin.” Only 3 percent identified as Indian South African (176).
28. I am indebted to Surendra Bhana’s work for the idea of a fluid Indianness in South Africa. For more on how Indianness adapted to changing social conditions in South Africa, see Bhana, “Indianness Reconfigured.”

29. The “return to roots” narrative is an important diasporic urge. In his controversial essay detailing the “ideal type” of diaspora, William Safran argues that one of the important characteristics of diaspora is that diasporics “regard their ancestral homeland as their true ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return” (83–84). Examples of return, both permanent and temporary, include the “back to Africa” movement in African American history or the trips to Israel by many Jews. Literary exemplifications of this phenomenon include Richard Wright’s *Black Power* (1954) and Pauline Hopkins’s *Of One Blood* (1902–1903). In a South Asian context, some examples of return that come to mind include V. S. Naipaul’s travelogues on India, Leila Dhirgra’s *Amritvela* (1988), Indi Rana’s *Roller Birds of Rampur* (1993), and Jhumpa Lahiri’s short story “The Interpreter of Maladies” (1999) in the collection by the same name.

30. Kruger’s perceptive essay explains that the first Indians arrived in South Africa in the seventeenth century as slaves and that their Indianness was erased by centuries of intermingling as well as by the apartheid taxonomy that classified them as Coloured. Even though this is historically verifiable information (see Suleiman Dangor, “The Myth of the 1860 Settlers,” for example), 1860 is generally considered to be the originary moment of Indian migration to South Africa. I discuss the expansion of the category of Indianness by highlighting the buried Indianness of many “Malays” in my chapter on Achmat Dangor, who is himself Cape Malay as well as has Indian ancestry, like many other Cape Malays.

31. Elder describes the various legislation enacted to disenfranchise the Indian community:

[T]he Indian Immigration Act of 1895 in Natal and even harsher regulations in Transvaal. Gregory reports that Indians were not attracted to the Orange Free State because of the extreme discrimination that had existed there all along against all non-Europeans: “The constitution of 1854 expressly conferred the benefits of citizenship only on ‘white persons’ and Indians were subsequently regarded as ‘coloured.’” (128) (117)

32. According to Bhana, “Given the NIC’s emphasis on ‘Indianness,’ Africans did not fit the strategy. . . . The Indians considered themselves part of an advanced civilization deserving of equality. The NIC’s best strategy, therefore, was to stress separation from other Blacks” (“Indianness Reconfigured” 101). For Gandhi’s stay in South Africa and his vexed relationships with nonwhites and non-Indians, see the chapter entitled “Confronting Difference and Exclusion: Gandhi’s Struggle for Recognition in South Africa,” in Manfred Steger’s *Gandhi’s Dilemma* and Thiara (139–40).

33. Even though Gandhi spent some formative years in England, he isn’t often appropriated by the South Asian–British diaspora. This could be because his stay in South Africa (twenty-one years) was much longer than his stay in England (three years). Additionally, even though England might have germinated Gandhi’s political
consciuosness, it was in South Africa that this activism really took root. This appropriation of Gandhi, of course, can often lead to an uncritical idealization of the South African Gandhi. See also Ebr.-Vally (95–96).

34. South African Indian fiction often speaks of the pain of relocation forced by the Group Areas Act. See also Chetty, South African Indian Writings (11).

35. For more on how Indians acquired wealth and social standing in the 1980s, see Hansen, “Plays” (261) and “Diasporic Dispositions.”

36. Kathrada was imprisoned with Nelson Mandela following the notorious Rivonia Trial in the early 1960s. Dadoo, as Muthal Naidoo points out, was the “leader of the South African Indian Congress during its most militant period of the Defiance Campaign in the 1950s, and Fatima Meer, also involved in the Defiance Campaign, [was] a founding member of the Federation of South African Women and author of a biography of Nelson Mandela” (29, n1).

37. For more information on the role of Indians during the apartheid period, see Ramamurthi’s Apartheid and Indian South Africans. For more historical detail, see Ginwala, Dhupelia-Mesthrie, Ebr.-Vally, and Desai.

38. Anne-Marie Van Niekerk, for example, states that “in their opposition to these [apartheid] laws Indians have joined hands with the black majority . . . in . . . fighting for democratic change” (36).

39. Similarly, Muthal Naidoo claims that “the relative affluence of some of their members and their social position caught between the haves (mostly whites) and the have-nots (mostly black) made them targets of African resentment” (29). Robin Cohen describes the position of Indians under apartheid as a “V, not of their own making. Turn right, towards the white regime, and they were rejecting their fellow victims of apartheid; turn left, in the direction of black solidarity, and they became frightened of losing what status, rights and property they had acquired. Perhaps, not surprisingly, many remained uneasily where they were, like rabbits, trapped before the headlights of an oncoming car” (66).

40. Radhakrishnan further argues that “even the all-encompassing identification of South African, which is to unify all racial groups under a banner of national unity, presumes a singular Black/white division” (“Time” 273).


42. James extends the idea of the “mass participation” in civic life to modern-day West Indies; I apply his formulations to contemporary South Africa.

43. Diana Brydon argues that

[d]espite their significant differences and the complexity of their individual work, Bhabha, Spivak, and Said have come to be associated with a brand of postcolonialism that valorizes exilic, cosmopolitan, and diasporic perspectives. . . . Homi Bhabha’s focus on the “transnational and translational sense of the hybridity of imagined communities” seems typical (5) . . . what readers have taken from his work tends to be his interest in cultural difference, migrant sensibilities, performances of identity, and the “unhomely” as “a paradigmatic colonial and post-colonial condition” (9).
Gayatri Spivak describes *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* as a book that “forages in the crease between global postcoloniality and postcolonial migrancy” (373). With Edward Said, Bhabha and Spivak agree in assigning a privileged role to the intellectual’s position as exile. Paul Gilroy’s *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* also helped to redirect analysis from nation-based study towards the consideration of multiple diasporic formations, travelling cultures and travelling theories, in the 1990s. Gilroy’s theorization of ‘the Black Atlantic as a counterculture of modernity’ based on diaspora resonates with a general shift within the postcolonial field towards privileging mobility and deterritorialization. (699–700)

Also see Padmini Mongia’s critique of hybridity in her introduction to *Contemporary Post-colonial Theory* as well as Kruger’s model of “the syncretic” as opposed to the hybrid (“Minor” 70).

44. This is particularly true of the Indian migrants in the United States who regularly send money “home” and are members of radical organizations such as the VHP, RSS, etc. See, for example, Sangita Gopal’s essay entitled “Hindu Buying/Hindu Being: Hindutva Online and the Commodity Logic of Cultural Nationalism” and Amit Rai’s essay entitled “India Online: Electronic Bulletin Boards and the Construction of a Diasporic Hindu Identity.”

45. I am in no way implying that Indians only used the short story during apartheid and novel in the postapartheid period. However, many, if not most, novels from the apartheid period tend more toward novellas for the same fiscal reasons that caused the short story to prevail.

46. A recent (2002) controversy sums up African hostility toward Indians. Zulu musician Mbongeni Ngema’s song “AmaNdiya” (meaning Indians) claims that things were “better with whites” than with Indians.

47. Lest the binary between apartheid and postapartheid fiction seem absolute, it must be asserted that the transition from past to present is not hermetic, especially given that the fiction I study here spans a relatively short period of time (1978–2004). Often we see the possibilities of an Indianized South Africa as well as the racial tension of later times anticipated in the apartheid period. However, these divergences are usually subsumed by the antiapartheid imperative that was intensely focused on identifying Indians as black. Correspondingly, the rhetoric of identification that characterized the apartheid period occasionally surfaces in the postapartheid period, often to counter the charges of Indian racism by Africans.

48. Bhabha’s work on mimicry may suggest that hybrid identities always fail at some level. His work on the “interstitial Third Space,” however, describes hybridity as empowering and dynamic. See chapter 2 for a critique of Bhabha’s celebration of hybridity.

49. While my survey of South African Indian fiction is comprehensive, it is certainly not complete. For example, I do not examine fiction such as Ansuyah Singh’s *Behold the Earth Mourns* (1960), Reshard Gool’s *Cape Town Coolie* (1990), Mewa Ramgobin’s *Waiting to Live* (1986), Fayiza Dawood Khan’s *The Sounds of Shadows*
(1995), Ronnie Govender’s *At the Edge and Other Cato Manor Stories* (1996), Aziz Hassim’s *The Lotus People* (2002), Pat Poovalingam’s *Anand* (2003), Neela Govender’s *Acacia Thorn in My Heart* (2000), Shamim Sarif’s *The World Unseen* (2001), and Ishtiyaq Shakuri’s *The Silent Minaret* (2005), among others. This is because I locate each text studied here not just as a text but also as exemplary of a certain literary moment in South African Indian fiction. My purpose, then, is to trace the evolution of the genre of South African Indian fiction, and how that enhances our understanding of diasporic cultures, rather than to provide a complete critical history of this body of work. That one single book cannot contain a critical genealogy of South African Indian fiction reveals the aesthetic density of this body of writing and how much work still needs to be done.

**Chapter 1**


2. Indian issues were often reported in *Drum*, however. John Matshikiza recalls reading in *Drum* about “six Indian sisters, none of them more than teenagers, who had hanged themselves in a death pact in the back yard of their family home in Durban, rather than submit to arranged marriages” (ix–x).

3. “The mixture of gangsters, religious cranks, easy girls, roving males and the occasional white intellectual—all of whom are to be found in [Ahmed Essop’s *Hajji*] stories—recall the mood of black short fiction of the fifties, originating in *Drum* magazine and set in Sophiatown” (Rowland Smith, quoted in Chetty, *South African Indian Writings* 20).

4. According to writer John Matshikiza, who grew up listening to *Drum* beats, “the startling thing is that there is no real dividing line between the two styles of writing: the journalistic and the fictional. Real life in the black townships has the monstrously stifling yet banal quality of a B-Grade horror film while the fictionalized accounts cannot escape from the relentless quality of realism” (x–xi). Also see Michael Chapman’s essay “More Than Telling a Story: *Drum* and Its Significance in Black South African Writing” in the same collection. Chapman argues that “the entire *Drum* writing exercise forces us to examine assumptions about story-telling forms and purposes” (195).

5. Publishing in serials does not necessarily preclude the writing of novels. Charles Dickens is an obvious example of a novelist who flourished in the serial form. In apartheid South Africa, the “seriality” of magazine publication was constantly under threat because of a lack of funds, official censorship, and so on. Magazine publication could be highly irregular and could not guarantee the continuity a novel would require.

6. Andries Oliphant claims that “the short story, when compared to the novel, apart from its length, does not require the same degree of stability in the order of things, or continuity between past and present, for its operations. This makes it extremely flexible and enables it to focus on the fragments and fractions of everyday life without forfeiting any of the efficacy of narrative” (“Fictions”).

Notes to Chapter 1
7. Similarly, M. J. Daymond observes “that it [the 80s] was a decade of such harsh State opposition and such determined resistance by ordinary people that the ‘history’ one might expect to find is that of the alignments and conditions of armed racial conflict” (“Gender and ‘History’” 192).


9. Progressive South African Jews, such as Joe Slovo, Ruth First, Albie Sachs, Rusty Goldberg, and Helen Suzman, also asserted solidarity with black Africans. While Jews were Other in many ways, their whiteness gave them a certain sense of place in apartheid South Africa that was denied to Indians. See the chapter on Achmat Dangor and Kafka’s *Curse* for an extension of this argument.

10. As Margaret Daymond points out: the “necessity of founding individual self-identity in a collectivity” is “particularly relevant to South Africans” (Bardolph 183).

11. Here I echo Indian writer Amitav Ghosh’s idea of the “shadow lines” as invisible lines of difference that make Other what was the Self-Same (228).

12. Amitava Kumar claims that “immigrants balance the conceit of a preserved heritage against the unanticipated and fairly uncanny elaboration of new identities that are liberating” (*Passport Photos* 229).

13. Born in 1948, the year apartheid was formalized as political praxis, Jayapraga Reddy suffered from spinal atrophy, a disease that bound her to a wheelchair. She died in 1996, before she completed her autobiography, *The Unbending Reed*. In addition to her collection of short stories, *On the Fringe of Dreamtime and Other Stories* (1987), she also wrote a play entitled *Web of Persuasion* (1984).

14. “The Love Beads,” for example, depicts African culture in detail, particularly focusing on the beads that African women give to men when they are separated by the vagaries of the apartheid system. “Snatch the Wind and Run” discusses a relationship between a young Coloured boy and his white social worker. “The Stolen Hours” is written in the voice of a black maid working for a privileged white family. “A Dream at Sunset” is about a black female nurse whose mother is dying. Also see *Passport Photos* (36).

15. Here, I am indebted to Toni Morrison’s claim that language is always racialized. According to Morrison, “in a wholly racialized society, there is no escape from racially inflected language” (12–13).

16. For more on the relationship between immigrant and indigene, see Prashad.

17. Born in 1942, Sam, who is descended from indentured laborers, was raised in Port Elizabeth and educated at Roma, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe (Jaspal Singh 209). Like Farida Karodia, Sam lived in exile in England from 1973 onward. Sam’s stories have been published in various magazines and journals; two of her plays have aired on BBC Radio. According to her Web site, Sam has finished a novel entitled *I Am Not Myself*. [www.agnessam.com](http://www.agnessam.com) (retrieved March 30, 2008).

18. The secret practice of one religion while outwardly maintaining another
brings to mind the crypto-Jews. Like indentured Indians, crypto-Jews were often coerced into converting from Judaism to Islam in Persia and Catholicism in Spain and Portugal, but continued to practice Judaism in private (“Crypto-Judaism,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crypto-Judaism). I am grateful to Sharon Weltman for alerting me to their presence.

19. Indeed, Sam herself emphasizes the importance of the figure of Ruth in her collection: “It seems appropriate for the theme of this collection to be expressed in the following quotation from the Book of Ruth” (introduction to Jesus Is Indian 12). For “A South African Indian Womanist Reading of the Character of Ruth,” see Sarojini Nadar’s essay with the same title.

20. See Ray for more on Sam’s use of Gandhi.

21. As Ray claims, “Angelina’s narrativization of the present moment is constituted by simultaneously continuing and changing narratives emerging from incommensurable historical pasts and positing a future that is not naively rooted merely in future possibilities” (10).

22. Also see Flockemann on how Sam’s work “suggests the possibility for . . . pragmatic cultural creolisations . . . as we move away from discourses of identity based on apartheid oppositions and engage with the tricky discourses of an apparently ‘new’ nationhood” (“Asian Diasporas” 83).

23. Bharati Mukherjee uses this phrase in her novel The Holder of the World to describe her narrator’s desire to forge connections between two historically unconnected spaces: medieval India and Puritan New England (11).

24. See Ray for a detailed analysis of these stories and how they “function as oral history” (3–4).

25. Writing with reference to Sam and Jamaican writer Olive Senior, Flockemann argues that we can “detect a shift from representing Asian women as ‘in-between’ . . . to reclaiming their cultural ‘difference’” (“Asian Diasporas” 75).

26. Fainman-Frenkel also analyzes some of these stories by Reddy and Sam. See her dissertation, “On the Fringe of Dreamtime.”

27. Born in 1953, Padayachee was trained as a medical doctor and currently practices in Durban. His compendium of short stories, What’s Love Got to Do with It? is Padayachee’s only collected work of fiction, although his work has appeared in other venues such as the prestigious South African newspaper the Sunday Times. Padayachee is also an accomplished poet whose verse and fiction have been widely anthologized. His collection of poetry, A Voice from the Cauldron, was published in 1986. In addition to winning the Nadine Gordimer Prize, Padayachee was also awarded the Olive Schriener Prize in 1994.

28. In her analysis of the Sikh diaspora in Canada, Kamala Elizabeth Nayar states that “the models that have been used to understand the change that occurs when two cultures meet are as follows: assimilation, acculturation, integration, separation, marginalization, and fusion” (253). Yasmin Hussain argues that “being in the diaspora means living in a cross-cultural context, one in which change, fusion and expansion are inevitable” (preface).

29. David Attwell points out that “assertions about the overwhelming prevalence of documentary realism all too frequently involve generalisations based on other critical statements with little or no discussion of the literature’s actual qualities: its range, its idiosyncrasies, its very unfinishingness, and sadly, also its high points”
Without minimizing the importance of “documentary realism,” I too attempt to locate a structural complexity in South African Indian writing.

30. Citing R. Peck, Chetty argues that “the invasion of the private realm by politics meant that even writers who might have ignored politics were forced to deal with it. The personal relationships that might otherwise have been their focus were moved into the political realm” (South African Indian Writings 11).

Chapter 2

1. In the interview Essop states:

Well, I felt that the human element had to be predominant in our writings. Apartheid formed one aspect of life. There are many other aspects of life. I was exposed to the different aspects of life in the community. There were humour, joy, marriages, funerals and so on. I felt that in my writings I should present a comprehensive whole. . . . (Chetty, South African Indian Writings 352)

2. Arlene Elder, for example, argues that the Hajji Musa tales “delight the reader in their sympathetic revelation of a variety of human foibles . . . but often frustrate by seeming to deflect intense engagement with the South African reality” (132). Elder concludes her study by stating that the “entire collection charms the reader with the author’s skill at humorous depiction but leaves her eager for more of the political/historical, not just individual, context by which to explain Essop’s characters” (137).

3. Vasu Reddy argues that Essop’s writing “shows close connections to apartheid as the informing context but it is by no means his only point of reference” (86).

4. Because Essop’s value system and aesthetic approach shifts so much, I think of him as two writers rather than one. Correspondingly, this chapter studies only Essop’s apartheid-era prose and focuses on his novella The Emperor and his two short story collections, Hajji Musa and the Hindu Fire-walker and Noorjehan and Other Stories, while chapter 6 examines Essop’s postapartheid writings.

5. Literary critics have traditionally celebrated the pluralism embodied in the East-West migratory exchange. For example, Yasmin Hussain credits Asian British filmmaker Gurinder Chadha for “re-defining British identities as culturally plural rather than fixed around some national, ethnic, racial or other absolute boundary and hence also explores ideas of diaspora, hybridity and cultural syncretism” (71).

6. South Asian American writer Bharati Mukherjee has been criticized for promoting an assimilationist credo in her work. Susan Koshy asserts that “Mukherjee’s celebration of assimilation is an insufficient confrontation to the historical circumstances of ethnicity and race in the United States and of the complexities of diasporic subject-formation” (in Ponzanesi 42). Significantly, the eponymous character Jasmine in Mukherjee’s novel Jasmine undergoes Americanization by often mingling with white characters and changing her name to Jane.

8. Timothy D. Taylor argues that "in most uses of the term 'hybridity,' the two cultures that hybridize are white and nonwhite Other, but the complex and multiple nature of the Other or Others is not always accounted for in the discourses of hybridity" (in Oren and Petro 234). Examples in literature of this white/nonwhite hybridity proliferate: Karim Amin in Hanif Kureishi's celebrated novel The Buddha of Suburbia is the child of an English mother and a Pakistani father. The main character in G. V. Desani's All About H. Hatterr, a novel said to have inspired Salman Rushdie himself, is "biologically . . . fifty-fifty of the species," an Anglo-Indian with British and Indian blood (1).

9. Avtar Brah argues that diasporas do not "normatively refer to temporary sojourns. Paradoxically, diasporic journeys are essentially about settling down, about putting roots 'elsewhere'" (182).

10. Rajendra Chetty states that South African Indian writers "like Farida Karodia, Ahmed Essop, Ronnie Govender, Indres Naidoo and Kesaveloo Goonam relocate the South African Indian as an integral part of the South African landscape. In demonstrating the unique position of the South African Indian as part of the oppressed and committed to the liberation of the country, these writers help to restore [credibility] to Indians" (South African Indian Writings 21).

11. For a detailed analysis of The Emperor, see Rowland Smith's "Living on the Fringe." Interestingly, far from criticizing Essop for not being political enough, Smith views the novella as "explicitly political," arguing that "the overriding political motif" makes the writing very "thin" (66).

12. It should be noted that for most scholars, the term "Aryan" is a meaningless category of analysis. Discarded by the thinking world as an empty signifier, it is significant that both Ashoka and the apartheid state attempt to resurrect the original value of the term.

13. Interestingly, Ashoka's features are described as "classically Dravidian" (2), associating him more with black people as well as the darker South Indians than with the supposedly light-skinned Aryans and North Indians. This is a classic tension in the novel: Ashoka wants to assume a normative whiteness but fails to realize his inner (and outer) blackness.

14. The kinship between Hindu social stricture and apartheid is reiterated at a public gathering of educators where the director of education makes a speech eulogizing the Indian community in South Africa: "Indians . . . have decided to jealously guard their racial and cultural identities that they have made such great strides in the educational world. We have one of the world's greatest universities in Durban, the Indian University of Westville, where you can find the best professors and lecturers in the southern hemisphere" (Emperor 136–37).

The director uses Indian professional achievement to argue for the success of apartheid. He manipulates the Indian desire to maintain a distinctive identity in African spaces as a tool with which to drive a wedge between the various disenfranchised communities. If "the jealous guarding of their racial and cultural identities" has led to Indian empowerment and uplift, then that clearly demonstrates the importance of segregation, or so the thinking goes. Again, Indian social organization is used not only to justify apartheid but also as an analogy for apartheid as both discourses claimed that separation would benefit rather than harm the races.
15. See, for example, Patrick Manning’s *Migration* in *World History*:

The social and cultural structure of a diaspora originates in the homeland from which people departed, either recently or long ago. Connections with the original culture across the diaspora can be retained through oral and written history, literature, and song. The linkages sustaining diaspora include family, religion, language, occupation, and traditions in dress, music, art and cuisine. (160)

16. The notion of carnival as a reordering of stratified social systems is most popularly associated with Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin. For more on the subversive prospects of carnival see Bakhtin’s *Rabelais and His World*.


18. *Herrenvolk* means the master race. Its use is pejorative here.

19. I base my analysis of these texts partly on their publication dates. Although Essop mentioned to me that the *Hajji Musa* stories were set in the fifties and sixties (see my interview with Ahmed Essop in this book), it is not completely clear when they were composed. Since new material was added to this collection, the stories were probably edited before their publication in the seventies and eighties. It is likely, then, that they reveal the sensibilities of the time of setting, composition, and publication. Similarly the stories in the *Noojehan* collection are set in the seventies and eighties, but many reflect the beginning of the end of apartheid. See also Flockemann (“Asian Diasporas”) on how Sam’s stories that are set in the 1980s look forward to the new nation of the 1990s, and Jacobs (198).

20. Essop echoes Nadine Gordimer’s thoughts in her early essay entitled “Where Do Whites Fit In?” (1959). Gordimer claims that “home is not necessarily where you belong ethnogenically, but rather the place you were born to, the faces you first saw around you, and the elements of the situation among your fellow men in which you found yourself and with which you have been struggling, politically, personally or artistically all your life” (*Essential Gesture* 34).

21. According to Jaspal Singh, “most so-called love stories about choice are represented in terms of sexual relationships between Indian women and white men . . . we have only recently started seeing the exploration of such racial intermixing in terms of black and Indian as spaces of empowerment or transcendence” (211).

22. Associated with activist Steve Biko, Black Consciousness urged the black community to free itself mentally and psychologically.

23. In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha describes “the third space” as an “innovative energy” (315), transforming the binary narrative of the (Western) nation-state. Using the image of the stairwell, he further describes hybridity as an “interstitial passage between fixed identifications [that] opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (5).

24. Many stories simply evoke the fullness of Indian life—with its cycle of birth, death, marriage, divorce, love, loss, joy, and anger. (Also see Smith 71–72.) Other stories, however, are so politically charged that taken together they articulate an
unambiguous message of social radicalization. Since my project in this chapter is to examine the relationship between transitional Indianness and political occasion, my analysis of Noorjehan focuses on how Essop endows Indians with political agency by bringing whites into the national fold.

25. Coined by Bishop Desmond Tutu, the term “rainbow nation” evokes the idea of a diverse, democratic South Africa. According to Sibusisiwe Nombuso Dlamini, the rainbow is “also an image associated with the premise of safety that followed the Biblical flood and thus is a symbol of reconciliation following a difficult period . . . the image of a rainbow nation, then, can be read to include recognition of South Africa’s diverse population [and] the interconnectedness of people within this nation” (3). Essop’s project of incorporating white people into the folds of the nation thus highlights this national interconnectedness.

26. Chetty points out that “the personae of Noorjehan and Other Stories transcend the barriers of race and ethnicity—perhaps in an attempt at coming to terms with a rapidly changing landscape. Many of Essop’s narrators act as witnesses to historical events” (South African Indian Writings 20).

27. The title of the story (“Metamorphosis”) further foregrounds the idea of empowerment through transformation. Its obvious echo of Kafka shows us how South African Indian literature is shaped not only by the various subfields of postcolonial literature but also by other international literary paradigms. Yet Essop makes Kafka’s tale into his own. In Kafka’s “Metamorphosis,” Gregor Samsa wakes up to find himself transformed into a bug, something that is clearly subhuman. Naomi Rosenberg’s movement from indifference to empathy gives her greater claim to humanity.

28. According to historian Surendra Bhana:

The Tolstoy Farm was the second of its kind of experiments established by Gandhi. The first, the Phoenix settlement in Natal, was inspired in 1904 by a single reading of John Ruskin’s Unto This Last, a work that extolled the virtues of the simple life of love, labour, and the dignity of human beings. Gandhi was not as personally involved in the daily running of the Phoenix settlement as he was to become in his stay of interrupted duration at the Tolstoy Farm which lasted for about four years. In part this was because the political struggle had shifted to the Transvaal after 1906, and he controlled it from its Johannesburg headquarters.

To a large extent Gandhi’s more intimate involvement at the Tolstoy Farm coincided with the heightened tempo of the passive resistance campaign, and the development of the Gandhian philosophy of the perfect individual in a perfect new order.

The Tolstoy Farm was in part born out of practical necessity. Funds were running short, morale was sinking, and the movement missed the benefits that might accompany the establishment of a centre where its followers might assemble and coordinate their activities. The Transvaal settlement accommodated all three. Money was saved, morale was boosted, and the satyagrahis, according to Gandhi, received “training” that proved to be “of great use in the last fight.”
Notes to Chapter 3

For more on the Tolstoy Farm, see Bhana’s essay “The Tolstoy Farm: Gandhi’s Experiment in Cooperative Commonwealth.”

Chapter 3

1. See Sailaja Sastry for the nexus between “the stories of interracial relationships” with “the project of nation-building” (276).

2. While Jameson’s formulation—“all third world literatures are necessarily . . . national allegories” (69)—is totalizing in its sweep, it is broadly true that postcolonial literature tends to often metaphorize the nation. For a critique of Jameson, see Aijaz Ahmad’s chapter entitled “Jameson’s Rhetoric of Otherness and the National Allegory,” in In Theory. For a critique and simultaneous rehabilitation of the term, see Imre Szeman’s “Who’s Afraid of National Allegory? Jameson, Literary Criticism, Globalization.”

3. A note on the term “transition” as pertaining to the South African context is necessary here. Apartheid weakened in 1990 with the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC. Universal franchise, however, became a reality only in 1994 when all South Africans went to the polls to elect a democratic government for the first time. Mandela’s party, the African National Congress (ANC), overwhelmingly won the election and Mandela became the first president of democratic multiracial South Africa.

4. While most of the existing criticism on Kafka’s Curse interprets the text as a commentary on transition, no work, however, studies the compositional complexities of the narrative in order to examine how they allegorize the “terrible beauty” of an imminent nation or the coming of age of South African Indians. Elaine Young, the critic whose work comes close to my hypothesis here, argues that the “individual mutations and crossings-over reflect the increasingly hybridized nature of South African society itself . . . the narrative structure of the novella is analogous to the multivocality and complexity of South African society after apartheid” (17). Young primarily focuses on the trope of “rampant transgression” (17) and does not explicitly foreground the theme of national allegory through symbolic morphology; neither does she pay attention to the text’s articulation of Indo-Islamic desires and anxieties and the fruition of South African Indian selfhood. Vilashini Cooppan’s argument resonates even more closely with mine. Linking “metamorphosis . . . as a metaphor for national transition” (361), she uses the term “national allegory” to describe Dangor’s novel, arguing that “the body politic imagined in Kafka’s Curse, with its polymorphous sexual crossings, physical alterations, and multiple social and linguistic metamorphoses, well deserves the label of national allegory” (362). Yet Cooppan does not focus on the text’s symbolic configuration in order to foreground national allegory, even though she is attentive to form and structure. In an extremely brief discussion of Kafka’s Curse, Christopher Heywood lists “the museum of houses, Islam, body parts . . . cooking ingredients, furnishings, architectural projects, and the social atrocity represented by group areas” (232) as part of the novel’s thematic roster. Few of these critics, additionally, see national allegory as a form of minority empowerment.
5. This list of tropes and motifs is by no means exhaustive. Rather, it is simply an articulation of metaphors that I find significant to the novel’s structural intent.

6. As Vilashini Cooppan observes, “the transformations that the novella describes are both political . . . and textual” (356).

7. Many critics see Dangor and Omar/Malik as Malay. However, because Kafka’s Curse deliberately obfuscates the racial identity of its characters, there is no consensus on the race of the characters, which seems to be Dangor’s point. Taking my cue from Loren Kruger, I consider the characters to also be Indian not only to excavate the buried Indian roots of many Cape Malays, but also because the characters often identify themselves as Indian. Moreover, because racial, cultural, and religious identity in Muslim communities is usually asserted through the line of the father, Indianness has been passed down to the Khan family—rather than erased—through Omar’s grandfather, who came to South Africa as a contracted trader.

Kruger also claims that Dangor’s “person and texts inhabit . . . in-between spaces in exemplary ways” (“Black” 114). Dangor’s own racial identity thus seems as uncodeable as that of his characters in Kafka’s Curse. He writes with such an intimate insider knowledge of Indian culture and language in Kafka’s Curse that it is impossible for him not to have Indian ancestry. I also base this assertion on an Internet interview with Dangor where he states that he “was a racially hybrid child (Indian/Javanese/Dutch ancestry),” a heritage shared by Omar and Malik, his two protagonists in Kafka’s Curse (“Interviews with South African Writers (Mike Nicol—Achmat Dangor—Bridget Pitt—Pamela Jooste—Peter Horn).” Retrieved October 28, 2006, http://www2.univ-reunion.fr/~ageof/text/74c21e88–337.html.

This is not to say that Kafka’s Curse is autobiographical. The book, and Dangor’s own tangled racial history, show us the extent to which Indians have integrated into South African society. Yet Kafka’s Curse needs to be studied as an Afrindian text because the novel is intensely preoccupied with the role of Indianness, particularly Islamic Indianness, in the time of transition in South Africa.

8. Phillip Roth’s novel The Human Stain (2000) echoes a similar premise: Coleman Silk is a black American who passes as a Jew. Notice how the titles of both texts describe racial passing as a stain and a curse.

9. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) also began its work in 1996; its resurrection of the segregationist past can be seen as an excavation of the buried “truth” hidden by decades of white supremacy. I am grateful to Shane Graham for making this connection.

10. For more on how Jews enjoyed white privilege, as well as the fraught relationship between Muslims and Jews, see Ameen Akhalwaya’s essay entitled “A Love-Hate Relationship: Jews and Muslims in South Africa.” Akhalwaya claims that “Jews and Muslims have a strange love-hate relationship in which they are divided by two issues. First, Jews are classified white, while the majority of Muslims have been categorized ‘Indian,’ ‘coloured,’ ‘black’ or other sub-divisions under South Africa’s now-scrapped race classification laws. And second, the question of Palestine” (17). Even though many progressive Jews, like Helen Suzman, rallied against apartheid, as “anti-white resentment began to build up . . . the perception grew that Jews were all too happy to take advantage of massive white privilege thus created by apartheid.
Jews were increasingly seen as silent partners in apartheid's oppression of Muslims and other South African blacks" (18).

Additionally, Milton Shain claims that in

the 1950s and 1960s . . . communist and progressive Jews had criticized the Jewish establishment for not speaking out formally against apartheid . . . the moral high road [was] not taken during the apartheid era, at least not by the formal leadership, represented in the South African Jewish Board of Deputies.

The question of Jewish behavior during the apartheid years remains a source of contention and moral questions will not disappear. (205)

11. Bharucha is referring to the Parsi diaspora in England, which is twice migrant: once from Persia and the second time from India.

12. In his discussion of black South African writing under apartheid, Attwell partly echoes this line of thought even though he doesn’t use the term "diaspora":

When European modernism registers spatial dislocations, it frequently does so in terms of the expatriate or exile. . . . This pattern is not absent from black South African writing . . . black South African writing can reflect a sense of dislocation at home . . . [which becomes] a place of permanent unease or unsettlement, a place where one experiences one’s dislocation from rural life, economic independence, political representation and citizenship. (176; emphasis in original)

13. Grey Street is increasingly becoming an important setting in South African Indian writing. Aziz Hassim’s novel The Lotus People (2002), Mariam Akabor’s collection of short stories entitled Flat 9 (2006), and Ashwin Singh’s unpublished play Spice ‘N Stuff all use Grey Street as both location and as a symbol for Indian identity. For a pioneering study of place in the works of writers such as Gordimer, Fugard, Tlali, and Mda, see Rita Barnard’s excellent book Apartheid and Beyond.

14. For Achmat Dangor’s comments on architecture and apartheid see his short piece “Apartheid and the Death of South African cities” in Judin.

15. I am grateful to Sharon Weltman for this interpretation.

16. Cooppan argues that the postcolonial novel has rendered magical realism into a “generic model” but concedes that magical realism in Kafka’s Curse is more complicated in its effort to “find the middle ground” (359).

17. Dangor is not the only one to demonstrate an interest in Kafka. A story in Ahmed Essop’s Noorjehan collection is entitled “Metamorphosis.” It is also impossible to miss the reference to Kafka in J. M. Coetzee’s The Life and Times of Michael K (1983). The truncated last name of Coetzee’s protagonist, reduced here to a single barren letter, brings to mind Joseph K in Kafka’s The Trial (1925). For a study of Kafka’s influence on Coetzee see P. Joffe’s “The Naming of Michael K: J. M. Coetzee’s Life and Times of Michael K.” Interestingly, both Michael K and Majnoen are gardeners, showing the influence of Coetzee on Dangor. See Cooppan for a study of Coetzee and Dangor, and for an analysis of Kafka’s Curse and transnational influences.
18. Woodward also argues that trees “figure repeatedly in the novel, but never as fertile natural symbols” (30). Like much of the novel, even the tree-turning is ambiguous. Oscar’s body may have “crumbled to dust,” (Kafka’s Curse 27) but rumor has it that the “shapeless form [Oscar’s body] . . . was really a shrivelled tree” (69). Also, “in what had once been the main bedroom, a tree had thrust up through the floor” (28). This is the room in which Oscar’s body is found:

He knew the case was unusual, Sergeant Johnson told Malik, but people said that they saw this thing happening to the dead man, like it was part of his nature. He indicated with a wave of his hand to the room, the mould on the walls, the flowers, the tree growing in the middle of the room. (66)

In my interpretation, Oscar becomes the tree in the middle of the room, while the word “growing” attaches an immediate and active fertility to the image of the tree. The unnatural circumstances in which the tree is growing further suggests Indian achievement and growth in the unnatural circumstances of apartheid.

19. See Malkki for metaphors of soil, rootedness, and trees.

20. “Our people don’t bury their dead as if they’re on the way to a party” (Kafka’s Curse 224).

21. This is also echoed by Cooppan, who argues that the novel “portrays metamorphosis as both curse and blessing” (358).

22. Amina’s beauty becomes “beaklike” and “thrust out” (Kafka’s Curse 125). Toward the end of his relationship with Amina and the end of his life, Malik begins to take on birdlike aspects: “[T]here is a lightness about him, the insubstantiality of wings, his skin as smooth as down . . . a beaked face” (145). Significantly, this metamorphosis occurs after Malik leaves the white part of town, where he has been living with Amina, and returns to the township, bringing to mind Omar’s mysterious illness that strikes him after he goes back to the township for his mother’s funeral.

23. Bird imagery also recurs in Dangor’s novella The Z Town Trilogy. One of the characters is described as “[a] dark and terrifying bird swooping down from the hot blue sky upon her frightened prey” (29). In another instance, migratory birds from the country amaze Hillbrow with their appearance (55). Another character has a “strange affinity for birds, the uncanny manner in which she seemed capable of communicating with them” (59). That same character, Jane, like Malik in Kafka’s Curse, feels that she is physically becoming a bird: “Jane saw a flutter of tiny wings, she felt a lightness in her body, as exquisite as death or flight” (86). Also see Kruger on bird imagery in The Z Town Trilogy (“Black” 125) and Woodward for “Malik’s identification from childhood with birds” (29).


25. See Cooppan: “[T]he becoming-other of Dangor’s characters describes that radical becoming-other which each South African citizen must allow if national culture is to emerge from the territorialized, classification-mad history of apartheid” (361). Also see Sastry (281).

26. See Woodward for an analysis of Kulsum/Katryn.
27. Naipaul uses the term “the neurosis of the converted” to describe the psychic anxiety felt by non-Arabic converts to Islam, particularly the populations of Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Malaysia, who always feel that they have to outperform the original Muslims (those of Arabic stock) in demonstrating their religious piety (“Questions for V.S. Naipaul on His Contentious Relationship to Islam,” October 28, 2001, from http://www.racematters.org/vsnaipaulonislam.htm). Retrieved June 11, 2007. Also see Among the Believers and Beyond Belief for more of this hypothesis.

28. Similarly, Sastry argues that in South Africa “standard postcolonial nomenclature such as . . . hybridity may have to be adjusted or abandoned altogether” (277). See the rest of Sastry’s essay for a critique of theories of hybridity.

29. Many of the slaves in the Cape were brought from the Indian Ocean area under the auspices of the Dutch East India Company from the seventeenth century onward. According to the Web site of the Slave Lodge, a museum dedicated to commemorating South African slavery in Cape Town:

Although a few of the first slaves came from West Africa, most slaves came from societies around the Indian Ocean Basin. Slaves came from Madagascar, from Mozambique and the East African coast, from India and from the islands of the East Indies such as Sumatra, Java, the Celebes, Ternate and Timor. . . .

The Indian subcontinent was the main source of slaves during the early part of the 18th century. Approximately 80% of slaves came from India during this period. A slaving station was established in Delagoa Bay (present-day Maputo) in 1721, but was abandoned in 1731. Between 1731 and 1765 more and more slaves were bought from Madagascar. (“Slave Routes to Cape Town,” http://www.iziko.org.za/sh/resources/slavery/slavery_routes.html). Retrieved November 18, 2006

The Web site also describes the work performed by the slaves housed in the Slave Lodge:

The slaves that belonged to Dutch East India Company (VOC) made an important contribution to the establishment, management and protection of the Dutch settlement at the Cape. . . . They were the largest group of slaves and were used for a variety of duties, from manual labour to skilled artisan work. In contrast to slaves in private ownership at the Cape, no strong division of labour based on sex existed for the Lodge slaves. In the first few years of the Dutch settlement’s existence, the slaves worked as assistants to the VOC officials such as artisans, the gardener and the wood-cutters. Seventy-five slaves were listed in a letter dated 11 April 1658—a third worked in the Company’s Garden while 19 were employed on the Company’s farm. (“At Work,” http://www.iziko.org.za/sh/resources/slavery/slavelodge_work.html). Retrieved November 18, 2006

For more on the arrival of Indians as slaves in South Africa, see S. E. Dangor’s
essay entitled “The Myth of the 1860 Settlers.” Also see Loren Kruger’s essay entitled “Black Atlantics, White Indians and Jews.”

Chapter 4


2. This is not to say that black women were not being published during the apartheid years. Bessie Head, Miriam Tlali, and Zoe Wicomb all come to mind as examples of nonwhite women writing during apartheid. Yet, as Govinden argues, “[b]lack women writers have been a marginalised group for the better part of this century, and only in recent years have they been given critical recognition” (“Against an African Sky” 84).

3. Examples Govinden cites include “Let it be Told, by Lauretta Ngcobo; Breaking the Silence, by Cecily Lockett; and Raising the Blinds, by Annemarie Van Niekerk” (“Against an African Sky” 84).

4. As with most other South African Indian writers, little biographical or literary information is available on Karodia. According to Anver Versi, Karodia’s father was a Gujarati Indian “who settled in South Africa in 1920. Her mother was coloured . . . . They lived in one of those small Afrikaaner-dominated towns, Aliwal, in the Eastern Cape. ‘We were the only Indians in the town’ she [Karodia] recalls. But of course they were not entirely Indian since her mother was not one” (39). Karodia taught school for two years after studying at a teachers training college in Johannesburg (Versi 40). Her South African passport was revoked while teaching in Zambia, after which she migrated to Canada, where she embarked on her writing career. While she began her literary career by writing dramas for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, Karodia’s first novel, Daughters of the Twilight, was published in 1986 (Versi 40). Even though Daughters of the Twilight confined itself to tracing the impact of relocation on the psyche of an Indian girl, Karodia refused to subscribe to ethnic mandates in subsequent fiction. Her first collection of short fiction, Com- ing Home and Other Stories (1988), approaches race relations through the prism of the diverse constituencies that inhabit South Africa—white, black, Indian and Coloured. After visiting India, Karodia made a TV film entitled Midnight in Embers (1992) about “the relationship between a retired British actress living in India and her Indian male servant” (Versi 40). Her next novel, A Shattering of Silence (1993), focuses on the insurgency in Mozambique. Following her return “home,” Karodia wrote Against an African Sky and Other Stories (1995) where she explores the impact of the changing social milieu on everyday South African life. Her magnum opus, Other Secrets, was published in 2000. Karodia’s most recent work, the novel Boundaries (2003), is set amid the mayhem caused by the arrival of a television crew in a small South African town. As the chronological summary of Karodia’s work reveals, it was only with the publication of Other Secrets that Karodia returned to exploring issues of Afrindian identity.

5. See Loren Kruger’s essay entitled “In a Minor Key” for an analysis of Jacobs and Karodia.

6. According to Frene Ginwala, the act:
Vaunted by former prime minister Dr Malan as embodying “the essence of apartheid policy” is the one piece of legislation whose application has had the greatest direct impact on the lives of Indian South Africans. Ostensibly non-racial, it makes provision for each group to be allocated to specific areas, thus segregating the country on rigid racial lines. The application of the Act, however, has been such as to complete the process of dispossession and the abrogation of almost all urban land to the white population, either individually, corporately or through state ownership.

Between 1966 and August 1984, 83,691 coloured, 40,067 Indian and 2418 white families had been moved under the provisions of the act. . . . Entire communities are uprooted and forced to leave behind not only long established homes and businesses but also schools, temples, mosques, clinics and community centres. . . . The people have been forced to settle outside the towns in areas with few amenities, without telephones, police, health or even postal services. (12)

7. Penguin South Africa is not an indigenous South African press like Kwela, Ravan, or David Philip. Yet, given how many South African Indian writers—including Karodia herself—were published abroad, it is significant that Other Secrets was published at home. The fact that the novel was published by the South African branch of a Western publishing house also, ironically, supports the point made later in this chapter: that Europe always manages to inveigle itself into the assertion of South African Indian identities.

8. The idea of a double diaspora is not just confined to Indians in South Africa. Ugandan Asians in Britain, Fijian Indians in Canada, and the growing number of Asian Africans in the United States are all examples of twice-migrants. It is, however, significantly different from the once-migrant Indian diasporas in the United States, the UK, and Canada. For more on “second banishment” (43) in the Fijian-Indian imagination, see Satendra Nandan’s essay in Crane and Mohanram, eds., Shifting Continents/Colliding Cultures.

9. Meg Samuelson very briefly explores some of these changes although her focus is on rape of Yasmin and “racial mixing” (96).

10. Effacement and revelation refer to the articulation of a common black/non-white identity and a tentative Indian selfhood that we have traced in all apartheid-era writing.

11. While Flockemann also sees “the community of older women, mothers, grandmothers, and aunts [as] significant touchstones” in Daughters, the novella, unlike Other Secrets, rarely abandons political context to describe emotional relationships (“Not-Quite” 43).

12. W. E. B Du Bois’ famous term “double consciousness” refers to the split in identity that living as Other in a violently racialized society engenders. The portability of the term to a South African context suggests the similarities between American segregation and apartheid.

13. Achmat Dangor raises this question in Kafka’s Curse, while Ahmed Essop also explores how Muslims themselves contribute to their estrangement from the nation in The Third Prophecy.
14. This is generally true of all South Asian diasporas, where family often substitutes for the community left behind. As Robin Cohen points out, “the Indian family was gradually reconstituted [in the labor diaspora], often in an oppressive patriarchal form, but none the less in such a way as to provide a source of social cohesion and a site for reasserting communal life” (63).

15. For example, Abdul is skeptical of Yasmin’s dancing, saying that a good Muslim girl has no business dancing (Other Secrets 119).

16. Yasmin Hussain considers “inter-generational conflict” to be a “central theme” of the writings of South Asian diaspora in Britain (15). Similarly, Mark Stein argues with reference to black British writing that “in the diasporic novel of transformation generational conflict often signifies a concurrent cultural conflict between a parental generation who migrated and the generation born in Britain” (xvii). In an American context, this is echoed by Wanni W. Anderson and Robert G. Lee, who describe “the generational conflict between immigrant Asians who, until the late 1940s and 1950s, were ineligible for naturalization and their American-born citizen children” (9).

17. Abdul’s absolutism is further focalized when Meena contemplates going to Johannesburg to take up a teaching course. Her apprehension in approaching this matter with her father is justified. When she expresses her desire to leave McBain for the city, her father loses his temper:

“Shut up!” he shouted. “I will not have you speaking to me so disrespectfully! I will not have you disgracing me the way your sister did. What is wrong with you girls? Is it so hard to be honorable? Do you have to be cheap? Muslim girls don’t run around the country—they stay home with their families. They know what’s right and wrong!”

“So what are we? It’s not our fault that we’re not what you wanted us to be!” (Other Secrets 210)

Abdul holds autocratic beliefs about how Muslim girls should behave. His concept of honor—and of daughters as custodians of that honor—also reflects an orthodox Islamic perspective that seeks moral restitution in a profane world.

18. See Chetty, South African Indian Writings (21).

19. For more on the tragic resonances of Soraya’s name, see Meg Samuelson:

Once again, though, the child’s name foregrounds this mixing. Her namesake, Princess Soraya . . . was of mixed Iranian and German descent. Divorced and banished, [Princess] Soraya’s . . . story fits into the tragic mould, confirming the “tragedy of mixed blood” that has held sway over the South African imagination. . . . The children, so relentlessly inserted into the plot, are an insurmountable stumbling block as the substitution of mother for rape victim rearticulates the Apartheid discourses of blood purity enshrined in . . . the “pillars of apartheid.” . . . The South African literary imagination has shown itself unable to extricate itself from this web of legislation. (96–97)

Loren Kruger further echoes this claim by arguing that Soraya’s “inheritance as the child of a white rapist and the daughter and granddaughter of transgressing
women of colour somehow dooms her to a sudden and implausible death by accident” (“Minor” 72).

20. Fainman-Frenkel aptly summarizes the novel’s commentary on inter-racial contact: “Karodia is, therefore, narrating the everyday ‘mix’ of many South Africans that Apartheid attempted to conceal and regulate, while highlighting the arbitrary and artificial nature of Apartheid racial classification itself” (“Ordinary Secrets” 62).

21. Discussing the idea of “middleman minorities,” Ashwin Desai and Brij Maharaj argue that “the role of middleman easily becomes the role of ‘economic villain’ especially at a time of economic crisis. Middleman minorities or people in the status gap are scapegoats per excellence. Scapegoats often deflect hostility away from the superior status group. Hilda Kuper, a social anthropologist, argued that like Jews in other countries, Indians in South Africa were being used as ‘scapegoats’ by the dominant ethnic groups” (“Minorities in the Rainbow Nation”).

22. Of course, I am using Bantustans metaphorically here. Rehana Ebr-Vally mentions a plan to create a Bantustan for Indians. Ironically titled “Hindustan,” this homeland failed to materialize (99).


24. See Samuelson for a critique of the celebratory aspects of the child (96).

25. Timothy Brennan has described The Satanic Verses as “the most ambitious novel yet published to deal with the immigrant experience in Britain” (Salman Rushdie 149).


27. The most important figure, as well as theorist, of exile is Edward Said. The title of Said’s autobiography, Out of Place, suggests the sense of placelessness that the cosmopolitan wanderer invokes. See Aijaz Ahmad’s In Theory for a critique of cosmopolitans such as Said and Rushdie in particular and literary migrancy in general. Further examples of cosmopolitan migrants include Saladin Chamcha in The Satanic Verses, Tara in Bharati Mukherjee’s The Tiger’s Daughter, and Karim Amin in Hanif Kureishi’s The Buddha of Suburbia. Sandhya Shukla also sees Ila in Amitav Ghosh’s Shadowlines as a “cosmopolitan-migrant” (150).

28. Cosmopolitanism as multiple allegiances that disrupt homogenous categories of classification, such as nation, race, and citizenship, has been theorized by Bruce Robbins, Pheng Cheah, and James Clifford, among others. See Clifford’s Routes: Travel and Translation in the Twentieth Century and Robbins and Cheah’s Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation for more on the pluralizing possibilities of cosmopolitanism. Sandhya Shukla further echoes the idea of migrant identities destabilizing hegemonic codes: “[B]y looking at how migrant discourses have created India abroad, we can challenge the assumed centrality of ‘America’ and ‘England’ in the lives of people who inhabit the spaces of the United States and Britain” (5). She further adds that “Indians’ connections to each other and to
places that traverse the boundaries of countries of settlement are often formulated in languages that straddle conceptual categories of race, ethnicity and nation” (9). Paul Gilroy makes a similar argument in *The Black Atlantic*, a book that destabilizes territorial and spatial boundaries through the idea of diaspora.

29. Loren Kruger interprets the titles of the novels that Meena reads as “short-hand comparisons between Meena . . . and the heroines of romance novels with titles like *Cast Adrift* and *Storms of Passion* [that] register irony as well as empathy” (“Minor” 72). I am, of course, referring to the romance novels that Meena writes.

**Chapter 5**

1. Similarly Sten Moslund argues that “many South Africans have a history of being misrepresented or obliterated by institutionalized histories and, being denied the access to participate in the making of institutionalized histories, literature has often assumed the function of being an aperture for self-expression and self-assertion” (21).

2. John McLeod argues that “Negritude is nostalgic for a mythic African past. Negritude often posited a ‘golden age’ of pre-colonial Africa from which black peoples had been separated by colonialism and to which they must return. . . . [T]hese ‘returns’ depended upon the construction of a mythic African pre-colonial past before the time of colonialism which was free from the ills of the present. But did such a ‘golden age’ of perfection ever really exist?” (82).

3. Moslund points out that “counter-histories involve a conscious attempt to regain the command of one’s own reality. . . . Accordingly the distribution of other myths of origin . . . or the expression of a marginalized perspective may comprise a complex ‘vital human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances’ (Jackson, 2002, 4). Counter-histories may rework and restructure the past psychologically, socially and metaphorically to change our experience and perception of truths and the limits of reality” (16).

4. Lukács’s formulations on the historical novel are useful to foreground here. As Michael Green points out, “Lukács . . . shifted the basis for his identification of the ‘historical novel’ from the realm of empty formalism and ahistorical classification to the materiality of the moment from which the form emerged” (123).

5. Similarly, Ulrich Broich argues that the “historical writing could have been useful to create . . . a national identity” (421).

6. Indians came to the Caribbean, Mauritius, Guyana, Fiji, and South Africa as indentured labor in the mid- to late nineteenth century. Due to the recentness of migration to the United Kingdom and United States, there is no dearth of fiction commemorating the diasporic voyage to the West. Accounts of voyaging to the Caribbean are fewer: David Dabydeen’s *The Counting House* (1996) is one of the few texts that reimagines the passage of indentured Indians to colonial Guyana. Dabydeen’s collection of poems entitled *The Coolie Odyssey* (1988) revives the indentured past. Indo-Trinidadian writer Ramabai Espinet’s novel *The Swinging Bridge* (2003) also narrates the indentured experience. The anthology *Coolitude*, edited by
Khal Torabully and Marina Carter, attempts to excavate a distinctive “coочie” conscience, but confines itself to poetry, as does the Noor Kabir edited collection, The Still Cry: Personal Accounts of East Indians in Trinidad and Tobago during Indentureship, 1845–1917. However, literary accounts of Indian migration to Africa are exceedingly rare. Recently, Pat Poovalingam’s novel Anand (2003) partially recovered the indenture experience in South Africa. When I was in Durban in 2005, I had the opportunity to watch Rajesh Gopie’s new play, entitled Coolie Odyssey, which sought to fill precisely this gap in South African Indian literature. Additionally, Aziz Hassim, author of the novel The Lotus People, told me that his next novel was to be set in, and about a character who emerges from, the cane fields.

7. The singular presence of apartheid in the national psyche often erased other histories of oppression—such as the experience of indentured labor—and prevented an examination of their psychic ramifications. Since the British who brought indentured Indians to South Africa were inveterate record keepers, it is easy to garner primary documentation of indentured migration. However, literary narrations of indenture are much rarer, even though, as Frene Ginwala estimates, “more than 90 percent [of South African Indians] are the descendants of indentured labourers” (4).

8. Moodley is currently an admissions officer in the Faculty of Science at the University of KwaZulu Natal. The Heart Knows No Colour is Moodley’s first published work. Her second novel, A Scent so Sweet, was published in 2006.

9. Paul Gilroy’s notion of the slave ship as “chronotope” is instructive here (Brazier and Mannur 49, 52–53, 64). The ship represents cultural interaction, albeit violent. Similarly, one can see the indentured ship, in keeping with the Middle Passage image, as a facilitator of cross-cultural movement. Indo-Caribbean scholar Ron Ramdin also uses the term “Other Middle Passage” to describe the movement of indentured laborers from India to various places in the British Empire. See also Mishra (“Diasporic Imaginary” 423, 429) on the importance of the ship in the indentured imagination.

10. According to Surendra Bhana and Joy Brain, the “first ship bringing indentured Indians from Madras was the Truro, which arrived in Durban on 16 November 1860. There were 340 men, women and children on board” (28). Brought by the British, who administered India in addition to the South African province of Natal, indentured Indians were to fill the labor shortage in “new and labour-intensive plantation crops like coffee, tea, or sugar along the coastal belt” (24). These immigrants were usually agrarian, illiterate, and destitute. Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie states that “Natal would receive a total of 152 184 indentured immigrants (62 % men, 25 % women and 13 % children). Of these, 101 468 came from Southern India . . . while others came from the northern and north-eastern areas of India. . . . The majority were Hindus, some 2 % Christians and less than 12% Muslims” (10).

11. Moodley here directly echoes historian Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie’s account of “the six to six” schedule of Indian laborers:

Being an indentured labourer meant that one was not quite a slave (a permanent piece of property) but neither was one a free soul. Indentured workers were bound by contract for five years and there was
incentive for a second contract for a further five years with the offer of a free return passage to India or the grant of some land; the land grant was eventually dropped in 1891. Food, clothing, and accommodation were provided. A minimum wage of ten shillings per month was provided for males, females received half this amount and children’s wages were determined by their age. During the period of bondage there was little freedom. The contract stipulated a nine-hour working day but agricultural workers in Natal found that ‘from sunrise to sunset’ or ‘six to six’ was the norm. No worker could leave the estate without a pass. (11)

12. In another marking of the glossed-over physical trauma of indenture, Chumpa (Sita’s mother) says that “I have helped deliver babies in the field and their mothers are back at work in a day” (Heart 52). Another indentured laborer is “flogged . . . in front of his wife and children and the other people from his barracks” because he had been afflicted with “diarrhea after drinking the water from the drums” (53). Even pregnant women were not given a respite. “Her job, like most of the other women on the estate, was to put the cane into bundles, ready to be carted off to the mills for crushing . . . being pregnant did not make it any easier” (36–37).

13. In addition to exploring the horrors of indenture, the second phase of the indenture migratory arc also traces the aftereffects of indenture. By sending Gopi, Sita’s brother, to the city, Moodley follows the life stories of many Indians who left for Durban after their indenture had ended:

The Indian labourers who were now free had many different plans for the future. Some, like Gopi, decided to go their own way. Some large and extended families, having saved very hard and pooled their resources, made tentative inquiries about purchasing land to start their own little farms. Then there were those who decided that they had had enough of this land, and used their money to purchase a passage back to India. Finally, the older generation, who were too tired and terrified to make any major changes in their lives, settled for a small increase in wages and succumbed to the call of the sugar-cane fields. (71)

The biographies of Indians after indenture diverged significantly from each other. In following Gopi as he makes his fortune in the city, Moodley charts one of the various trajectories across which the lives of the indentured laborers unfolded. The text shifts in tone once it moves to Durban. There we are exposed to the lives of Indians after the period of indenture has lapsed. The section in the city reflects the gritty reality of working-class urban Indian life. Moodley shows us that Indians have a long presence not only in the South African plantation economy but also in urban South Africa, where they contributed to the financial culture of the city in significant ways.

14. The economic uplift articulated above goes hand-in-hand with political commitment. Sita’s eldest son, Mukesh, for example, “was forever talking about his political hero, Gandhi . . . he was not afraid to speak his mind about the oppression of the burgeoning Indian community” (Heart 192). Sita’s other brother, Bharath, had
“died so tragically young after catching tuberculosis, helping the injured soldiers during the Anglo-Boer war. Like so many young Indian men he had served under the simple yet forthright politician, Gandhi, as a stretcher-bearer” (195; emphasis added). These moments in the narrative are elaborate strategies in fulfilling the text’s political destination. While sketching the economic progress of many Indians following the end of indenture, Moodley emphasizes their politicization and commitment to an egalitarian South Africa. The story of Bharath, while recuperating a history hidden in the margins, also reminds us of the sacrifices that South African Indians made for a nation that would grant them citizenship only in 1961, 101 years after the arrival of the first wave of indentured labor. Moodley’s meticulous reconstruction of the past enables us to understand the extent to which Indians have lived, suffered, and contributed to South Africa.

15. Hansen remarks that the “upwards snobbery in the racial hierarchy made relationships of Indians to whites more central and complex” (“Plays” 264).

16. The literal blackening of Indian identity here brings to mind the metaphorical blackening that Jayapraga Reddy evokes through the image of the “blackened ruin” in her short story “On the Fringe of Dreamtime.”

17. In that vein of parochial commitment, Sita’s daughter, Rani’s future husband, Balu Pillai, is sent abroad for his studies. “Master Sheldon had seen a need for an Indian doctor in the community, and Balu had jumped at the opportunity to go to medical school. Now he had returned to serve his people” (Heart 220).

18. Note that there are two Ranis in this novel: Gopi’s wife and Sita’s daughter. The latter is named after the former, who is the wife of her mother’s brother.


20. Vilashini Cooppan points out with reference to Friday in J. M. Coetzee’s Foe that “faced with the South African white writer’s perennial problem of how to record the spoken discourse of black characters in such a way as to mark that speech’s difference without altogether exoticizing it as a species of, quite literally, local color, Coetzee in Foe chooses what Gayatri Spivak and others characterize as a Derridean aporia of silence” (353).

21. Moodley could also be simply echoing the fraught relationships between Indians and blacks in the aftermath of indenture. Robin Cohen claims that “indentured labourers and their offspring developed a troubled and often hostile relationship with the indigenous people and other migrant groups. The inter-ethnic tensions in countries like Guyana, Fiji, Uganda and South Africa provide cases in point” (64).

22. I am extrapolating here. Bryce and Dako’s subjects are black postcolonial writers such as Joan Riley and Ama Ata Aidoo.

23. Again, this is exactly the criticism that Achebe levels at Heart of Darkness:
Africa as setting and backdrop . . . eliminates the African as human factor. Africa as a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his peril. Can nobody see the preposterous and perverse arrogance in thus reducing Africa to the role of props for the break-up of one petty European mind? But that is not even the point. The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age-long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. ("Image of Africa")

See also Barnard (26–32).

24. Vijay Mishra aptly points out that “all that remained [in the indentured consciousness] was the memory of the passage and a loss that could only be sustained through the categories of myth” ("Diasporic Imaginary" 429) and that “in the old Indian diaspora this absence [of India] had become a true fantasy as India had no real, tangible existence in the socio-political consciousness of the people” (442).

25. The biographical information provided in this chapter is taken from the novel and the Internet. The only published scholarly study I have found is Govinden’s essay “The Performance of Post-colonial Writing.” Imraan Coovadia was born in Durban, South Africa, educated in the United States, and now teaches at the University of Cape Town. The Wedding is his first published novel. His second novel also deals with the South African Indian community: Green-Eyed Thieves was published in South Africa in 2006.


Of the Indian population of 41,142 in Natal in 1891 some 5500 were passenger Indians. News spread in the villages and towns of India and many immigrants to South Africa came from closely connected villages. . . . While the big merchants dominated the scene, many Hindus and Muslims from the west coast of India started small shops in Durban and also in the smaller rural towns of Natal. Others took to hawking in the hope of better things to come. The smaller traders, many of whom were inexperienced and lived in very humble and precarious economic circumstances, relied on the wholesale merchants with whom they ran up substantial debts. . . . Traders also cornered the African market, supplying clothing, blankets, trinkets and other goods. . . . Gandhi suggests that the white traders subjected African customers to poor treatment, while the Indian trader allowed the African into his shop and permitted him to handle his goods. (12)

27. According to Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie:

Frene Ginwala states that “the majority were from peasant families who had been unable to maintain their traditional place in the Indian economy” (5). In a brief recapitulation of the history of passenger Indians, so called because they paid for their own passage to South Africa, sociologist Ravi K. Thiara explains:
Passenger Indians arrived mainly between 1875 and 1897, thereafter their entry was restricted and finally abolished in 1913. They came from the north-west of India and were predominantly Gujarati-speaking Muslims (Memons) and Hindus (Banias), a few Urdu-speaking Muslims, Marathis and Ismailis. . . . With the expansion of opportunities they moved to the Transvaal and the Cape but were legally excluded from the Orange Free State. By 1911, an estimated 30,000 in number, they were present in most of the major towns and cities in South Africa. (129)

28. The Wedding’s structure is obviously influenced by Salman Rushdie’s collection of short stories East West (1994), which is divided into three sections: East, West and East-West. Coovadia’s novel consists of a similar tripartite arrangement around geographic coordinates: East, South, and North.

29. According to Betty Govinden, “apart from descriptions of indentured migration in the form of historical documentation, autobiographical writing of this history in South Africa follows a predictable pattern. For example, Neela Govender’s story of her grand uncle Acacia Thorn in My Heart [2000] or Zuleikha Mayat’s A Treasure Trove of Memories [1996] span a wide trajectory of events in the life of new immigrants from India” (“Performance” 158).

30. Appropriately, a diasporic character in Indo-American writer Sanjay Nigam’s novel The Transplanted Man assesses the impact of India on its diaspora by claiming that “the shadow of India still hangs over us like hurricane clouds” (231).

31. See the section entitled “Images and Constructions of Africa” in Govinden’s essay “Performance” for more.

32. Govinden (“Performance” 165) and Fainman-Frenkel (“On the Fringe” 152) make similar points about this passage.

33. Similarly, Vikram, Ismet’s neighbor, tells Ismet to relinquish any nostalgia for region as the troubled situation in South Africa dictates that “in this country you must not come with stories if you are this Bombay-Indian or that one Tamil, one what-what Gujarati Indian . . . no, my friend, what is essential is we must stand together united as one, that is my point” (Wedding 150). Ismet, however, bristles at the forced referentiality of an imagined India: “What India did this Vikram imagine was there? The only India he had seen was a million squabbling fiefdoms and hostile tribes quarrelling over land. Where were these ‘united as one man’ Indians going to come from?” (189).

34. As P. Pratap Kumar remarks, “the Indians who came to South Africa came from various backgrounds: linguistic, religious, cultural and social . . . the nature of the ritual integration among Hindus, commercial co-operation between Hindus and Muslims—all demonstrate that the Indian is capable of negotiating the competing values in an effort to forge unity” (in Jacobsen and Kumar 389). Social scientist Goolam Vahed claims that “while a number of identities based on language, class, religion, and customs co-existed within the category ‘Indian,’ during critical periods of political and economic pressure, disparate community members were brought closer together and a common identity of ‘Indian’ emerged in relation to Africans and whites” (125).

35. For more on food in Coovadia, see Fainman-Frenkel (“On the Fringe” 151).
Chapter 6

1. Although Essop’s fiction deals mostly with the Indian Muslim population, very often my analysis of the status of Indian Muslims in postapartheid South Africa reflects the disaffection felt by the Indian community as a whole. In those cases, I use the term “Indian” rather than “Indian Muslim.” Yet this alienation perceived by the Indian population in general is aggravated greatly for Indian Muslims. While Hindu Indians may also suffer from the twin strikes of religious and ethnic difference, Hinduism is generally not collapsed with religious fundamentalism the way Islam is and can often be easily incorporated into the discourse of the rainbow nation.

2. Kruger points out with reference to Kafka’s Curse that “the condition of diaspora, deterritorialization and uprootedness, attributed to the Jews, applies to other minorities as well, even in a possibly postapartheid moment of the 1990s” (“Black” 132).

3. Desai and Maharaj also note that “many Indians believed they would not benefit from the ANC’s affirmative action policies. These perceptions appeared to gain currency as the elections approached and fear and vulnerability became pervasive. Indians began to retreat into their ethnic and cultural shell” (“Minorities in the Rainbow Nation”).

4. Dr. King is obviously modeled on Christiaan Barnard (1922–2001), the South African doctor who conducted the pioneering heart transplant procedure in Cape Town in 1967.

5. The heart metaphor is not a trivial one. Essop underlines the need for “social surgery” (King of Hearts 13) in South Africa. He also suggests that the heart of humanity is the same despite outward differences, indicating that race is a constructed rather than real category. Dr. King asserts that “if one of the most vital organs in the body is that of a Sircon then they can no longer claim that they are pure Saturnians” (16). This implies an abjuration of purity and a synchronous desire to make Saturnians into Sircons by injecting them with blackness. It also forces the whites to recognize the futility of rejecting change. If a body rejects a transplanted heart, it dies. Similarly, in order to survive, whites must not reject the inevitable shift in social dynamics. Gradually the oppressive machinery of racial differentiation grinds to a halt. The country’s name is even changed to Sircon-Saturnia (28), a necessary fusion of black and white for a viable political future.

6. Jameson is commenting on critic Robert C. Elliot’s work on satire and utopia here.

7. Discussing Asian Indians in Britain, Avtar Brah argues that “a characteristic feature of [British] racism has been its focus on cultural difference as the primary signifier of a supposed immutable boundary” (168) and that “politicians such as Enoch Powell, being fully aware of the potency of cultural symbolism, made speeches which consistently used metaphors that evoked images of the Asian as the archetypal ‘alien’” (27).

8. As early as 1959, Nadine Gordimer had presciently raised these questions vis-à-vis the white community: “[B]elonging to a society implies two factors, which are outside reason: the desire to belong, on the one part, and acceptance, on the other part. The new Africa, may with luck, grant us our legal rights, full citizenship,
and the vote, but I don’t think it will accept us in the way we’re hankering after” (Essential Gesture 32).

Azadeh Moaveni also raises the same concerns about belonging, but in different circumstances, in her return-to-roots memoir Lipstick Jihad. An Iranian American who has come back to Iran to seek a place there, Moaveni laments that even though she feels Iranian, the Iranians never validate her as such:

I thought of my family in California and superimposed the question onto them. What if they woke up one day, and decided they were really American? Even if they felt it with all the force of their being, did that mean Americans would suddenly stop considering them foreign? Maybe identity, to an extent, was an interior condition. But wasn’t it also in the eye of the beholder? . . . What percentage of identity was exterior, what percentage self-defined? (115)

9. "Unlike the Assyrian kings his wealth did not consist of conquered territory but money—money conquered by his retail and wholesale shops in the city" (King of Hearts 104). The use of the word “conquered” suggests the nexus between Indian trade and the exploitative process of colonialism, a connection further enhanced by the description of Mr. Khamsin’s business interests as “a commercial empire” (106).

10. According to Frene Ginwala, the South African Indian Council (SAIC) “was established as a nominated body in 1964 and became an elected institution in 1981. However with 80 percent of the [Indian] community boycotting the elections, even the Council’s creators and participant members did not claim that it was representative” (10).

11. Mr. Khamsin spouts the rhetoric of racial absolutism at a gathering of wealthy business and political interests and launches into a discussion of separate development: “What would happen if the races began to mix indiscriminately? We would have chaos. Even the great Shakespeare stood for order in human affairs” (King of Hearts 107).

12. In 1970, Uganda housed 76,000 Indians. Following the expulsions in 1972, the number of Indians in Uganda had fallen to 430 by 1980 (Cohen 60).

13. My subtitle here echoes Nadine Gordimer’s well-known essay “Where do Whites Fit In?” (1958). In keeping with the argument of this chapter, Gordimer appropriately answers her own question: “Nowhere [in Africa], I am inclined to say in my gloomier and least courageous moods” (Essential Gesture 31).

14. According to Daniel Herwitz, “the African renaissance [associated with Mbeki] explicitly eschews racial language while implicitly courting it. It explicitly opens South Africa to a multiplicity of citizens in the manner of the South African constitution while implicitly returning to images of a glorious black Africanist past—the past of the great decolonizing struggles and, earlier still, to that of a utopia before colonialism, which ultimately means before the white man” (70). For more on the African Renaissance, see the chapter entitled “Afro-Medici: Thabo Mbeki’s African Renaissance” in Herwitz’s book Race and Reconciliation.

15. Unless otherwise indicated, my use of the term “Muslim” refers to “Indian Muslims.” Having said that, it is important to remember that the Muslim constituency in South Africa is much larger than its Indo-Islamic adherents. While a study
of Islam in the Cape may lead to different conclusions about minority unbelonging, for reasons of focus, the subject of this chapter is Indian Muslims only. According to S. E. Dangor:

"While official statistics put the number [of Muslims in South Africa] at 500,000 unofficial estimates range from 750,000 to one million. The overwhelming majority of South African Muslims have their origins in South East Asia, with about equal numbers from India and the East Indies. Muslims of Malay origin constitute about 45 per cent of this population and reside mainly in the Western Cape; a similar percentage is of Indian origin and resides mainly in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Mpumalanga. A small percentage has roots in Africa. ("Negotiating" 244–45)"

16. Even though Essop clearly satirizes his protagonist, Salman Khan, and his overweening ambition, the novel also critiques the reasons for Salman's failure as much as it censures Salman himself. My analysis focuses more on why Salman fails to fulfill his ambitions than on Essop's critique of Salman, although the two are obviously related.

17. Only another Indian from parliament, Mr. Khamsin, previously encountered in The King of Hearts collection, is invited to the celebrations. "There were other Indians in Parliament, but he had not invited them as none of them, he felt, measured up to his academic eminence" (Third Prophecy 1). Later we are told that "there were eight other Indians, besides Mr. Khamsin, in parliament, but Salman had refrained from becoming friendly with them" (26). An intellectual elitist, Salman's distance from the Indian community is highlighted here, an estrangement that also takes on a physical quality, "his eyes blue and his face pale so that in appearance he looked more European than Eastern" (2).

18. According to Humayun Ansari, "the call for a ban on The Satanic Verses and a change in the blasphemy law failed because they were unable to convince the non-Muslim majority of the validity of their case in an idiom and in ways which that majority could understand. While actively seeking a more sympathetic hearing for these religious grievances, Muslims did not seem to be engaging constructively with British political, social and cultural institutions" (233).

19. The narrative thus transfers this imaginative failure—the willed refusal to offer belonging to those who should own it—to Salman. Essop criticizes Salman's strident secularism, a secularism he has acquired by living overseas. As Minister of Prisons, Salman refuses to allow a contingent of Muslims to preach religion to Muslim men in jails. One of the men from the group says to him, "You come from overseas and you make laws against us" (Third Prophecy 28). A reference, of course, to the white community legislating discriminatory laws against blacks and Indians, it also situates the group of Indian Muslims conversing with Salman as not coming from overseas, an unequivocal assertion of the Africaness of Indian identity, indeed of the Africaness of conservative Indian Muslim identity. Later Mr. Khamsin tells Salman that "in life one must make compromises . . . you know what happened to Salman Rushdie" (29). Like Rushdie, Salman too lives by a secularism that holds no sensitivity for those who believe differently from him. That is the problem not only with Salman, but also with the secular government he represents. Once again
this reveals important aspects of national identity in the postcolonial state. One is accepted as belonging only if one adheres to dominant patterns of religious, moral, sexual, and social affiliations. Alterity is not welcomed, even in the rainbow nation.

20. Just as the African Front is a thinly disguised manifestation of the ANC, the UMAC is a thinly disguised manifestation of PAGAD, or People Against Gangsterism and Drugs:

PAGAD was formed in 1996 as a community anticrime group fighting drugs and violence in the Cape Flats section of Cape Town but by early 1998 had also become antigovernment and anti-Western. PAGAD and its Islamic ally Qibla view the South African Government as a threat to Islamic values and consequently promote greater political voice for South African Muslims. The group is led by Abdus Salaam Ebrahim. PAGAD's G-Force (Gun Force) operates in small cells and is believed responsible for carrying out acts of terrorism. PAGAD uses several front names, including Muslims Against Global Oppression (MAGO) and Muslims Against Illegitimate Leaders (MAIL), when launching anti-Western protests and campaigns. ("People Against Gangsterism and Drugs [PAGAD]". Retrieved June 12, 2007, http://www.nps.edu/Library/Research/SubjectGuides/SpecialTopics/TerroristProfile/Prior/PeopleAgainstGangsterismAndDrugs.html).

21. I am repeating, and diverging from, Homi Bhabha's description of the “Janus-faced discourse of the nation” (Nation and Narration 3).

22. For example, Ama Ata Aidoo’s collection of short stories No Sweetness Here reflects on the failure of postcoloniality. The short story “For Whom Things Did Not Change” is about an old man who is still waiting for the benefits of independence and ends powerfully with the words: “what does Independence mean?” (29). Similarly Chinua Achebe’s Anthills of the Savannah mourns postcolonial Nigeria’s decline into dictatorship, and Khushwant Singh’s Train to Pakistan, written only nine years after Indian independence, forecasts the corruption of the Indian state and the meaningless of political freedom for impoverished agrarian communities.

Conclusion

1. Some of my findings here echo the excellent ethnographic work done by Thomas Hansen and Smitha Radhakrishnan. See particularly Hansen’s “Diasporic Dispositions” and Radhakrishnan’s “Time to Show Our True Colors.”

2. One of the consequences of the gathering was the decision to establish a support group for South African Indian writers. According to Padayachee, the “Writer’s Network,” as it is now called, is flourishing.

3. See Radhakrishnan for an ethnographic analysis of these two strands of South African Indian identity (“Time” 268, 274). For more on the range of Indian political affiliation see Desai and Maharaj.
4. See Patrick Bond’s *Elite Transition: From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa* for more on the failure of the ANC government to alleviate some of the most pressing economic concerns of South Africa, particularly those of racialized poverty. Also see Radhakrishnan, “Time” (277) and Irlam (697).

5. See also Dhupelia-Mesthrie (9).

6. Recently, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) even started showing Bollywood films on Saturday night.


8. Sangeeta Ray asserts that the “majority of Indians in the United States have very close ties with the homeland to which they periodically return. . . . Most South African Indians . . . have almost no connection with their native land” (5).

9. This is not an unusual response even from Indians located in non-Western diasporas. The Indo-Trinidadian writer V. S. Naipaul wrote bitter, scathing narratives upon encountering an India radically different from the one encountered through the communal diasporic imagination. The titles of the texts speak for themselves: *An Area of Darkness* and *India: A Wounded Civilization*. Betty Govinden cites a similar incident in Dr. Goonam’s autobiography, *Coolie Doctor*, when Goonam’s family visits India: “My father and I were soon munching away in peasant-like abandonment, but not my mother and sister, the stuff was not hygienically handled, cellophane wrapped and hermetically sealed for them” (quoted in “Against an African Sky” 91).

10. *Filmi* is an Indian neologism and refers disparagingly to Bollywood films. Also see Jaspal Singh’s essay for the role of Hindi film in constructing diasporic Indian identity and how “Indians abroad . . . become . . . more ‘Indian’ than Indians in India” (203).

11. An interesting contrast to the Durban Centre was the Jewish Museum in Cape Town. Jews in South Africa number approximately seventy-five thousand, compared to the 1.1 million Indians there. The museum was impeccably maintained and filled with visitors from all over the world. Clearly there was a pride in the Jewish presence in South Africa and its contribution to South African life, as well as in its rich history of resistance to apartheid that seemed to be missing among Indians.

12. See Ray on how “postcolonial writings are . . . on the side of memory, their oppositionality a function of anamnesia” (7).