

At times Derby's constructivist approach suggests that citizenship under Trujillo was largely an experience of being governed by a 'shadow state' or 'shadow bureaucracy' run by manipulative citizens in 'costume' or 'white masks' performing the 'spectacle' of the *tíguere* or 'Creole masquerade' (65). If the dominating culture of fear, with its incessant public displays of state power, underscored the theatrical nature of life, what Trujillo was covering up remains largely unexplored. In this regard, Derby slightly fetishizes the hidden and occult character of the Trujillato, when she might have attended more to the material conditions permitting its narrative of mystery.

Yet the sheer breadth and variety of her source materials produce a fascinating and nuanced portrait of the Dominican Republic in the middle of the twentieth century. If Derby fails at times to explore all the other ways Trujillo's power was maintained – through violence, for instance – it is only as a result of the book's magnanimity: attempting to cover such extensive historical and cultural ground, Derby must paint certain aspects of this period of Dominican history with brush strokes that occasionally oversimplify the exhaustive subjects of her portrait.

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*Islam, Women and Violence in Kashmir: Between India and Pakistan.* By Nyla Ali Khan. New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2009. Pp. 185. ISBN 9788189487577 Rs. 395 (pbk).

In this book, Nyla Ali Khan struggles with her responsibility as both academic and activist to the gendered, political and troubled imagined community to which she belongs: Kashmir. This struggle plays out in a contradiction that is inherent within the text, where nostalgic and political argument compete against Khan's stated goal to 'explore the construction and employment of the Kashmiri political and cultural landscape, and gender, in secular nationalist, religious nationalist and ethno-nationalist discourses in J&K [Jammu and Kashmir]' (12). On one hand, this book attempts to contest dominant Indian and Pakistani national narratives of possession over the former princely state that, as Khan explains, have consistently been used to pursue narrow, homogenizing state-interest at the expense of local Kashmiri desires for autonomy and self-definition. Toward this end, Khan speaks back to the construction of a political and social Kashmiri landscape inundated by Islamic and Hindu patriarchy and conflated religious, secular and ethnonationalisms that victimize, subjugate and circumscribe women's agency (12–13). *Islam, Women and Violence in Kashmir* weaves together a multi-faceted assessment of those nationalisms,

suggesting a complex genesis of J&K's troubled state of affairs, the role of 'outsiders' in its production, and the benefit that could be garnered from the reinvigoration of a plural Kashmiri national ethos, or 'Kashmiriyat'. Yet this fabric of argument frays as the reader is forced to consider the author's personal investment, as her uncritical approach towards narrating her family's central location in twentieth-century Kashmiri history eclipses the declared focus of her book as well as her stated scholarly aims.

Khan's main argument illustrates how Kashmir has been turned into a crucible for the forging of Indian and Pakistani national creation myths, razing what she describes as its unique syncretic social character to the detriment of local identity formation and, in particular, women's agency. Her first chapter narrates the diverse and competitive political milieu surrounding the end of Maharaja Hari Singh's control, the environment in which her grandfather, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, rose to state-wide prominence eventually to become the political force behind local efforts to ensure self-determination, in part via a UN-mandated plebiscite. The second chapter introduces the fourteenth-century Pandit/Sufi *yogini*-poetess Lalla-Ded as an early symbol of embraced cultural hybridity; a reflection of her preeminent theme, Khan frames this figure as a historical-literary symbol of 'Kashmiriyat'. Chapters three and four delve into the roles of India and Pakistan in what Khan describes as a political and social evisceration and militarization of Jammu and Kashmir; here, she traces a history of Janus-faced anti-democratic Indian involvement and Pakistani military and political machinations that both inspired and nurtured extra-state J&K paramilitary growth. The fifth chapter draws on Khan's first-hand research in villages bordering the Line of Control, interrogating the status of gender violence as a direct outcome of war-induced social destabilization and related patriarchal entrenchment. The conclusion offers an analysis of past suggestions for resolution, ending with a reflection venturing that Kashmiri stability will only be achieved when power emanates from local origins rather than the halls of New Delhi, or solely in relation to subcontinental politics (147–8).

Khan begins in *belles-lettres* fashion, signalling a nostalgic, romantic and intimate relationship with her subject, reflecting on both its misfortune and its intersection with the sublime. Effectively noting Kashmir's tragic beauty–pain duality, Khan writes: 'The lush meadows carpeted with daisies and lupines now reek of death and destruction. The soothing fragrance of pine-covered hills has now been overwhelmed by the odour of false promises and false hope' (10). The introduction walks the reader through early Kashmiri history, historically locating the region's political fortunes from Mauryan (early Hindu and Buddhist) rule, through Muslim and Sikh conquest and Dogra rule to the beginnings of a pre-independence nationalist movement in the princely state of Maharaja Hari Singh. Khan weaves the stakes of her

problematic into this history, noting her location/engagement as both researcher and participant, yet without effective or rigorous interrogation. She usefully explains her methodology, which draws heavily on oral historiography in addition to traditional historical accounts, yet chooses to avoid major theoretical engagement with both feminist discourse(s) and the vast body of competing scholarship on Kashmir.

Khan's writing style is a mix of academic engagement, family autobiography and political discourse that attempts to locate itself based upon its relationship to the land, people and history of Kashmir; however, it fails to do so adequately. Never far from the storyline is the author's maternal grandfather, *Sher-i-Kashmir* (Lion of Kashmir) Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, though Khan's critique of her antecedent's policies seem problematically and uncritically limited, forcing the reader to acknowledge the partisan character of such scholarship. On occasion, she also uses surprisingly harsh language when describing the systematic breakdown of syncretism and the rise of fundamentalism in Kashmir, using the term 'arabize' to refer to such denigration. Troublingly, the subject of caste is also not adequately represented, and is, in fact, sidelined at times: for instance, Khan uses broad strokes when referring to 'the freedoms that Kashmiri women have traditionally enjoyed', a description that not only homogenizes but also conceals important caste distinctions – not to mention religious differentiations – regardless of the 'syncretic' nature of Kashmir that Khan argues for so vehemently (104).

Despite these limitations, Khan's engagement with the problem of Kashmir is noteworthy not because of her dynastical past, but because of her participation in imagining Kashmir's future via an engagement with its contemporary traumas of state formation and myths of nation-building, something Ashis Nandy comments on in detail in the afterword to the book, 'Negotiating Necrophilia'. While Khan articulates the need for localized and gendered agency in Kashmir, uniquely at times through a deployment of oral evidence, the book's contribution cannot be disassociated from the projection of her romanticized, if quixotic, desire to retrieve an independent, plural and stable ethos for Jammu & Kashmir, 'because', as she says, 'if we stop remembering, we stop being' (14). *Islam, Women and Violence in Kashmir* will inform those interested in postcolonial theory and poetics, national mythmaking within post-Partition discourse, and/or the intersections between the politics of space, Islam, gender, violence and nationalism more generally; it is most useful to those graduate students and scholars who are capable of analysing the book's political tensions and investments.

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