

University of Szeged
Doctoral School of Literary Studies
Institute of English and American Studies

Shreya Bera

Doctoral Dissertation

**The Diasporic Sublime in the Works of Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chitra
Banerjee Divakaruni**

Supervisor

Dr. Réka Monika Cristian

Szeged

2022

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction: The Diasporic Sublime	4
I.1.	The Sublime in Indian American Literature	19
I.2.	Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni on the Postcolonial Subject	32
I.3.	The Female Subject and the Feminine Sublime	39
II.	Conceptualisations of the Diasporic Sublime	
II.1.	Towards the Diasporic Sublime: Self, Migration, and Morality	45
II.2.	Body, Food, and Home: The Aesthetic Foundation	55
III.	The Diasporic Sublime in Six Contemporary Indian American Novels	
III.1.	Loss, Exploitation, and Cultural Bereavement in <i>Jasmine</i>	62
III.2.	Pain, Pleasure, and Freedom in <i>Desirable Daughters</i>	76
III.3.	The Shock of Arrival and Aspirations in <i>The Namesake</i>	92
III.4.	The Voice of Reason and Womanhood in <i>The Lowland</i>	112
III.5.	Cry of Desire and the Spells in <i>The Mistress of Spices</i>	126
III.6.	(In)Visibility of the Familiar in <i>The Oleander Girl</i>	143
IV.	The Diasporic Sublime: Reclaiming the Self in Body, food, and Home	155
V.	Bibliography	165

Introduction

In this thesis, I showcase how the discourse of migration and diaspora studies is connected to the experience of sublime through Indian American literature. In attempting to establish the authority of reason and morality in the sublime, Immanuel Kant has disregarded the female involvement and ability to achieve the sublime (sovereign) state of self in his work, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beauty and Sublime* (1764/2011). There is an absence of a particular theory in exile and migration studies that integrates aesthetics of the sublime concerning the subjectivity of postcolonial women. With the help of contemporary feminist perspectives of the Kantian ethics, I use Kant's own theorisation of the sublime to prove that women are as capable of achieving the sublime as men. I investigate that the prolonged marginalised state and lack of freedom makes Indian women more vulnerable to the country change and how migration and resettlement triggers their intent for liberation.

Considering my research, the connection between migration and the sublime has been evaded so far in postcolonial studies. But the question is, how can we establish a connection between diasporic status and its sublimity and why this certain connection is needed? Even though Kant discusses the right to hospitality, there is little to no research on how women deal with that right as diaspora, or how we can relate it with the sublime. I am concerned with the mental and physical changes occurring due to migration giving the migrant women the opportunity to realise their innate nature, and moral abilities. It is extremely important to renegotiate the canon of the Kantian sublime for two reasons: firstly, the Kantian framework disproves his bias over female capability of the sublime experience, and secondly, it frames the function of reason, authority, and freedom in postcolonial literature.

The Kantian sublime, though seems outdated, still lends itself evolve into a mode of confrontation from just an awe response and avails itself to diverse interpretations. I discuss the element of fear and loss of culture and how Indian women face the collapse of their respect especially during the transition from one country to another. The possibility of reason's collapse is a crucial moment in the discourse of the postcolonial and I wish to employ the term "the diasporic sublime" to understand the positioning of female immigrants within the contexts of border, conflict and self. This particular coinage is significant as the term attempts to bridge the gap between diasporic literature and aesthetical research contributing a new term to the genre studies of migration. There sublime has been considerably researched within the postcolonial discourse, and since migration is one of the by-products of postcolonial studies, it makes sense

to discuss the sublime in diasporicity. I specifically choose to discuss feminist perspectives of the Kantian ethics because Kant presumes the sublime as human freedom. Indian American literature by female authors (Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni) discuss the state of immigrant women in the United States of America and how their selves are divided between traditions and cultures, struggling for their freedom.

To be cosmopolitan nowadays would mean acknowledging obligations for those who are not fellow citizens. To do so, it would essentially include identifying the moral worth of individuals, as also disregarding the consequences of their nationality, religion, gender and so on over their worthiness (Donaldson 1992, 142). Although existing theories of cosmopolitanism locate their origin in Immanuel Kant, it would be relevant to note that Kant used the word “cosmopolitanism” in a different sense (Linden 2004, 805). According to Kant, cosmopolitanism is a right to hospitality or a right not to be treated with hostility, especially when it comes to an individual who has reasonably fled a tyrannical, repressive power structure in the hope of security, stability, and peace (Mertens 1996, 331). Migration can be described as the practice of going from one country, region or place of native residence to settle down in another. The duration of this new arrangement varies, individuals “who relocate either semi-permanently or permanently to another country” (Bhugra and Becker 2005, 18). Some people migrate for economic or educational prospects on their own to be later joined by families, whereas some people move due to political reasons with or without their families.

Kantian ethics in postcolonial negotiations point to the relationship between morality and migration. The importance of morality lies in the value or expectations that are ascribed to communal life and in the willingness to welcome new people in a particular society since Kant discusses the morality of migration in his *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1785/1991), it is apt to briefly touch upon his idea of migration and how it is possible to connect to his idea of the sublime. Migration discusses two moral and legal principles which are foundational in globalisation. On one hand, the human right of individuals to move across borders, whether for economic, personal, and professional reasons or to seek asylum and refuge and on the other hand, the human will of self-governance (Kant 1991, 146). Immanuel Kant, therefore, called the moral claim to seek refuge or respite in the lands of another, a “universal right of hospitality” (Donaldson 1992, 143)—provided that the intents of the foreigner upon migrating to the foreign lands were nonviolent, a right that appropriately belongs to every human being that shares the planet with others (Linden 2004, 806). According to Kant, morality is insisting on the equal dignity or humanity of all persons which directs him to highlight both mutual respect and self-respect, and to criticise failures to acknowledge both our own and others’ dignity (Mertens

1996, 331). Even though the right to “hospitality” is an individual claim, the socio-economic and cultural triggers of migrations are largely collective (Mertens 1996, 332).

Under the conditions of morality and reason as delineated by Kant, I display how Indian immigrant women claim this individual right, and their dignity while facing the conflicts of the body, home, and border. Since the sublime presupposes human freedom, the theory reflects on the manoeuvred positions of women, their dominance and their resistance within the Indian diaspora in the United States of America. Bonnie Mann in her book, *Women’s Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment* (2006), observes that the feminist movement in the United States has been surprisingly quiet regarding the reshaping of America. Even though there have been individual attempts to stand against the marginalization of women within U.S. foreign policy, there has been no massive “public outcry in a feminist voice at home, even though the reconstruction of U.S. national identity is so blatantly masculinist in the form” (2006, 177). In constructing the female self, alongside the unfamiliar social structure and culture, there are added guilts of abandoning the homeland, being dependents as housewives and being undocumented labourers exploited for household chores. The experiences of violence, sexual abuse, gestation, pregnancy, abortion and experiences of murder and death incorporate anxiety, fear and anger at her own subordinated self which emphasizes the importance of discussing the female self-concerning migration and sublimity.

Diaspora and the sublime may exist in two different realms of theoretical research yet together as the “diasporic sublime” it frames the conditions of life in a foreign land through triumph and rupture. Dominant narratives of the sublime, especially as theorized by Immanuel Kant return to the experiences of the mind yet deny women their capabilities and participation in nature and society to experience the sublime feeling, which in a sense supposes freedom of the mind from an overwhelmingly powerful object or a situation. Since migration, the right to hospitable conditions is a human right to freedom, then the immigrant women may build their right to liberation in a foreign land, facing the loss of culture and social structure, resisting the identity that was imposed on them. The diasporic sublime conceptualises the powerful presence of immigrant women redefining the idea of freedom through certain moments of disruption. The sublime in diasporicity requires a different kind of courage that can linger with pain, loss, and grief swelling to uncontrollable proportions, overthrowing the pretentious societal and gendered roles to a grand power within that borders omnipotence (Mann 2006, 177). The diasporic sublime hence highlights the courage to face pain and vulnerability through social, cultural, economic, and political encounters and marks the sublime not as escape fantasies, or fictions of freedom but narratives of sovereignty through powerful lived experiences.

The Aim of the Dissertation

The formulated problem of this dissertation is to investigate how the diaspora studies is interlinked with the experience of sublime through Indian American female literature. The objectives of the thesis are the mental and physical changes occurring due to migration giving the migrant women the opportunity to realise their innate nature, and moral abilities. The textual analysis of elements of fear, power, and agency help to raise questions on how Indian women face the collapse of their respect and reason during the transition from one country to another. There is an absence of a particular theory in exile and migration studies that integrates aesthetics of the sublime concerning the subjectivity of postcolonial women. The Eighteenth century Kantian morals and ethics have denied the female capability in achieving true morality and respect as men do and rediscovering this perspective not only posits a new concern in postcolonial feminist discourse, but also helps to dismantle the canon by bringing in the issues of immigration.

With the help of contemporary feminist perspectives of the Kantian ethics, I use Kant's own theorisation of the sublime to prove that women are as capable of achieving the sublime as men. Even though Kantian morals deal with migration and cosmopolitanism, a certain connection is missing between migration and his theorisation of the sublime which presupposes freedom. The dissertation hence aims to bridge this gap within Kant's research by connecting feminist perspectives of his ethics and sublimity with Indian American diasporic women through selected works of Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. I wish to employ the term "the diasporic sublime" to understand the positioning of female immigrants within the contexts of border, conflict and self, marking the term as a new contribution to postcolonial aesthetic research.

The Structure of the Dissertation

The dissertation manifests in three sections focusing on representation, conceptualisation, and testing of the diasporic sublime, delineating its theorisation and expansion through a specific aesthetical foundation and contextual practice as evidenced through the novels by Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The first sub chapter, “The Sublime in Indian American Literature,” discusses the involvement of the sublime as a theory within Indian American literature, especially the effects of postcolonial migration. In the second sub chapter, titled “Mukherjee, Lahiri, and Divakaruni on the Postcolonial Subject”, the argument attends to the viability of the primary sources and how the selected works focus on the emergence of the postcolonial subject. The last chapter in this section, “The Female Subject and the Feminine Sublime,” briefly discusses the relationship between female postcolonial subjects and the theory of the feminine sublime, drawing upon the theorisations of female sublimity, terror, and power constructs.

The second section conceptualises aims to explain the introductory claims with theoretical and contextual relevance by reflecting on the transition of the feminine sublime and its eventual application to the diasporic sublime. the chapter titled “Towards the Diasporic Sublime: Self, Migration, and Morality,” focuses on a brief review of the eighteenth century theorization of the sublime. The chapter reflects on how historically Longinus, Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant have laid down the sublime, in the terms of sensory feeling and aesthetical reflection of reason and morality and how the Kantian philosophy is relevant in modern day aesthetical research, especially in postcolonial studies. The last chapter on this section is titled “The Body, Food, and Home: The Aesthetic Foundation” specifically takes on the feminist perspectives of the Kantian ethics showing the bias over female subjectivity, female involvement, and their active agency in the society. The sublime in this section initiates discussions on dismantling the Kantian bias showing the challenges and manipulations faced by migrant women. The severe effects of migration on a female body disrupts her relationship with her body, her concept of familiarity, and her sense of belonging. The concepts of body, food, and home do not strictly embody the diasporic subject and dominate the subject’s decisiveness, reason, and moral judgment, yet domination, or the manipulation of one or more of these three concepts, regulates the power within the subject.

The dissertation finally divides the third section into six chapters based on six novels to bring in the theoretical concepts under the umbrella of literary contexts. The first two subchapters titled “Loss, Exploitation, and Cultural Bereavement in *Jasmine*” and “Pain, Pleasure, and Freedom in *Desirable Daughters*,” evaluates the diasporic sublime in Bharati

Mukherjee's novels *Jasmine* (1989) and *Desirable Daughters* (2002). The subchapters "The Shock of Arrival and Aspirations in *The Namesake*," and "The Voice of Reason and Womanhood in *The Lowland*" by Jhumpa Lahiri; and the sub chapters "Cry of Desire and the Spells in *The Mistress of Spices*, and "(In)Visibility of the Familiar in *The Oleander Girl*" by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni also formulate the diasporic sublime through the development of female migrants in the novels. The diasporic sublime reflects on their aspirations and eventual freedom from social and gendered constraints. The narratives and the character arcs will not strictly adhere to the foundation of the body, food, and home but the foundation will analyze the narratives and the eventual constitution of the self collectively and coherently. The novels highlight the experiences in exile and internalization of certain abuse, trauma or accidents that represent life-changing momentums in their respective lives, in relation to masculinity, traditions and patriarchal expectations creating the opportunity to evaluate and trace the sublime theory.

The conclusion "The Diasporic Sublime: Reclaiming the Self in Body, food, and Home" establishes the relationship between the diaspora and the theory of the sublime through the concepts of the body, food, and home. The journey of migrating and exiled women will establish that diasporic literature becomes the scenario where one is challenged and strained to push beyond the limits of location, dislocation, culture, and gendered expectations where they become moral agents of society, perfectly capable of confronting boundaries to experience the sublime state of mind. The diasporic sublime, hence, by definition, traces the evolution of Indian American women into sovereign subjects from submissive objects of contemporary society.

Research Methodology

This research held with respect to this dissertation is a textual analysis that focuses on intensive reading of the primary texts within the postcolonial literary canon. The goal of the dissertation is to use the selected novels as evidence to trace a certain theory, in this case the sublime, and its contemporary feminist manifestation. The selected primary works for this research *Jasmine* (1989) and *Desirable Daughters* (2002) by Bharati Mukherjee; *The Mistress of Spices* (1997), *The Namesake* (2003) and *The Lowland* (2013) by Jhumpa Lahiri and *Oleander Girl: A Novel* (2013) by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni while focus on the development of the postcolonial female subject within Indian American diaspora, the four secondary sources are important to this research helping to formulate the problem of the diasporic sublime and establish its relevance and proceedings in migration studies. These sources are Immanuel Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beauty and Sublime* (1764/2011), Barbara Claire Freeman's *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction* (1995); Bonnie Mann's *Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment* (2006); and *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant* edited by Robin May Scott (1997).

There is a plethora of research on postcolonial women, and migration from the perspectives of orientalism, subjugation, subaltern, and hybridity but only a few research exists on postcoloniality and aesthetic theories. While Recent scholars have turned to Lyotardian theory of the postmodern sublime to recognise the denial of cultural differences, I turn to the Kantian sublime to re-establish the concepts of reason and liberation in the lived experiences of diasporic women. Immanuel Kant's *Observations* depicts the beautiful and the sublime as distinctive yet symbiotic qualities that together bring into harmony the humility of nature and the elegance of the civilized. Each alone is faulty: sublimity without beauty surpasses the bounds of nature and turns into "adventurous" or "grotesque" (as with medieval knights and monks, respectively), while beauty without sublimity is deficient in seriousness (Kant 1960, 43). But Kant's *Observations* lacks the idea of the female subjectivity and the kantian bias over the female sex is quite prominent. By assigning women a subtler role in the society, Kant declares women only exist to assist men, and they are incapable of achieving true virtue, in other words, incapable achieving the sublime. In spite of the kantian bias, I agree with the kantian notion of the sublime but I applied his own theorization of the sublime to disrupt his bias on female subjectivity and contemporary conditions of migration, and state of immigrant women creates the perfect field to assess the theory. (Kant 1960, 44).

Freeman's book provides new insight into the modes and methods employed in the concept of women's fiction since the eighteenth century. While male philosophers have been

overtly writing about the sublime experience for well over three hundred years, women seem to have appeared in this debate only when feminist curiosity in the sublime surfaced explicitly around the early nineteenth century. Barbara Claire Freeman argues that conventional theorizations of the sublime depend upon unexamined hypotheses about femininity and sexual difference and that the sublime could not survive without misogynistic interpretations of “the feminine” (Freeman 1995, 1). Taking this as her starting point, Freeman reevaluates Longinus, Burke, Kant, Weiskel, Hertz, and Derrida while also employing a wide range of women's fiction, including novels by Chopin, Morrison, Rhys, Shelley, and Wharton. This theoretical work helps this dissertation to look at the postcolonial framework of migration from a feminist perspective. The masculinist perspectives have dominated the postcolonial canon and the discourse lacks a parallel study on the growth and evolution of the female migrant. This work helps to address the arguments that how the sublime also serves to assess, domesticate, and eventually disregard an otherness that is almost always gendered as feminine. Freeman explores the circumstances in which fiction by American women (in this dissertation Indian American women), primarily of the twentieth century, reacts to and redefines what the conventions have called “the sublime” (1995, 2).

The secondary source by Bonnie Mann helps to posit a question on the sublime in relation to female citizenship and their liberation. The book focuses on the idea of female identity, a set of rights, an elevated yet exclusionary status, a connection between individual and state, and more. In recent decades residency or citizenship has fascinated interdisciplinary interest, especially with the transnational expansion of Western capitalism. Yet citizenship's connection to gender has gone comparatively unexplored—even though the worldwide pervasive refusal of citizenship rights to women, historically and in many places, continues today. This interdisciplinary work investigates the political and cultural aspects of citizenship and their significance to women and gender. Comprising essays by a renowned group of scholars, including Iris Marion Young, Alison Jaggar, Martha Nussbaum, and Sandra Bartky, this volume explores the theoretical issues and approaches at work in the feminist pursuit to give women equal rights and status.

Through the edited volume *Feminist interpretations of Immanuel Kant*, Robin May Scott focuses on the women that are omitted from the canons of philosophy. Due to Immanuel Kant's misogyny and contempt for the body, he has been a target of much feminist criticism. The focal point of this volume is to discuss the feminist debate over the Enlightenment legacy—whether its notions of reason and improvement offer devices for women's liberation and emancipation or, rather, have influenced the historical subservience of women in Western

society. This edition depicts fundamentally divergent explanations of Kant from feminist perspectives. Some essays refer to Kant as having significantly influenced the theories of rationality and autonomy in aspects that can further feminist projects. The feminist writers resituate Kantian issues in the politics of mundane life and highlight the symbolized nature of knowledge, morality, and aesthetics. They examine predicaments that face concrete subjects, including issues of collective responsibility, xenophobia, and colonialism, among others. The thesis applies a twofold theoretical framework. On the one hand, it draws on the theories of postcolonial literature with the works of key authors such as Homi Bhabha and Vijay Mishra concentrating on the ideas of otherness and displacement. On the other hand, it uses an extremely specific aspect of the feminine sublime focused on re-reading Immanuel Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1764/2011), female utilization of fear, agency and power in society to turn into an autonomous subject.

The textual analysis is an important method in literary studies and this dissertation takes up this method to work on the in-depth analysis of texts and contextualise the primary novels with a new theorisation. Because it deals with literary composition, the textual analysis places more importance on the intentionally composed elements of a text, especially the narrative perspective in a novel. It provides a space to investigate potentially unintended or so far unrelated connections between different texts, asks what a text exposes about the context in which it was written, or pursues to examine a classic text or dismantle certain philosophical and aesthetical research in a new and unanticipated way.

The Conclusion of the Dissertation

Considering my research, the conclusion of the dissertation establishes a connection between migration and the sublime that has been evaded so far in postcolonial studies. The mental and physical alterations occurring due to migration giving the migrant women the opportunity to realise their innate nature, and moral abilities is an intentional concern of this research. It is very crucial to renegotiate the canon of the Kantian sublime for two reasons: firstly, the Kantian framework refutes his bias over female ability of the sublime encounter, and secondly, it supports the function of reason, authority, and freedom in postcolonial literature. The Kantian sublime, though seemingly outdated, it gives itself the opportunity to evolve into a mode of confrontation from just an awe response and avails itself to diverse interpretations. I discuss the element of fear and loss of culture and how Indian women face the collapse of their respect and reason from time to time, especially during the transition from one country to another. I wish to employ the term “the diasporic sublime” to understand the positioning of female immigrants within the contexts of border, conflict and self. This particular coinage is significant as the term attempts to bridge the gap between diasporic literature and aesthetical research contributing a new term to the genre studies of migration.

But the question is, how can we establish a connection between diasporic status and its sublimity and why this certain connection is needed? Even though Kant examines the right to hospitality, not much research is available on how women deal with that right as diaspora, or how we can relate it with the sublime. There sublime has been considerably researched within the postcolonial discourse and since migration is one of the by-products of postcolonial studies, it makes sense to discuss the sublime in diasporicity. I specifically choose to discuss feminist perspectives of the Kantian ethics because Kant presumes the sublime as human freedom. Indian American literature by female authors (Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni) discuss the state of immigrant women in the United States of America and how their selves are divided between traditions and cultures.

The sublime experience consists of an exhilarating kind of “pleasure” (Kant 2000, 5:245, 23) that is felt upon a (safe) encounter with objects in nature that are “overwhelmingly powerful, terrifying, formless, vast, or incomprehensible: the starry heavens, erupting volcanoes, a stormy ocean, and so on” (178). For Kant, these pieces are especially well-suited for producing that anxiety-laden altitude of the soul that signifies the feeling of the sublime. The justification for this is that these sorts of ideas require us with a kind of insinuation or feeling of the rational “vocation” of the mind (2007, 5:262, 275). Kant writes, nature is judged as sublime not insofar as it arouses fear, but rather because it calls forward our power (which is

not part of nature) to respect those things about which we are concerned (goods, health, and life) as trivial, and hence to regard its power as not the sort of authority over ourselves and our power to which we would have to bow if it came down to our highest standards and their assertion or desertion (2007, 5:262, 275).

In the novels of Mukherjee, Lahiri and Divakaruni, what seems at first sight to be an easy echo of the private space, with men's space defined as 'outer' and women's 'inner', turns out to be more complicated. Conceptions of innerness and outerness are compliant and changing. The 'inner', as women's space, can, varying on perspectives, mean the village, the combined space of kinship or caste group, or the household; women's existence in the domestic idea of belonging lends an inner-ness each time to a distinct arrangement of relations. What continues perpetually is that female sexuality and its regulation continue both the objective of and the medium through which not only female identity, but also the limitations of community space, come to be negotiated (Niranjana 1994, 14-15). The diasporic sublime suggests an intricate "discursive and strategic positioning for women" (15).

The conversational concepts of women and women's activities are seen as productive of, and often central to, the emergence of national, race, and community identities. 'Woman' and 'women' become "necessary to the emergence of these identities through acknowledging and appropriating the privileged access to origins that the female capacity of birth represents" (Niranjana 2006, 16). The stability of these communal identities of Indian women in the States identities relies on locating 'Woman' and 'women' as "pure origin, as timeless tradition and the fixed place of home" (16). By contrast, when women name themselves as women, and contend for the right to name their activities as women, this is perceived as "dangerous incitement" (Kant 2007, 80). This indicates not only that the expression of distinct gender concerns by women is deemed dangerous to the permanence of community identities, but also that "women's access to an individual sense of self is seen as threatening" (Chakravarti 1983, 73). Uma Chakravarti argues that, in these narratives, women may be empowered with the power to conserve and regenerate the nation or the community, but that power often depends on a synchronized obliteration of the self (Chakravarti 1983, 73). The Kantian doctrine where Kant rendered women only capable of beauty, obliterates the idea of women in their individual space, as an equal to men in society. His focus on the imperative nature of women as pleasurable to society in a subservient and obliging manner.

The dissertation challenges the male-dominated construct of this idea and evinces the rising of Indian diasporic women through the aesthetical challenges manifested through their habits of body, food and home. The theory of the sublime stayed out of reach with respect to

South Asian studies as well as the involvement of postcolonial women. The status of secondary personhood has reduced women to subdued beings and the diasporic sublime reorients the discussion in terms of the novels to indulge in an inquiry into how women through their survival in threatening events such as killing, death, pregnancy and labour, rape, domestic abuse etc. If the diasporic sublime can be attempted, then not just Indian American community but other hyphenated communities can use the theoretical paradigm of the diasporic sublime to explore the categories of terror, agency and power and questions of identity. This dissertation hence submits an inquiry into the discourse of postcoloniality, and femininity in relation to the aesthetical observation of the sublime that can be expanded beyond the Indian American identity. The diasporic sublime hence studies the enabling of the individuals' in-betweenness of cultures and conflicts to create space for newer possibilities and new realities for displaced communities.

Even though in this dissertation, I conceptualise the diasporic sublime in relation to the struggles and lived experiences of Indian women in the United States, the theorization and application of the term does not end here. In my research, I have come across plethora of works that explored the sublime theory in environmental studies, game studies, and even in digital humanities. To consider the most recent theorisation of the sublime, I find Lyotard's postmodern version proposes the most philosophically meticulous and applicable paradigm for revisioning the aesthetics of the sublime as motivating the possibility of "mutual respect in a postcolonial context" (Giles 2014, 228). The diasporic sublime heavily relies on the Kantian sublime's dependence on "supersensible reason" that reduces nature to a conduit for "man's teleology rather than being for itself" (Giles 2014, 228). Hence, the theory can instead rely on Lyotard's concept of the sublime, and his theorisation of the "differend", the incommensurability between experience and idea (Giles 2014, 229). Since Lyotard's sublime retrieves nature from its Kantian exile, the value of embodied experience gets reintroduced into aesthetics in which the foundation of body and home can be useful.

The diasporic sublime has the scope not only in the Indian American studies but can be applied as a framework to analyze diverse diasporic and ethnic communities such as Asian Americans, Latin Americans, Indo-Japanese communities, and many more. To understand the severity of immigration, and its implications, impact, and long term effects on the global culture, the diasporic sublime might turn out to be an effective method. The closeness of the 'self' and 'other' (other represented by any opposing, overwhelming power or resistance), or the domestic and foreign, fits current definitions of "American Orientalism and American Empire" as discussed by critics Colleen Lye and Amy Kaplan (Wu Clark 2015, 2). The

theorisation of diasporic sublime also opens a door to the discussions on U.S. diplomatic ventures into the Asia Pacific triggering the domestic legal exclusions, beginning in 1882 (Wu Clark 2015, 2). Since the sublime gets established as a method to highlight morality and freedom, it has the potential to reflect on the inclusion or exclusion of the Asian laborers who began to enter the United States as a result of capital expansion. As part of the migration genre studies, diasporic sublime initiates new discussions on Asia American avant-garde, Spanish American conflicts, and other important territorial conflicts.

I intend to further this research into discussing the new U.S. territories such as the Philippines and Puerto Rico that were legally declared as “both ‘belonging to’ but ‘not part’ of the United States” And how that affects the ideas of citizenship, cosmopolitanism, and sense of belonging (Wu Clark 2015, 2). The diasporic sublime may venture into postmodern aesthetics to highlight the social imaginary of the East as West that motivated U.S. foreign policy in the East during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. My purpose will be to observe the works of contemporary Asian American writers, such as Sui Sin Far, Sadakichi Hartmann, Yone Noguchi, Younghill Kang, Dhan Gopal Mukerji, and Carlos Bulosan, and trace the sublime within the orientalisng of the East, the American interface in the lives of Asian Americans (Wu Clark 2015, 3). The diasporic sublime can further highlight the mobility of movement of migrant bodies between the domestic, Western and Eastern identities.

Selected Works Used for the Dissertation

- Bhabha, Homi K. 1994. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Brady, Emily. 2013. *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature*. Cambridge University Press.
- Brady, Emily. 2019. "The Kantian Sublime and Greatness of Mind." In *The Measure of Greatness Philosophers on Magnanimity* edited by Sophia Vasalou. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burke, Edmund. 2014 (1757). *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful: With an Introductory Discourse Concerning Taste; and Several Other Additions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chakravarti, Uma. 1998. *Rewriting History: The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai*. New Delhi: Kali for Women.
- Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. 1997. *The Mistress of Spices*. California: Doubleday.
- Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. 2013. *Oleander Girl: A Novel*. Simon and Schuster.
- Donaldson T. 1992. "Kant's Global Rationalism." *Traditions of International Ethics* edited by Terry Nardin and David R. Mapel. Cambridge Studies in International Relations: Cambridge University Press.
- Freeman, Barbara Claire. 1997. *The Feminine Sublime: Gender and Excess in Women's Fiction*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
<https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft2199n7mq;chunk.id=0;doc.view=print>
- Gatens, Moira. 1991. *Feminism and Philosophy: Perspectives on Difference and Equality*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Gedalof, Irene. 1996. "Syncopating India: Catherine Clément's Syncope." *Women's Philosophy Review*, vol. 15: 31–35.
<https://doi.org/10.5840/wpr19961525>
- Giles, Jana M. 2014. "Can the Sublime Be Postcolonial? Aesthetics, Politics, and Environment in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*." *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, vol. 1(2): 223-242.
- Hanauer, Tom R. 2018. "Pleasure and Transcendence: Two Paradoxes of Sublimity." In *The Possibility of the Sublime: Aesthetic Exchanges*, edited by Lars Aagaard-Mogensen, 29-44. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1960. *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, trans. John Goldthwait. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Kant, Immanuel. 1960. *The Critique of Judgement*, trans. by James Creed Meredith. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1983. *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. by Ted Humphrey. Hackett: Cambridge.
- Kant, Immanuel. 1987. *Critique of Judgment*, trans. by Werner S. Pluhar, Hackett. University of California
- Lahiri, Jhumpa. 2003. *Namesake*. New York: Houghton-Mifflin.
- Lahiri, Jhumpa. 2013. *Lowland*. Delhi: Alfred A. Knopf and Random publishers' ltd.
- Mann, Bonnie. 2006. *Women's Liberation and the Sublime: Feminism, Postmodernism, Environment*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Mertens, T.1996. "Cosmopolitanism and Citizenship: Kant against Habermas." *European Journal of Philosophy*, 4(3): 328-347.
- Mukherjee, Bharati. 1989. *Jasmine*. New York: Grove Press.
- Mukherjee, Bharati. 2002. *Desirable Daughters*. New York: Hyperion.
- Scott, Robin May. 1997. *Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant*. Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Shell, Susan Meld. 2014. *Observations and Remarks A Critical Guide*. Boston: Cambridge University Press
- Van der Linden, Harry. 2004. "Immigration," "Immanuel Kant", and "Kantian Ethics." revised edition. https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/facsch_papers/62
- Wu Clark, Audrey. 2015. *The Asian American Avant-Garde: Universalist Aspirations in Modernist Literature and Art*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Publications Pertaining to the Topic of the Dissertation

- Bera, Shreya. 2019. "Surviving the Diasporic Home: Renegotiating Home and Hostland in 20th Century Indo-American Literature." *Americana: E-Journal of American Studies*, vol. 15 (1): <http://americanajournal.hu/vol15no1/bera>
- Bera, Shreya. 2019. "Review on *Women in the Indian Diaspora: Historical Narratives and Contemporary Challenges*." Amba Pande. 2018. *Americana: E-Journal of American Studies*, 15 (1): <http://americanajournal.hu/vol15no1/bera-rev>
- Bera Shreya. 2021. "Fear, Sexuality, and Liberation: Pursuit of the Sublime in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Mistress of Spices*" in *British and American studies (B.A.S.)*, vol. 27: 213-220. https://litere.uvt.ro/publicatii/BAS/pdf/no/bas_2021_articles/213-220_art19.pdf
- Bera Shreya. 2021. "Understanding the Postcolonial Woman: Discussing Home, The Sublime and the Uncanny in Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters*." In *Sentiment, History, and Intermediality* edited by Ágnes Zsófia Kovács, 69-79. Szeged: JATE Press.
- Bera Shreya. 2021. "Review on *Anglo-Indian Identity: Past and Present, in India and the Diaspora*". Robyn Andrews and Merin Simi Raj. 2021. *Americana E-Journal for American studies*, 17 (1): <http://americanajournal.hu/vol17no1/bera-rev>
- Bera Shreya. 2021. "The Self and Sovereignty Contextualizing the Sublime in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Mistress of Spices*." *The ESSE Messenger*, vol. 30 (2): 44-62. <https://essenglish.org/messenger/vol-30-2-winter-2022/>

International and National Conferences

International Seminar —10-12.03.2016, Puducherry, Pondicherry University.

Title: “Multicultural Reading of Indian English Poetry: from Patriotic Epoch to Post-Independence Pandemonium.”

International Seminar— 16-17.03.2017, Puducherry, Pondicherry University.

Title: “Myth and Martyr: ‘Behula’- Subarnalata under the Light of Sublimation and Trauma.”

HUSSE—31-2.02.2019, Veszprem, University of Pannonia.

Title: “Identifying ‘Damini’ in Indian Female Diaspora Literature: Para-racial Collision, Empirical Weights and Androgynous Alienation in Contemporary North America.”

11th Brno International Conference: Breaking the Boundaries— 12-14.02.2020, Brno, Masaryk University.

Title: “The Diasporic Sublime in Indo-American Literature: Comparative Reading of *Jasmine* and *The Tortilla Curtain*.”

15th Biennial HUSSE Conference—27-29. 01. 2022 (online), SZTE

Title: “The Naxalite Woman and Otherness: Contextualising the Diasporic Sublime in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Lowland*.”

(His)stories of Migration: Then and Now Conference, International Conference organized by the Center for International Migration Studies—14-15. 10. 2022 (online), Debrecen, University of Debrecen.

Title: “Desire, Reason and Freedom: Formulating the Sublime Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri’s *The Lowland*.”

International Symposium and Workshop Participations

Transformation: Nature and Economy in Modern English and American Culture, 24.10.2019,
University of Zagreb, Zagreb, Croatia.

Title: “The Diasporic Sublime in Indo-American Literature: Nature, Naxal and *The Lowland*.”
15th ESSE Doctoral Symposium—31-04. 09.2020, Lyon, France.

Title: “The Diasporic Sublime in the Works of Bharati Mukherjee, Jhumpa Lahiri and Chitra
Banerjee Divakaruni.”

Narratives and Self Ambivalence symposium—30. 09. 2021-02. 10 .2021, South Asian Studies,
UK.

Title: “Oleander Girl and the Otherness: Fashioning the Sublime Identity through Body, Home,
and Nostalgia.”

SFBB: Short Forms Beyond Borders: Teaching-Learning-Training Activity and Transnational
Meeting, 28.03.2022- 01.04.2022, Giessen, University of Giessen.

Development of Baludik application for classroom teaching. Developing the *Baludik*
application for classroom teaching as well as the end project video to support the
training of the programme.