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Type: Thesis

Title: The skin of a writer.

Author: [Aung Thin, Michelle Diane](#)

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Abstract: Can writing be situated precisely at the point of the limit between not only binaries but also types of difference? Where does a writer representing mixed-race, Anglo- Burmese subjectivity write from? How does such a writer work from a specific place (colonial Burma) but from a perspective that is no place? How will such writing look and read? This thesis considers how a creative writer, writing about mixed-race subjectivity, might position herself and her material in the context of English-language literary traditions. It comprises a novel and an exegesis in two volumes. Both elements address these questions. “Winsome of Rangoon” is a novel set in Rangoon, 1930, that examines colonialism from a position between coloniser and colonised. Winsome Goode is young, attractive, half-Burmese and half-European. On the night train to Rangoon and just married to a man she barely knows, she anticipates life to come in the metropolis of Rangoon. Her husband, Desmond, also of

'mixed-race', is determined to work his way into a position of prestige. With a dutiful wife to help him, further promotion is inevitable. Doctor Jonathan Grace has recently arrived from England to test his theories on tropical fever and enhance his professional reputation. What he hasn't anticipated is the temptations that devour white men in Asia. For each of them, Rangoon will be where they either make something of themselves, or succumb to dissolution. But Rangoon is no city of dreams. It is a place fractured by racial, class and religious prejudice. When Jonathan meets Winsome, these tensions erupt, and the two of them are drawn into a dangerous and shocking affair. The exegesis, "Representing Anglo-Burmese Subjectivity", offers a reading of texts that depict Anglo-Burmese characters including: *The Lacquer Lady* by F. Tennyson Jesse; *Not Out of Hate* by Ma Ma Lay; *The Gentleman in the Parlour* by Somerset Maugham and *Burmese Days* by George Orwell. I focus on the way skin is represented, drawing from Didier Anzieu's 'skin ego', Imogen Tyler's intervention in Anzieu's thinking, as well as Steven Connor's analysis of cultural reception of the skin to argue that certain forms of difference are subject to hidden boundaries or limits. Authenticity is one such limit. I also rely on the thinking of filmmaker and critic Trinh T. Minh-ha as well as the artist Svetlana Boym. Trinh Minh-ha questions who may comment on difference and to what end while Boym defines 'cultural intimacy' as the ultimate form of belonging. Both of these views have informed my critical and creative processes. This thesis as a whole reflects upon the complexity of in-between identities, specifically, how some forms of difference complicate stable identities and make the familiar strange and the strange, familiar.

Advisor: Castro, Brian
Schwerdt, Dianne Ona

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Keywords: creative writing; skin; authenticity; Anglo-Burmese subjectivity;

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[Pt. 1 Novel]: *Winsome of Rangoon*, a novel [Embargoed] -- [Pt. 2 Exegesis]: *Representing Anglo-Burmese subjectivity*.

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