Introduction
Queer trajectories of gender and sex/uality

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This issue’s collection continues the critical analytical project of queering indentureship explored in the previous issue. The contributions focus on questions around rethinking intimate partner violence within queer relationships, mapping genealogies of gender queer performativities across transcolonial circuits of indenture and offering fabulations of what might constitute a queer archive of indentureship, among others. The analyses reveal the violent and disciplinary power/knowledge effects of the colonial legacies of the sex/gender/sexuality discourse, specifically configured within the context of indentureship, yet connected to the violences of slavery and heteromasculinist projects of postcolonial nation-making. As in the previous volume, these critical explorations of indentureship and its legacies hold significant import for radical and generative provocations of mainstream queer and feminist studies (even within the Global South). In fact, it is hoped that both issues of Volume 2 will help readers appreciate that the project of queering indentureship is one of broadening a ‘problem space’ (Scott 1999) that multiplies the possibilities for sustained critical inquiry about gender and sex/uality in the context of distinct yet entangled regimes of indentureship.
The issue begins with Preity Kumar’s article ‘Reclaiming power: Women loving women and intimate partner violence in Guyana,’ which draws on interview data to highlight the various relationalities and power dynamics of intimate partner violence (IPV) among women loving women (WLW) in postcolonial Guyana. The article is situated at the intersection of queer studies, feminist studies and studies of postcolonial nationalism, demonstrating that intimate partner violence within the LGBTQ community is simultaneously organized through the categories of gender, sexuality, class and race. Kumar presents rich vignettes of IPV experiences among WLW to show the spatialization of violence in male-dominated public spaces, as well as psychological violence within the more private domains of WLW relationality. The author’s main finding is that despite the state-orchestrated invisibility of IPV among WLW in Guyana, ‘WLW enact violence as a strategy of resisting heteropatriarchy and heteronormativity … violence is a strategy for resolution, reclaiming their power and affirming their queerness’. Kumar’s analysis not only reflects the insidious nature of heteromasculinist state violence (which remains a key driver of IPV amongst WLW), but it offers readers an opportunity to queer postcolonial violence by illuminating the complexities of same-sex relationalities, which ‘blur’ the predominant (heteronormative) victim–perpetrator model of analyzing violence. As such, the article challenges queer and feminist scholarship within and outside of the Caribbean, to think more critically about what it means for WLW to ‘affirm queerness’ through IPV.

Next, Dominique Stewart’s article ‘Krishna kee bansi bhajay: Body politics in the Indo-Jamaican folk performance of Nachania’, offers a complex genealogical analysis of the gender queer performance of Nachania across four distinct yet connected sites that have been ruptured by indentureship – India, Fiji, Suriname and Jamaica. Stewart analyses how the queerness of indentured migration has fuelled the development of perverse and transgressive gendered and erotic configurations of Nachania in Suriname,
Fiji and Jamaica as well as within Bidesia (migrant) cultures in India. Nachania therefore represents a queer epistemological site of negotiating both pleasure and pain within each locale. This comparative and relational mapping leads the author to claim that there are multiple origin stories of Nachania which ‘refuse a linear tracking’ of the genre and which collectively contribute to the ‘kinetic archives’ of global indentureship. The author’s discussion about ‘women nachania’ in Jamaica is especially compelling, particularly given that performers (across all four sites) are assumed to be men. This analysis holds radical import for contemplating the potentials of indentureship studies for critically engaging mainstream queer and feminist scholarship.

Following Stewart’s exploration, the review essay by Michael Mitchell, ‘Offspring of a virgin’s womb: Up to monkey business in Robert Antoni’s Divina Trace’, provides a summary and literary commentary on the novel’s contrapuntal engagement with the themes of gender and sexuality in postcolonial Trinidad. For Mitchell, the complexities and contradictions highlighted across the novel reflect multiple ambivalences around sexuality that ‘involve violent, unconventional, non-consensual or unconsummated sexual encounters’. His analysis of Divina Trace takes readers away from a focus on consensual erotic relations to those of sexual excess or, in a more general sense, ‘taboo-breaking excess’. In doing so, Mitchell’s review prompts scholars invested in queering indentureship to think about the place of the ‘grotesque’, ‘the shockingly absurd’, and the ‘bawdy’ in this emerging scholarly sphere.

This is followed by two interviews which focus on LGBTQ rights in contemporary postcolonial Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana. The first, entitled ‘The LGBT activism of Jason Jones’, explores the personal experiences and political efforts of British-Trinidadian LGBT activist Jason Jones. Jones shares significant insights about his landmark legal case against the government of Trinidad and Tobago, which resulted in anti-LGBT legislation
being declared unconstitutional. The second interview with the British High Commissioner to Guyana, Jane Miller OBE, ‘Thinking LGBT human rights in Guyana: A conversation with the British High Commissioner to the Republic of Guyana, Jane Miller OBE’, discusses issues related to the legacies of the colonial regulation of gender and sexuality, the inclusion of diverse identities and collaboration with LGBT activist organizations in Guyana. While the interviews do not necessarily foreground indentureship or its legacies, they have important ramifications for thinking critically about anti-LGBTQ violence as well as the LGBTQ human rights framework that is becoming increasingly prevalent in these nation states as new transnational paths to justice emerge. How might we connect these discussions to the haunting legacies of indentureship and slavery to think more complexly about postcolonial social justice? And how might we critically reflect on the seemingly benign global human right framework in the context of these enduring colonial legacies?

Two book reviews follow. Maria del Pilar Kaladeen’s review of Fleeting Agencies: A Social History of Indian Coolie Women in British Malaya by Arunima Datta (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021) finds that the monograph is ‘an important contribution to the field of indentureship studies’ especially through its complex analyses of resistance by indentured women on colonial rubber plantations. Kaladeen, however, questions the use of the term ‘coolie’ in the Kangany labour system which followed indentureship in British Malaya and suggests need for a ‘deeper engagement’ with ‘other sites of indenture’. Michael Mitchell’s review of Silent Winds, Dry Seas by Vinod Busjeet (New York: Doubleday, 2021) provides a brief context of colonialism and postcolonial Mauritius to set the stage for his synopsis of Busjeet’s novel, which Mitchell reads as a ‘memoir based on the author’s own experiences’. For Mitchell, the novel highlights the themes of patriarchy, sexual repression, and violence against women within the post/colonial Mauritian national and religious
contexts, which make it ‘an important contribution to the literature emerging from the worldwide legacy of the indenture system’.

The issue ends with a research spotlight on the project ‘Trans-Oceanic erotics: Sexing indentureship’ by Amar Wahab. Wahab offers four artwork images that critically respond to the heterocolonial discourse of sex/gender/sexuality that has dominated mainstream scholarship on indentureship. He situates these creative fabulations within a space of intellectual curiosity and longing, framed by a series of questions intended to deterritorialize the strange intimacies between ‘sex’ and ‘indentureship’ as conceptual categories.

**REFERENCE**