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2008 CWSA ANNUAL BOOK AWARD

Zina, Transnational Feminism, and the Moral Regulation of Pakistani Women. Shahnaz Khan. Vancouver, British Columbia: University of British Columbia Press, 2006; illustrations; vi + 152 pages; ISBN 0-7748-1286-9; \$ 29.95 (paper).

Shahnaz Khan's study of Pakistani women incarcerated under the *Zina* adultery laws promulgated by the Hadood Ordinances provides a complex reading of the tensions between third and first world politics of gender, power and native representation. *Zina* laws - instituted under the militarist regime of General Zia-ul-Haq in 1979 - censure adultery, fornication, rape, and prostitution among men and women, but have historically targeted impoverished women. Khan begins her study with a sophisticated historical discussion of religious and political processes by tracing the roots of *Zina* laws to the creation of Pakistan when the latter was imagined as a homeland for the muslims¹ of British India in 1947. Originally propagated by the State as a "means to ensure a moral and just society in Pakistan," these laws are increasingly used by families to discipline urban lower-middle-class and working-class women who go against parental authority - by marrying against parental consent (even though adult women do not need parental consent under Pakistan's constitution), defying husbands, and so on (10). In short, *Zina* laws are used by the family *through* the State to morally discipline women, ultimately emphasizing State control over women's lives and bodies.

Broadly, Khan's study contributes to everyday histories of lives and how these narratives must be investigated within the umbrella of State and religious processes. In particular, Khan is able to show how the Pakistani State and the family collude in the subjugation of impoverished women via

religious ordinances in an increasingly militarized third world zone. In showing how women are often direct victims of *Zina* laws, Khan illustrates how State and filial morality are often erroneously tied to women's honor.

Khan's field work took place over a period of four years in two prisons and one women's shelter in Pakistan. In engaging with stories from over 125 stories from women, activists, lawyers, and even prison guards, Khan found that even as the State attempts to cleanse itself through its female subjects, the latter resist such martyrdom in multiple local and discursive ways. A majority of these women are wrongly convicted and while some continue to want to return to their families (who are often complicit in their imprisonment), many prefer to stay in the prisons because these new locations are often safer spaces that allow them to flee "the wrath of their families" (11). In illustrating how these women enact agency, Khan dislocates, albeit in a small way, the notion of the oppressed muslim woman in third world societies. The only shortcoming of the field work, self-acknowledged by Khan, was her restricted access to the women who were afraid to tell complete stories for fear of reprisal from prison guards and their families.

The book provides a strenuous feminist discussion of the politics of representation of third world women by Western trained native informants, such as the author. While there is no novelty in what Khan tells us about navigating the tensions in being a native researcher, being perceived as the subject of the research, and the dangers of further essentializing islam, her discussions reinforce the representational politics inherent in undertaking such projects in light of the global war on terror. Staying consistent with a transnational feminist position she concludes with a powerful call for

transnational feminist solidarity between the north and south because it can "disrupt binary thinking about divisions between the oppressive third world woman and the liberated Western woman, allowing for an understanding of how oppressions operate globally" (123).

Note

1. Khan pointedly uses lower case to refer to muslims and other religious groups in order to semantically de-essentialize such religious categories. In this review, I stay consistent with her choice.

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***Wrangling Women, Humor and Gender in the American West.* Kristin M. McAndrews. Reno, Nevada: University of Nevada Press, 2006; illustrations, map, notes, bibliography, biographies, index; xvi + 175 pages; ISBN 13:978-0-87417-683-4; \$34.95US (cloth).**

Kristin M. McAndrews' book *Wrangling Women* provides a detailed examination of the humour and tall tales told by the women who work as ranchers, trail guides, horsetrainers and packers in a small mountain community of Winthrop, Washington. McAndrews conducted interviews with several of these non-traditional women to find out how they cope with the sexism they experience in their work. Humour is one of the most used devices incorporated by the women and McAndrews documents many of the tall tales, incidences and jokes that the women were involved in and what it reveals about gender in the American West. Unfortunately, the book struck me as a dissertation turned into a book because it excessively calls on the expertise of others to provide support for the author's points. Because of this the book was often times dry, long, and cumbersome to read. The author frequently goes into great detail about how particular stories or jokes fit into

particular categories of humour. I found this distracted from the readability of the book and because of this the author is not as effective as she could have been.

One interesting aspect, from the perspective of Women's Studies, is the use of the insider/outsider point of view. While the "wrangling women" are insiders in terms of the tourists they serve, they are still outsiders because they are women doing a "male" job in a patriarchal culture. Such a perspective gives the reader a good overview of the women's "gendered" position in this male-dominated field of work. However, there is very little discussion about feminism or how these women view feminism.

The women's stories are remarkable and the author uses a number of black and white photographs of the women to give us a sense of who the women are. The author also provides biographies of the women and notes to provide more in-depth information. However, given the very interesting title I thought it would be a delightful book to read. I was disappointed.

Wendee Kubik
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***Diaspora, Memory and Identity: A Search for Home.* Vijay Agnew, editor. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005; x + 308 pages; ISBN 0-8020-9374-4; \$29.95 (paper).**

In *Diaspora, Memory and Identity*, editor Vijay Agnew examines how memory figures prominently in Canadian diasporic subjectivities. The book is located in a larger body of feminist literature interested in the role of gender in memory work. Two chapters stand out in the opening section. Sugiman analyzes how three generations of women remember Japanese Canadian internment during World War Two. She argues that as a sociological concept, memory is situated as part of larger projects of domination that silence certain groups, while constructing official stories around