



Bazaar Stories of Gender, Sexuality and Imperial Spaces in Gilgit, Northern Pakistan

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Abstract

This paper provides a material and spatial analysis of processes of sexual imperialism in contemporary northern Pakistan. I interrogate Western women development workers' experiences of sexual vulnerability in Gilgit, and argue that their representational practices and spatial negotiations are ambivalently organised by a discourse of racialised sexuality that emerged largely in the European era of high imperialism in the context of Western imperial relations and lingers into the 'colonial present'. This discourse evokes a vaguely articulated moral panic about 'lascivious' indigenous men who lust after white women. Western women cope with sexual threat by scrutinising Gilgiti men's behaviours, regulating social interactions with them, avoiding sexualised local space, and arranging their private spaces to exclude threatening men. Eroticist and racist discourses about Other men that are circulated through these efforts to cope with sexual danger reinforce established social, sexual, and spatial boundaries, which keep imperial hierarchies between Gilgiti men and Western women intact.

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“Men’s sexuality is so strong here” (Amanda, 1999).

As Ann Laura Stoler (1995) and Robert Young (1995) have shown, discourses of race and imperialism usually involve sexuality as a significant mediating category of colonial power. Indeed, several postcolonial scholars have empirically demonstrated the ways in which discourses of sexuality and desire are deployed to regulate racist European imperial ventures (e.g., Blunt, 1999a; Fanon, 1967; Gilman, 1986; Lewis, 1996; Levine, 2003; Mercer and Julien, 1988; Nederveen Pieterse, 1992; Stoler, 1997; Wiegman, 1993). Most evidence in support of this argument has been drawn from published nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature and artistic productions: novels, advice manuals, travel narratives, paintings, government reports, scientific and anthropological treatises, and missionary documents. While these textual analyses have been innovative and effective in delineating the articulated character of discourses of gender, race, sexuality, and imperialism in this specific period and context of the colonial era, critical geographers may find many of them insufficient on two main grounds. First, few of these scholars have addressed the important spatial processes that are linked to intersecting relations of power in imperial contexts. Feminist geographers have recently begun to speak to this lacunae in what is becoming a sizeable literature (see, for example, Bell, 1993; Berg, 1998; Besio, 2003, 2005; Besio and Butz, 2004; Blunt, 1999a, 1999b; Blunt and Rose, 1994; Domosh, 2002; Donaldson, 1992; Garcia-Ramon, 2003; Gowans, 2001; Jacobs, 1996; Kearns, 1997; McEwan, 1996; Morin, 1999; Morin and Berg, 2001; Pickles, 1998, 2002; Robinson, 2002). And second, little attempt has been made to examine how this discursive nexus operates - if at all - in contemporary ‘postcolonial’ social settings (but see Mindry, 2001). As Robert Young argues, the salient work of colonial discourse analysis - pioneered by Edward Said (1978) - needs to be followed by analyses “extended to the discursive formations, representations, and practices of power in contemporary social contexts, together with their relations to the colonial past and to nineteenth-century forms of knowledge, showing how they sustain and intervene in contemporary practices which legitimise [various forms of domination]” (1995, 175; see also Said, 1989). In short, critical social science that focuses on the lived, material aspects of Western imperial relations needs to go beyond postcolonial literary and cultural theory that mainly restricts its interests to written or artistic texts produced in the era of European high imperialism (Mills, 1991), to make visible the forms of “vestigial thinking which permeate and structure current practices and representations even after the formal end of colonialism” (Shohat and Stam, 1994, 2).

The program of research from which this paper emerges has sought to contribute to such a materially-grounded and spatial interrogation of some of the contemporary transcultural processes that produce inequality and sustain nineteenth-century European colonial power relations in postcolonial contexts, while attempting to provoke new understandings and alternative behaviour patterns which are more equitable and just. As part of that project, which was inspired by a concern to

think through my own complicity in these processes as a Western tourist and researcher in Pakistan, this paper applies insights derived from ethnographic fieldwork among white Western women development workers living in Gilgit, northern Pakistan to explain how relations of gender, race, sexuality, and imperialism are perpetuated and resisted as women discursively and spatially constitute their subjectivities in this social setting.

Most of my research participants are British, Canadian, Dutch, American, and Australian volunteers working for international development agencies in Gilgit on two year contracts negotiated mainly through the British agency Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO). The majority are teachers, librarians, project managers, English-language coaches, and teacher trainers whose job is to instruct local educators on new methods of teaching the curriculum in English. The rest are health workers and spouses of upper-level development personnel who become involved in development work after they arrive. Some women in these latter two groups have decided to settle in Gilgit for the long term.

When my research participants have not followed their spouses to Gilgit, they have chosen to travel there for reasons of adventure, philanthropy, and job advancement, although most of them would have preferred work placements in a non-Muslim country. Apart from the few women for whom Gilgit is their first development job, many of my research participants have favoured working in northern Canada, Africa, western China, and south-east Asia. The experience of global travel provides them with a sense of adventure and self-determination as competent individuals doing vital development work. In terms of philanthropy, most of them also come to instigate socio-cultural reforms by revamping the local education and health system and 'freeing' Muslim women from an ostensibly oppressive Islamic culture through a transfer of Western expertise and their own 'liberated' example. Working abroad empowers them by increasing their knowledge, specialisation, and experience, which can translate into professional advancement, work autonomy, and pay increases once they return home. Teaching overseas in educational development also allows them to realise their intellectual potential and to garner some authority by training mostly male teachers, being Western educated, and representing their development work as an essential cultural 'improvement' project. In deciding to accept a job placement in Gilgit, Western women use the sense of authority they gain through travel and 'benevolent' development work to protect themselves against the gender and sexual oppression they expect to experience when living in an Islamic society.

The particular (and partial) interpretation I offer here focuses on the unease many of these Western women experience living in Gilgit. Daily life in this community can be overwhelming. This is not surprising as they are just thirty foreign women in a local community of 60,000, and they rarely encounter the roughly 40 percent of the local population who are not men. Moreover, local languages and

new social interaction rules are difficult to learn, and perceived Muslim vigilance over the separation of the sexes generates tensions that can be exhausting and annoying. Minute-to-minute uncertainties and stresses can accumulate to engender feelings of despair, alienation, and exhaustion, as well as tears of frustration. However, most of my research participants, who have large reserves of physical and emotional stamina, eventually learn to negotiate life in Gilgit in ways that allow them to minimise their stress, feel moderately relaxed, carve out spaces of comfort, and construct satisfactory identities for themselves.

But many Western women - especially the young and single - remain distressingly edgy in Gilgit. Apart from and more intense than the types of social unease mentioned above is a haze of vulnerability, anxiety, and undetermined insecurity that permeates their lives. In most cases, women readily identified their social anxieties about interpersonal communications to me. However, the more generalised threat or vulnerability they experience is most often left only vaguely articulated. This palpable silence denotes an elusive sensitivity around which decisions are made and actions are taken.

If these women are anything like most of their counterparts in metropolitan centres, they also experience significant levels of insecurity at home. Feminist geographical research conducted in Australia, Britain, and the United States demonstrates that fear, especially of crime and violence, is one of the most critical issues facing many women in these countries (Carcach and Mukherjee, 1999; Koskela, 1999; Madge, 1997; Pain, 1997, 2000; Smith, 1987; Valentine, 1989, 1991). Women often feel so vulnerable that they change their behaviours and spatial movements to prevent themselves from becoming victims of violence; they stop travelling to work, disengage from social and sporting activities, and avoid public space.

Because many women have a profound fear of sexual assault and perceive rape to be a risk that accompanies most other crimes (Pain, 1997, 2000), rape can be understood as a master risk that drives women's fear of violation. Women's fear of being violated is thus related to their fears of rape and of men. Although there is much feminist debate about which men women fear most, statistics from one Australian study show that middle-aged women who live with a male spouse fear for their personal safety more than young single women do (Carcach and Mukherjee, 1999). But in Gilgit, older Western women do not feel more fearful than younger women. Married women, or those who have a male partner, usually feel less vulnerable than single women, although older women tend to feel safer than young women, even when they live alone. Western men are actually understood by Western women as protectors, as providing safe havens for them. For example, Elena - a 29 year old British teacher trainer - describes the benefits of life in Gilgit with a fiancé this way: "I usually jog from here to the eye hospital and back. I've done it alone quite a few times...But it's nice now to have Peter along with me...now I can

ignore everyone. Nobody even dares to look if I'm with him." Speaking about her spouse, Susan, another 29 year old British teacher trainer, admits that "Rick protects me, and I would never allow that at home, but it's easier here, and I don't want to fight all the time...He usually goes to the bazaar, just because it's easier. So if I can avoid hassle, I will. It's just my survival instinct. It's one way of coping with the difficulties." From what are these women being protected? To what difficulties and hassles are they alluding?

Although there are important variations in women's perceptions of and responses to Gilgiti men due to their age and marital status that require analytical attention, many of my research participants, like most Western women at home, situate themselves as subjects in Gilgit in relation to matters of vulnerability, particularly the fear of sexual harassment and abuse. To varying degrees they believe this risk diminishes if Gilgiti men think they are sexually claimed by a foreign male spouse. But while the nature of women's fear at home and abroad is similar, the source of threat in Gilgit has shifted. Local men consistently replace Western men as the primary source of women's differentiated sense of vulnerability.

Why do many Western women fear these men? Why do foreign men, who many Western women see as potential sexual harassers at home, become safe and trustworthy in Gilgit? To answer these questions, I argue that, in Gilgit, Western women's vulnerable subjectivities and vaguely articulated moral panic are ambivalently forged in relation to perceived sexual dangers associated with (a) 'lascivious' racialised men, who pose an overriding threat to white women due to their sexual, cultural, and racial 'primitiveness,' and (b) local spaces, like the bazaar, that are associated with these men. As Stoler (1989, 636) argues for the colonial era,

While sexual fear may at base be a racial anxiety, we are still left to understand why it is through sexuality that such anxieties are expressed. If, as Sander Gilman claims, sexuality is the most salient marker of Otherness, organically representing racial difference, then we should not be surprised that colonial agents and colonised subjects express their contests - and vulnerabilities - in these terms.

This situation persists when contemporary Western women in postcolonial Gilgit fear 'primitive' men's hypersexuality. I interpret women's experience of vulnerability as a discursive manifestation of their implicit fear of being ravaged by Gilgiti men, which permeates their subjectivities and socio-spatial interactions with local men. My research participants resist the threat of sexual violation, in part, by examining racialised men's behaviours for evidence of sexual excess and aberration. Through representational and surveillance practices, as well as spatial negotiations, Western women perpetuate - but also sometimes resist - eroticist and racist discourses about Other men that reinforce established social, sexual, and spatial boundaries. These boundaries, in turn, keep imperial hierarchies between local men and Western women intact.

My argument divides into three main sections. First, I introduce in more detail my research setting and larger ethnographic project. In the second section I review how discourses of racialised sexuality developed in nineteenth-century European colonial representations of the colonised. Finally, I explain how Western women's sexual vulnerability is ambivalently shaped, how they react to 'dangerous' local men with strategies of survival, and what discursive and boundary consequences these practices have. Moreover, I outline three spatial implications of the social and sexual boundaries formed in reaction to 'lascivious' racialised men. Social and sexual boundaries are realised spatially when (a) women's sexual fear is projected onto racialised spaces, as well as when (b) they attempt both to control spaces where dangerous local men are absent and (c) to create spaces where they feel safe. I conclude that, among Western women in Gilgit, sexually vulnerable subjectivities are spatially, as well as discursively constituted. Specifically, these 'vulnerable subjects' spatialise the social landscape to produce imperial fields of inclusion and exclusion.

Western Women Abroad

Gilgit is the largest town and development headquarters in the Northern Areas, a frontier region of South Asia that was once part of the British Raj, but is now a federally administered province of Pakistan located 700 kilometres north of Islamabad, near the Chinese border. It lies in a steep valley at 1400 meters asl at the confluence of the Hindukush, Karakorum, and Himalaya mountain ranges and the Hunza and Gilgit Rivers.

The British sold Gilgit - alongside Kashmir, Ladakh, and Baltistan - to the Raja of Jammu in 1846, making him the first Maharaja of Kashmir and nominal ruler of these regions. When India was divided in 1947 the Northern Areas were designated part of Hindu-ruled Indian Kashmir. The Maharaja, under pressure from Nehru, opted to join India, not Pakistan, even though Kashmiris were predominantly Muslim. The Muslim population staged a coup against the Kashmiri government over this decision, and the area was consequently declared The Independent Republic of Gilgit. The Northern Areas and Azad Kashmir acceded to Pakistan in 1949, but the rest of Kashmir remains disputed territory.

Although Gilgit was nominally ruled by the Maharaja during the time of the Raj, numerous European explorers, colonial administrators, and scientists frequented the region, usually under the auspices of British authorities, because it was vital to British military efforts in the Great Game to compete against Russia for trade and political influence in Central and South Asia. For example, Frederic Drew conducted geological surveys of Kashmir's mineral deposits, while Dr. Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner studied local languages, both for the benefit of the British Empire. John Biddulph was the first political agent in Gilgit, followed by Algernon Durand, who held the post in the late 1880s. Prominent explorers, climbers and car-

tographers in the region include Francis Younghusband, Fanny Bullock Workman, William Martin Conway, George Cockerill, Reginald Shomberg, and Eric Shipton. Later Europeans, who roamed the Karakorum valleys to add empirical detail to mid-nineteenth century accounts of the physical and social contours of the area, include Emily Lorimer (a linguist), her political agent husband Lieutenant-Colonel David L. R. Lorimer, and Jenny Visser-Hooft, a Dutch scientist who explored and mapped the Karakorum glaciers with her German husband.

Around the time of Partition, European presence in the Northern frontier faded as the British vacated the area and the newly emerging Pakistani nation came to be at war with India over Kashmir, a situation that made travel, in addition to local life, difficult and dangerous. Foreign travellers, journalists, travel writers, and researchers gradually made their way back to the Northern Areas about a decade after Pakistan's Independence. When the Karakorum Highway opened in 1978, the Northern Areas were connected to southern Pakistan and Xinjiang province in China via a paved road that traces one of the ancient silk routes of Central Asia. The majestic landscapes of Pakistan's Northern Areas, especially in those valleys adjacent to the road, became more accessible to travellers. The hardtop road has made the Gilgit area a new site of international development activity, as well as an increasingly popular tourist destination for foreign travellers interested in mountaineering, trekking, and cultural tourism.

Gilgit was almost immediately affected by the increased economic trade and human mobility that the KKH allows, which initiated state attempts to integrate a largely subsistence agricultural society into the national economy. The city became the administrative, military, and economic centre of the Northern Areas, attracting traders and tourists, village migrants, and various development organisations. As a result, the population of Gilgit has grown dramatically, and in 2002 was approximated at 60,000.

The Aga Khan Rural Support Program consolidated and intensified development activity in the villages of Gilgit District beginning in December 1982. Next to the army and the civil administration, it is the largest employer in the region, and its Northern Areas head office is in Gilgit. Along with numerous other development projects, it employs many local people and down-country Pakistanis, as well as Western student interns, volunteers, consultants, and General Managers, who join the host of Westerners who have travelled there over the centuries. This wide-ranging development activity explains why there are approximately 75 Westerners living in and around Gilgit.

During the summers of 1999 and 2000 I conducted 37 in-depth interviews, nine months of participant observation, and several group interviews with Western women in Gilgit. In previous years when I was visiting the area, expatriate women confessed that, like me, they found it difficult to construct comfortable lives, identities, and relationships in this socially and religiously unfamiliar social setting. I

subsequently wanted to understand how they negotiated subjectivity (re)configurations in Gilgit through particular discursive frameworks and socio-spatial practices, and, as a result, how they perpetuate and resist relations of domination as they imagine themselves in relation to the people among whom they live, construct communities and homes, and build careers and relationships in Gilgit. The resulting study (Cook, forthcoming) examines these aspects of the lives of the 30 Western women I introduce above.

Initially, I contacted a Canadian acquaintance in Gilgit, who joined my research project and introduced me to her foreign female friends and workmates. I then used a loose, socially-familiar snowball sampling procedure until I accessed eight potential research participants. I described my research to these women as a study of their practical attempts to make themselves comfortable while they lived in Gilgit, including their daily routines, work and movement patterns, social interactions, and living arrangements. When they consented to participate, I organised a group interview to brainstorm pertinent research topics and interview questions. All eight women suggested further participants and introduced me to them. I was never certain of the exact number of possible participants, as work contracts wrapped up and women came and went. But after two summers, this first group of eight women furnished me with enough introductions to enlist 30 participants in the Gilgit region, seven of whom I followed during both summers. In an attempt to ‘describe,’ but not reify this group of women, appended Table 1 delineates eight facets of their subjectivities that emerged as central to their self-images and practices during our interactions.

Unstructured interviews detailed meanings, experiences, opinions, and representational knowledge, but they did not produce a strong impression of Western women's daily lives in Gilgit. Participant observation allowed me to develop longer term and multifaceted relationships with research participants. These more intimate associations enabled me to collect first-hand data on participants' social interactions, behaviours, movement patterns, and everyday activities. Together, interview and participant observation data suggest that many of my research participants become vulnerable subjects in Gilgit as they invoke discourses of racialised sexuality through their daily activities. As they enact everyday risk-control measures, Western women maintain boundaries and exclusions that perpetuate imperial relations with local Muslim men.

The Threatening Other

Many postcolonial theorists argue that the construct of the sexually dangerous male Other has had considerable currency among Europeans since the modern colonial era. Even earlier, in the Middle Ages, Europeans viewed racialised Others mainly as figures of their concupiscence (Gilman, 1986; McClintock, 1995; Piet-

erse, 1992). However, not until the nineteenth-century do we detect the deepening intersection of particular notions of race, sexuality, gender, and culture, which reified the construct (McClintock, 1995; Young, 1995). Dominant scientific and anthropological discourses about race and sexuality at this time merged and congealed particularly in theories of hybridity. Many European scientific treatises were devoted to explicating theories either of monogenesis or polygenesis to determine how many human species existed. The final, but temporally elusive, test of these two competing theories was the continued fertility of the hybrids that resulted from the sexual union of two different 'races.' Hence, European "theories of race in the nineteenth-century, by settling on the possibility or impossibility of hybridity, focused explicitly on the issue of sexuality and the issue of sexual unions between whites and blacks. Theories of race were thus also covert theories of desire" (Young, 1995, 9).

These racial theories - founded largely on European fears of the sexualised Other and the notion that Europeans were morally, culturally, and sexually superior to other 'races' - were used as scientific 'proof' of a natural racial hierarchy. This hierarchy was established on the basis of degrees of racial civility, primarily an opposition between Europe's civilised moral/sexual order and a savage propensity toward sexual excess on the part of Others. As Mercer and Julien (1988, 107) argue, "sex is regarded as that thing which *par excellence* is a threat to the moral order of Western civilisation. Hence, one is civilised at the expense of sexuality, and sexual at the expense of civilisation. If the savage...is the absolute Other of civility then it must follow that he is endowed with the most monstrous and terrifying sexual proclivity." Colonialism, the civilising mission *par excellence*, was thus rationalised as the route through which naked, uninhibited, impetuous 'savages' could be transformed into cultured individuals by Europeans whose sexuality was restrained by the manacle of Western civilisation. The 'white man's burden' of civilising 'savages' through the spread of European culture consisted, in part, of taming the terrifying sexual proclivities of Others so as both to contain any threat to the Western moral order and to counteract cultural and sexual savagery abroad.

European attitudes toward 'noble and ignoble savages,' however, were not as straightforward as the civilising mission might suggest. A profound ambivalence is embedded in the colonial fantasy of race and desire. Europeans were simultaneously attracted to the apparently extroverted sexuality of racialised Others and repelled by a 'primitiveness' threatening to the civilised world (Young, 1995). As a result, racialised Others were both hypersexualised and marked as sexually taboo. Frantz Fanon (1967) claims that the stereotype of the sexually devouring 'primitive' refers more to the ambivalent attitude of nineteenth-century Europeans toward their own sexuality than to actual experiences of Others. To allay their own anxieties, European fears and desires were projected, in exaggerated form, onto racialised Others (see also Gilman, 1986; McClintock, 1995; Stoler, 1995; Wiegman, 1993). This ambivalent epistemic projection took many material forms, particularly

in European women's interaction with colonised servants. In British India, for example, racialised men were understood as appealing and fascinating sources of domestic labour, but that appeal turned to apprehension when they transgressed the precarious boundaries of intimate social spaces such as women's hospital rooms and bedrooms. Even waiting for serving orders at the doors of these spaces often incited rape charges by European women (Stoler, 1989).

According to the dominant discourse of racialised sexuality in this time period and imperial context, colonised men's unbounded sexuality followed from their immense penises and cultural 'primitivism' (McClintock, 1995; Stoler, 1997). Lore, often in the form of European travel literature, had it that colonised penises were aroused especially by the sight of white women. Stoler (1997) notes that, throughout many of the British colonies, this sexual threat was labelled the "Black Peril," a fear that inspired initiatives such as 'ladies' riflery clubs' and racialised rape laws. This threat legitimated white control of colonised territory, surveillance of local populations, and social, sexual, and spatial boundaries between colonisers and the colonised.

At the same time, racialised space was being sexualised in much travel and exploration literature. This aspect of sexual colonialism was enabled by the dominant Enlightenment epistemology of science, which depicted the accumulation of knowledge as a gendered power relation: male penetration into veiled female space/nature (Keller, 1989, 1992; McClintock, 1995). A masculinised European science emphasised power, control, and domination, which conjoined rhetorically the domination of nature with the image of nature as female. This conflation was already present in the writings of Francis Bacon. He writes, for example, that the science of his day can be represented as "leading you to Nature with all her children to bind her to your service and make her your slave" in a way that does not "merely exert a gentle guidance over nature's course; they have the power to conquer and subdue her, to shake her to her foundations" (as quoted in Keller, 1989, 183). Science was coded in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century to legitimate masculine knowers (mind) penetrating and disclosing female nature (earth, body, raw materials).

This thread of modern epistemology thus constituted colonial travel and exploration as an "erotics of ravishment" (McClintock, 1995, 22). Male travellers and explorers feminised the unknown and threatening boundaries they crossed. As men crossed borders into unfamiliar lands, they experienced an identity crisis, a sense of ambivalence fostered through the simultaneous "fantasy of conquest and dread of engulfment" (McClintock, 1995, 27). The disavowed aspect of travellers' identity, their dread of engulfment, was projected onto the unknown territory, constructing both a feminised, 'virgin' space of conquest and a local population with the capacity to devour outsiders through their cannibalistic sexuality. Anne McClintock

(1995, 22) calls this space the “porno-tropics,” the European invention of racialised space as the “quintessential zone of sexual aberration and anomaly.”

In summary, hegemonic European discourses of racialised sexuality in the nineteenth-century depicted Other men as lascivious ‘primitives’ with a dangerous appetite for white women, Other space as liminal places where sexual excess and deviance ran rampant, and white women as sexually vulnerable subjects in the porno-tropics. Through a series of conceptual and material ruptures and recuperations precipitated by multicultural, feminist, nationalist, anti-imperialist, human and civil rights, and anti-Muslim activities since the mid-nineteenth century, this cluster of attitudes and practices have been interwoven in inconsistent and discontinuous ways to both challenge constructs of racialised sexuality and reinscribe them in metropolitan centres through contradictory, subordinate, supportive, and contestatory discourses. Constructs and practices of racialised sexuality have subsequently diversified, however ambivalently, in different places around the world, as race and sexuality articulate with gender and culture in different ways in different places to produce related, but distinct, manifestations.

Vulnerable and Spatialising Subjects

Jenny Sharpe (1991, 1993) and Nancy Paxton (1992) argue that official British reports of the 1857 Rebellion, India’s largest anti-British uprising, and the many British novels written about it, solidified discourses of racialised sexuality in India. These texts depict Indian men assaulting European women *en masse* during the insurgency. But Indian men were not the only group of male Others constructed as sexually dangerous in nineteenth-century European representations of the colonised. All racialised men, including, for example, Africans (Gilman, 1986; Wiegman, 1993), Arabs (Clancy-Smith, 1998), and Fijians (Knapman, 1986), could be expected to lust after white women. British colonial representations of Muslim Indian men, however, particularly emphasised this group’s ‘uncivilised’ treatment of all women and, therefore, their distinct threat to colonial women (see Ware, 1992, 142-146). Of all Indians, Muslim men were portrayed as the most terrible ‘savages’ who presented the greatest danger for and instigated the worst sexual crimes against white women, especially rape (Sharpe, 1991). According to many British women colonists, Muslim men were rapists *ipso facto* (Sharpe, 1993). This characterisation was based, in part, on the misconception that the cloistering of women, which supposedly keeps women sexually unavailable and men sexually frustrated and eager, and polygamous marriage, a sign of men’s exaggerated sexual need, were exclusively Muslim practices. Moreover, Muslim men’s penchant for raping white women was thought to be rooted in their hypermasculinity. Particularly in the northwest frontier region of India, which was an important arena of British military struggle with Russia during the Great Game, Pathan Muslim men were, on the one hand, admired for their ‘hypermasculine’ bravery and war-like ‘nature’ by colonial

administrators and explorers alike. On the other hand, these men were especially sexually suspect due this very same ‘savage’ character.

Although this construct of racialised men’s exaggerated sexuality is now more subtly experienced, invoked, and perpetuated through daily practice than it was in nineteenth-century colonial India, it remains a significant, if sometimes ambivalent, threat for Western women in contemporary Gilgit. Their vulnerability and fear are founded, in large part, on their representations of indigenous men as modern-day ‘primitives.’ According to my research participants’ dominant discourse, local men’s primitiveness is the consequence of an amalgam of their religion, race, and spatial and cultural isolation in the high mountains of the Karakorum. For instance, Andy, a single 26 year old teacher trainer from Britain, accuses these men of participating in a “pathetic culture,” where many of them are illiterate, intellectually inferior, lack a Western perspective, and force their women to practice antiquated Islamic social customs such as arranged and polygamous marriage and *pardah*. Many women claim that due to local men’s cultural backwardness, including their minimal contact with women who are not family members, and their sexually problematic social practices, they have not learned to interact in ‘civilised’ ways with Western women. Andy uses this example:

That’s one of the biggest differences between my Western friends...and my Pakistani male friends. My Pakistani male friends would take the keys away from me and unlock the house for me. I mean, can you imagine a Western man doing that?! It would just be *shocking*...He’s been educated in Islamabad and all the rest of it, and he didn’t think that women should be treated like servants. But it was just moving them to the Victorian stage...I was quite shocked...Taking my keys, opening my house, hoping to get in, that’s outrageous!

Older and married women, however, sometimes see the civility of local men differently. For example, Anguita, a married 52 year old British project manager, recalls the assistance she received from men in the bazaar after a fall: “I feel spoiled for courtesy here. I think that Western men should take lessons of courtesy from Pakistani men. They are very *caring*, theyre very *respectful* and polite...In the West women get treated very roughly. So, one has forgotten that this extreme courtesy exists. I like it.” I too have experienced most shopkeepers and male friends as exceptionally attentive, politely offering their hospitality and material support when it is appropriate, especially when I am travelling alone. Although 43 year old Evelyn, who is married, also recognises this solicitousness, she expresses her appreciation of local men slightly differently. She is “glad not to know much about what happened with Bill Clinton and the cigar thing...I felt contaminated after knowing that about our *crud* culture...so I value the cultural purity here...I really admire it, you know, [local mens] ability to be that pure, that simple, and to have such a good time doing things that are just *nice* things. So I value this exposure to

purity.” While this construct of the innocent and ‘noble savage’ is not unrelated to cultural primitivism, Evelyn represents it as sexually innocent. Some younger women agree. Elena, for instance, claims that local men are sexually confused rather than aggressive: “[Western women] have mens freedoms here, but really we are still women, and we don’t want to be *touch*ed by [local men], like the way they touch their male friends or whatever. I think it’s confusing for them.” Instead of rejecting local men as friends, Elena makes an effort to communicate her behavioural expectations to them.

Anguita, Evelyn, and Elena may explicitly claim to be unthreatened by caring, polite, pure, simple, and confused local men, disrupting the discourse of racialised sexuality. However, their statements imply some sexual anxiety that simultaneously recuperates the discourse. By strategically feminising Gilgiti men as ‘pure,’ ‘nice,’ and ‘polite,’ Western women make themselves feel safer living among these men.

While a few of my research participants feel relatively at ease with local men, a great majority of Western women in Gilgit, to varying degrees, feel sexually and culturally threatened by them. Amanda, a single 37 year old, paints a picture of local men’s ostensible sexual deviance:

People have told me how women here never take off their clothes [to have sex]. So then they’re like a sex machine for their sex-craved husbands...[Men should have] those dolls, the rubber dolls with the hole here, and then they can use the doll and not goats or men or something else [for intercourse]. Although these guys *really want* to get Western women to have their sexual experiences before they get married to a virgin [Muslim woman]...Men’s sexuality is so strong here.

She constructs ‘sex-craved’ local men as repressed yet yearning beings who long for liberating sexual experiences with foreign women. In so doing, Amanda recuperates the discourse of racialised sexuality, the notion that uncivilised male Others have an uncontrollable sexual appetite that is, if possible, directed at white women.

We also see in this quotation that the sexuality of Gilgiti men is constructed in relation to that of white women. As products of a generalised feminist politics in the West, my research participants understand themselves to be sexually liberated subjects who are free to make sexual choices without risking their respectability. However, they imagine that this same globally circulating discourse of Western women’s sexual liberation is construed differently by Gilgiti men, as a sign of Western women’s moral laxity, immodesty, and suspect character, especially in relation to dominant constructs of demure, spatially constrained, and sexually controlled Muslim women. My research participants frequently presume that Muslim

men read their moral laxity and hypersexuality through their ‘immodest’ clothing (especially as portrayed in Hollywood movies), liberal access to divorce, greater choice in sexual partners, and independent presence in Pakistan without husbands or fathers to act as sexual chaperones. Consequently, Western women, in concert with this two-sided discourse of Western women’s sexual liberation, are careful to dress appropriately in local clothing styles so as to forestall negative impacts on both their development work and daily interactions with local men.

Many women’s feelings of vulnerability are similarly expressed in their impressions that all local men have sexual designs on them, that they are the subject of all men’s attentions and desires. I often had to reassure myself, while riding on public transport, that the men crowded around me in the back of the Suzuki van were more likely thinking about food prices, school tuition, family obligations, international politics, recreational activities, and work demands than about me. And René, a married 36 year old teacher, supposes that local shopkeepers have designs on her. She describes her interactions with them in the bazaar as sexually threatening: “I feel uncomfortable I guess. I don’t want them to get friendly with me. Maybe I’m on my guard, trying to keep them at a distance. Maybe I feel a little bit threatened or something. Like, you know, once they get friendly, then I start feeling like they’re on the edge of abuse. You know, so I’m trying to protect myself from abusive behaviour.” She thus restricts her interactions in the bazaar, shopping only at stores run by men with a ‘good reputation,’ and avoiding friendly chats and eye-to-eye contact even with these shopkeepers.

Andy also interprets many of her interactions with local men as sexual harassment, interactions that seem ‘natural’ with white Western men:

When I first came here, and I started meeting some of these Pakistani guys, and they would *hug* me, you see...Because it feels *so* natural, you forget that they are crossing a boundary *too* big for them. You know, that is actually *huge* for them to even come in and rub your back. It’s a big thing. Actually, the gardener rubbed my back yesterday because I had a bad stomach. I leant forward and he rubbed my back. And I suddenly thought ‘That’s actually not acceptable! What you’re doing now is sexual harassment,’ because you’ve got to move it onto their sexual terms.

Janet - a once-married, 56 year old British teacher trainer - confirms the sexual anxieties and difficulties younger women experience, but imagines she is past the ‘danger’:

A lot of their problems feature on sex and sexual relationships, and how to deal with people who are *constantly* attracted to you...I mean it’s just endless, endless, endless difficulties. I’m so thankful to be relieved of that...Although under my desk is the second of a series of

gifts that a local policeman brings in. It started with a package of biscuits, and then it was a box of sweeties, and I think they are for [my colleague] and me. I certainly hope so. But then he came in yesterday, and this is a box of cherries from Skardu... Then I suddenly thought last night “Hummm. A box of sweeties, a packet of biscuits, a box of cherries. Should I be worried about this?” Maybe I’m making all sorts of terrible mistakes...I assume everyone thinks I’m a granny...So I’m guessing it’s not an issue. But maybe I have something to learn. It might be dangerous.

Andy, Janet, and René admit that they don’t find male stares threatening, they have never actually been hassled by a shopkeeper, they can cope with anything, and that local men would never “do anything horrible” to them. However, they invoke the notion of Gilgiti men’s lasciviousness through their fear-infused daily activities. For Louise, who is a single 30 year old British teacher trainer, living the fear begins by identifying a harassing situation:

[Apart from that one pinch at the polo game], I’ve had nothing that is obviously enough of a grope for me to want to react to it. So, often in the bus, I find that people will be too close to me, in my space, and I feel uncomfortable with it. But not obviously enough of a gesture for you to be able to react to...it was the same thing in Islamabad. When we were in the Sunday market, people bumped into me all the time. But I’m very used to that, because kids in school bump into you because they’re too big for themselves. So, it didn’t shock me at all, until someone said to me ‘Don’t you think that it’s odd that they’re bumping into you?’ And I said ‘Oh, well, now that you mention it, maybe.’

She then mobilises the fear by practising the rules she learned in self-defence classes back home: “Make yourself as *unsexually* attractive as possible. And then that gives you a fighting chance. And so, yeah, I try *not* to make myself look sexual, and I don’t wear make-up...it’s a thing about protecting yourself.” Louise also avoids men’s eyes and is careful not to laugh or smile in public, fearing that this body language will be interpreted by local men as a sexual come-on.

Western women who live with a sense of vulnerability in Gilgit spend much of their energies devising what they call “coping” or “survival” strategies to manage risk damage and control sexualised interactions and boundaries. Their everyday risk management practices include never being alone with local men and having very little interaction with them, taking children on shopping trips to the bazaar, and making it clear to men that they are married. Some women decide to walk and talk assertively, or ignore men’s stares by wearing sunglasses and walkmans, and by looking at the ground or the sky. Young women may form romantic relationships with Western men during their tenure in Gilgit, socialise only with expatri-

ates, and present themselves as demure, including dressing modestly in local clothing styles, although few of them cover their heads. All women frequent familiar and 'safe' shops, which have been recommended by other Western women. And vehicles are not just convenient for trips to the bazaar in the heat or cold; they provide a physical barrier between foreign women and local men. Although Evelyn finds her deluxe 4X4 a "terrible insulator" when she drives through town. Andy prefers to shop out of the window of a vehicle, calling shopkeepers to the street to serve her, "because I feel contained, and safe, and in a place, and everyone understands white women in a vehicle." René, Janneke, and Abbie always negotiate shopping trips in their trucks, driving between shops and never wandering any length of the bazaar on foot.

As for how they represent local men, Western women in Gilgit are conflicted. They experience sexualised fear and vulnerability, but simultaneously claim they are not threatened or mistreated by innocent indigenous men. Although there is little statistical evidence about sexual crime in Gilgit, none of my research participants have reported a sexual harassment, assault or rape case to the police or medical authorities. Indeed, as Louise claims above, identifying anything beyond a 'pinch' as an instance of sexual harassment is often a difficult task for Western women in Gilgit. All of my research participants experience this ambivalence between fear and self-assurance, but some emphasise one pole or the other more strongly. This ambivalence can be interpreted as an intersection of imperial power and invincibility with gendered fears of sexual engulfment, projected onto racialised men. Most Western women, including myself, recognise that much of what they can do and is done for them in Gilgit is underwritten by global imperial power. Their sense that they can change some official rules and assume respect from local people conflicts with their feelings of vulnerability. They feel both powerful and fearful, both as women and as white Westerners.

Through informal conversations with Gilgiti friends, I have learned that many local men are aware that they are constructed as sexually dangerous by foreign women, and behave in ways that attempt to pre-empt women's fears; they often restrain their friendship and hospitality, are careful not to touch or be alone with Western women, verbally reassure women that they are safe, and refuse invitations to expatriate dinner parties. In this way Gilgiti men are engaged in an autoethnographic conversation with Western women, which Pratt (1992) defines as a text constructed by subjugated (colonised) Others that engage dominant metropolitan representations in the process of self-presentation (see also Besio and Butz, 2004; Butz, 2001; Butz and Besio, 2004). Thus, "autoethnography involves partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror" (Pratt, 1992, 7). Gilgiti men are disciplined by imperial discourses of racialised sexuality, but in order to recreate themselves as subjects for themselves, as well as comprehensible (and safe) subjects for Western women, they engage the discourse to put forward an alternative 'non-sexualised' and thus non-dangerous self. In this way, Gilgiti

men are required to 'know' Western women's discursive frameworks in order to live comfortably among them, but there is no comparable need on the part of Western women to 'know' local men beyond imperial constructs, which is another instance of cultural imperialism in postcolonial times.

Western women's subject positions are also ambivalently constituted through conflicting senses of fear and desire. This is a fear that articulates with a sexual fascination with local men, as it did in the European colonial context (Young, 1995). Although Andy dislikes and distrusts local men, she lets them rub her back and accompany her on long walks in the mountains. Julia's conversations often revolved around men's good looks and flattering attentions - the same men whose stares in the streets she resents and who put her on edge in the bazaar. Louise risks being alone with them: "And like I went to this one [Pakistani] guy's house once and ...actually it was quite *unique* because I went there and there was only a servant there. So I'm sure it was completely inappropriate for me to be there by myself [laughs]." She wants to gratify her fascination with local men, even though it is risky and at odds with notions of respectability.

Whether or not they enact their sexual fears of indigenous men through their everyday practices, many Western women are ambivalently situated 'at risk' in Gilgit, which constitutes them as sexually vulnerable subjects and Muslim Gilgiti men as the source of sexual danger. In an effort to manage this fear, women try to avoid social interactions with local men, and scrutinise their behaviours for signs of sexual excess and aberration. My research participants seem to be less threatened by local men when they are able to exercise some control over social and sexualised interactions. Therefore, their sense of control is an important tool for ameliorating their fear of men's hypersexuality. But that control is quite elusive. Where it is less possible, such as in the bazaar or with unfamiliar men, the risk is seen as more acute, and sexual deviance is imagined to be greater. In these cases, the surveillance of racialised men allows women to gather 'proof' of misconduct, which can 'legitimate' social and sexual boundaries that keep Western women and local men hierarchically separated.

These boundaries also have significant spatial implications. According to Robert Wilton (1998, 174), "Spatial separation facilitates the maintenance of social boundaries since it reifies perceived social differences between same and Other. Conversely, physical proximity challenges the legitimacy of social boundaries." By crossing into local space, Western women relinquish some of their social, spatial, and cultural detachment from local men, as well as control over boundaries and interactions. Wynn Maggi (2001, 69) claims that "What makes boundaries so powerful is not that crossing them is unthinkable, but that it is so completely possible." This possibility of sexual, social, and cultural border crossings and boundary violations in local gendered spaces informs Western women's identity as sexually vulnerable subjects, both spatially and socio-culturally constituted.

Public places in Gilgit that are predominantly male, such as the bazaar, are constructed by my research participants as liminal, sexually dangerous places - the local 'porno-tropic.' They experience the bazaar as a threatening place, because it is an enigmatic space full of racialised men, and beyond Western women's control. Few women explicitly expressed fear of violence in the bazaar, but most of them indicated a vague sense of discomfort, some of it sexualised, fostered by this unmanageable racialised space. For instance, Elena prefers to avoid the "bit [of bazaar] up towards the hospital. I don't like that place. It's all blokes hanging around there...It always seems like a bit of a seedy area...The blokes around there are really, they just stare at you and say stuff that I can't understand." Janet and 42 year old Abbey, attempting interactional control, are more comfortable calling shopkeepers to their vehicle in the street than venturing into shops and side alleys. Andy never goes there alone.

While older women are not entirely at ease in the bazaar, they are often more so than younger women. Marion, Amanda, Fiona, and Christine - Britons who range in age from 37 to 59 - wander familiar sections of the bazaar alone and on foot. According to Christine, "The bazaar's a funny place. I mean, men are friendly enough, but I don't go. There's so little to buy. I certainly don't feel threatened there, it just isn't terribly friendly, mainly because they just don't notice you. Not that I *want* them to notice me, but you know what I mean." However, most young women avoid the bazaar unless they are accompanied by friends, preferably foreign men who serve as protectors. The favoured strategy, if possible, is to send male spouses, friends, or servants for groceries and household supplies. Even some older women are anxious about being in the bazaar. Jane, a married 40 year old teacher from Britain, strays only short distances from her parked vehicle. Janet used to shop as little as possible, even when the cupboard was bare. But since a small shop opened beside her rented house, she can get the basic supplies she needs and be spared regular trips to the downtown bazaar. And René tries to stay away from the area altogether: "I avoid the bazaar at all costs. To me, going to the bazaar is something I hate. There's no fun in it at all. You know, you don't get to explore...So I go to the bazaar, in the car, and I come home as fast as I can...I'm ready to be defensive. I'm very much on my guard." What these women experience in common is a guardedness and nebulous uneasiness about the bazaar. They claim not to be concerned about being robbed or beaten. Their anxiety seems to be generated by a vague sexual discomfort fostered by this inscrutable racialised space, with its dark, cramped, and unwelcoming recesses and faces.

Interestingly, some of my research participants describe relatively safe spaces within the larger Gilgit bazaar. Bazaars that are operated and frequented by Ismaili Muslims are preferred shopping sites for many women, not only because they work every day with Ismaili men and women at Aga Khan Foundation NGOs who encourage them to shop at their relatives' stores, but also because Western women see Ismaili men as less hypersexual than Sunni and Shia men. Ismaili men

seldom practice polygamous marriage or enforce *purdah* on their wives; their daughters are often as well educated as their sons; their wives are active in many sectors of the economy; and they have more interaction with women from outside their family circles. In short, Western women see these men as more sexually civilised. While they too are racialised, my research participants believe that they respect women in ways that other local Muslim men do not. Due to their culturally enlightened attitudes, Ismaili shopkeepers and customers are understood as less sexually dangerous to foreign women. Hence, there is less reason to keep them at arm's length. It is often from these shopkeepers that women accept offers of tea, conversation, and assistance in the bazaar.

My research participants largely experience the bazaar as a sexually threatening place because it is an enigmatic space full of racialised men, and beyond Western women's control. But this space is not uniformly risky. It has a topography of threat: Ismaili bazaars are less threatening than Sunni and Shia bazaars, private transport is less intimidating than public Suzukis, and the interior of shops and restaurants are less risky than open streets and dark alleys.

A second spatial implication of social and sexual boundaries between Gilgiti men and Western women is visible in my research participants' attempts to manage spatially their fear of liminal local places, by creating and controlling 'safe' spaces where dangerous local men are absent. Western women have little freedom to control space in the Gilgit bazaar and to censure local men's movements and behaviours there, although shopkeepers who need their business and co-workers who want their respect may acquiesce to women's limited attempts at control. Many women react to their lack of control by partially and inconsistently withdrawing from spaces and types of interactions that seem especially threatening and unmanageable. They withdraw into enclaves, little pockets of safe space which are held back from a larger context of sexual insecurity and in which they can re-establish some sense of interactional control. These protected Western spaces of exclusion include their homes, the eye hospital swimming pool, and the Christian church. Most of my research participants are at ease in these places, where their cultural identity is also confirmed. Western women cope with sexual threat and elusive interactional control by creating 'alternative' local-free spaces, but their ability to exclude local men is enabled by racial and imperial power relations.

My research participants may feel compelled to distance themselves from local men, even to create safe landscapes of exclusion, because they are often tense and nervous when these men are in Western women's spaces, whether that is in their homes, on public transport, or at an expatriate party or the pool. Lyn, a 51 year old Australian teacher trainer, admits that "My coping strategy is to ignore men. Safe spaces are also important. Fortunately, except in crowds, it's not a problem. They don't get too close." Western women usually consider their homes to be their primary safe space, where local men are not welcome. While Susan is com-

fortable, even enthusiastic about living with village families when she is on out-of-town teacher training courses, she is upset when local men show up at her doorstep in Gilgit: “Rick’s [local] friends will come in...I’ll be in shorts and a t-shirt, and I’ll feel *really* uncomfortable in my own home...it doesn’t matter when Rick says ‘Don’t worry about it. It doesn’t make any difference.’ But that’s easy for him to say. I mean, I can’t *not* be bothered. I resent having to go into my bedroom and put my trousers on. I’m in my *own house*.”

As a sign of these sexual-spatial worries, some women get extremely agitated when uninvited local men attend expatriate parties. Andy is a good example: “Mustafa will come up and swim with us in the pool. Well, no. You do your thing. Or he’ll go to Allan’s party. I don’t agree with it.” Mustafa should literally know his place, which is safely away from foreign women. However, before I gained some understanding of how my research participants experience most local men as ‘out of place’ in Western space, I invited Mustafa, a close family friend, to accompany me to my first expatriate party. Andy was there too. She was so agitated about seeing him there that she left every room he entered so that she could avoid not only interacting with him, but being in the same space with him. She admitted feeling uncomfortable having him there while she was dancing and drinking in Western clothes.

Alison Blunt’s (2005, 157) recent work, in focussing on the post-Independence social life of Anglo-Indian women at the Lucknow Club in Lucknow, India, suggests that women’s anxiety about Indian men attending dances revolved around the absence of Indian wives, who could direct and control their husbands’ attentions. But this is not the case in contemporary Gilgit. In fact, usually by choice my research participants have little contact with Gilgiti women, except for those few they train as teachers, because, as Susan debatably concludes, “I don’t have anything in common with my female neighbors.” Abbie also doesn’t “feel any draw to the [local] women. I don’t want to go and visit my neighbors. I feel like I have to have my life separate.” Consequently, Gilgiti women are rarely invited to these functions, and there is little expectation that local women’s presence could draw local men’s attentions away from Western women and thus alleviate their sexualised anxieties.

These examples of Western women’s vulnerabilities, constricted spatial mobilities, and limited activity patterns may suggest that it is *they*, in fact, who are subordinated subjects in this social context, not local Muslim men. However, I want to emphasise that as Western women infuse local men’s bodies and spaces with their fears and organise their everyday practices around those risks, they recuperate the imperial and racist discourse of racialised sexuality that constructs local men as dangerous cultural, racial, and sexual ‘primitives’. And in doing so, in combination with their desire to restrict local men’s access to certain spaces, they maintain social, sexual, and spatial boundaries that keep imperial hierarchies be-

tween Gilgiti men and Western women intact. This link between fearful practices and subjectivities, imperial constructs of racialised sexuality, and boundary management is the foundation of my claim that Western women are intimately involved in a spatial process of sexual imperialism in the 'colonial present' (Gregory, 2004).

Conclusion

Although there are some significant variations based on differences of age and marital status, my research findings suggest that Western women's vulnerable subjectivities are ambivalently forged in relation to intersecting discourses of gender, race, sexuality, and imperialism in the postcolonial present. Women fear male hypersexuality, and resist that threat by scrutinising racialised men for evidence of sexual danger or safety and by controlling social interactions and ordering space to exclude threatening Others. Western women also deal with this perception of an omnipresent risk by using their age as protection, retreating into the expatriate community, and avoiding sexualised local space. These risk-infused strategies concentrate women's fears in local male bodies with oppressive imperial effects.

According to feminist analyses of Western women's published colonial-era journals, novels, and travel accounts (e.g., Blunt, 1994; Mills, 1996; Pratt 1992), European colonial women were already afraid of the sexuality of racialised men in the nineteenth-century. However, because these texts rarely include detailed information about how women invoked and managed this fear in their daily lives, they do not provide rich data for understanding many of the complex socio-spatial processes involved in the production of Western women's sexually vulnerable subjectivities in transcultural settings. Materially-grounded research and empirical ethnographic evidence allow me to document some of these dynamics in contemporary Gilgit and to delineate their lingering power consequences.

I suspect that as the world becomes more globalised, as pertinent constructs circulate more widely, as the general sense and number of vulnerabilities has increased for Western subjects (see Beck, 1992), and as more women become part of transnational populations through globalising processes, Western women's sense of vulnerability may be further heightened as they live abroad in 'sexually dangerous' places. As this sexual unease persists in Gilgit as a legacy of the modern European colonial era, guiding Western behaviours and representations, particular types of imperial risk for indigenous men seem not to have been dramatically reduced. And with increased cross-cultural contact, particularly through international development initiatives over the past two decades, imperial sexual activity may be an even more acutely experienced oppression now than it was during the Raj.

But as dominant imperial logics and power relations are recuperated in divergent ways, alongside the boundaries they sustain, contestatory discourses also circulate, destabilising, perhaps even at times rupturing, those relations as Western women represent particular Gilgiti men and specific local spaces in alternative

ways. In so doing, they disrupt discourses of sexual vulnerability and the generalisability of women's fear. After my research participants have spent time with Ismail men who 'prove' themselves trustworthy and safe, women often develop delicate feelings toward them, and, therefore, may be less likely to assume all indigenous men will be sexually dangerous. And once the threat diminishes, however slightly, boundaries become less rigid and border crossings are easier. Rather than always denying difference, some women are able to accommodate it, even adapt themselves to it. They transform some of their behaviours and attitudes into non-reactive practices that temper the experience of sexual and spatial threat, and thus partially disrupt dominant discourses of power. In terms of more comprehensive and widespread challenges to sources of socio-sexual unease, perhaps this analysis can offer insights that provoke other new and more just ways for Western women to conceive of and interact with racialised men in postcolonial contexts in order to realise a non-imperial future.

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Appendix

Table 1- Facets of Subjectivity

- lifeline participants — are aged between 23 and 59; 5 are in their twenties, but most are between 37 and their early 50s; they usually identify as one of two life groups: young (unmarried, no children, desirable) and seasoned ((once) married, with children, past desirability, and often, in their words, 'grandmotherish')
- ancestry — most participants, whether they consider Canada, the United States, Australia, or the United Kingdom home, claim an Anglo-Saxon heritage; 4 said they had a Germanic or Nordic background
- formal schooling — all but 2 participants are university educated; many have advanced degrees, teaching certificates, and English as a Second Language training
- vocation before coming to Gilgit — 1 freelance photojournalist; 1 postal carrier; 1 business woman; 1 retired civil servant; 2 nurses; 3 housewives, 2 of whom are also part-time teachers;

1 doctor; 1 feminist lawyer; the rest are educators (teachers, teacher trainers or education consultants)

- religiosity — to 8 women, Christianity is a fundamental component of their lives (5 of them are missionaries); the rest claim to be non-practising or to have no religious affiliation
- station — they all self-identify as middle-class
- partnership — 3 lesbians (2 of whom are partners); 4 are in long-term relationships with men, but are not married; 8 are single; 9 are married; 5 were once-married
- progeny — 4 participants have children

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