Umme Al-Wazedi, Augustana College

Gendered Citizenship and the Chitmahals

For almost 68 years India and Bangladesh had a common border problem—the chitmahals. There are 162 tracts of land totaling 24,270 acres, 111 inside Bangladesh and 51 inside India, and more than 60,000 people living in these chitmahals. Locals call these territories chitmahals which means paper palaces and geographers call them enclaves. The people live as stateless and nationless. They can’t claim a country as their own. They have no passports to travel anywhere. They are deprived of medical care and education. Women’s lives are affected more than the men’s as one’s gender and citizenship reacts in unexpected ways. Nationalism affects women in adverse ways as they are more insecure than men in the chitmahals. Selina Hossain, a Bangladeshi writer, has depicted the lives of the women and men who live in these chitmahals in her 2010 novel Bhumi o Kushum. She tells the stories of the people of the chitmahal Dhohgram beginning from the partition to the Independence war of 1971. However, the two main characters Golam Ali and Monjila are care givers of Dhohogram. Hossain portrays the lives of the characters in a way that shows what Isabell Lorey argues that instead of achieving security, “everything that the society holds as a threat is projected onto specific groups at its margins’ and Othering those at the margins further perpetuates precarity. The relationships portrayed in this novels reveals what Lorey suggests: citizens need to form “a ciudadanía, a care community in which our relationality with others is no longer interrupted but is regarded as fundamental.” I argue that although these characters live in the margins they create relationships that are fundamental to their existence in the chitmahal. Through and with these relationships they transgress the state of insecurity in Dhohogram.

Umme Al-Wazedi is Associate Professor of Postcolonial literature in the Department of English and Co-Program Director of Women’s and Gender Studies at Augustana College, Rock Island, IL. Her research interest encompasses (Muslim) women writers of South Asia and South Asian Diaspora, Standpoint Feminist Theory, Muslim and Third World Feminism, and Postcolonial disability studies. She has published in South Asian Review, South Asian History and Culture, Sycamore Review, The Clearing House, and Research Journal (Bangladesh). She is the author of two book chapters: “‘Under Western Eyes’: The Face of Home Grown Terror in Three Texts” in Tabish Khair: Critical Perspectives.

Waseem Anwar, Forman Christian College, and Sameer Afzal, Beaconhouse Systems

Pedagogical Precarity: Teaching the Precariats of Lit.-Crit. Theory “Queerly” (in Pakistan)

With all its anthropological plus politico-economic background, precarity and its “empowering
subjectivities” (Isabel Lorey 2010) imply a continuing struggle of the multiple social positions. One such position is what critics like Laura Fantone and Judith Butler identify as gender-roles that challenge the outcome of “deeper ontological precariousness” coming from “vulnerability to violence and silencing” (Butler 2009), resulting in exclusion. Within the Pakistani living conditions, gender segregation, silencing, exclusion, discrimination, violence and victimization is part of the normal politico-religious ontological practice that has strong negative effects not only on the Pakistani social strata but also on its educative and academic environment. Exclusions and insecurities happen in institutions as well as in classrooms, even in terms of the teachers’ and learners’ self-censored and self-edited performance or participation, preventing them from generating a discourse on the unspeakable. The consequence is various types of pedagogical precarity. Our experience of teaching and theorizing precariousness, its uncertainty and unevenness, its fear and threat, and the otherization and marginalization it causes, results from dealing with the selectivity processes of courses and topics in literature and lit.-crit. theory. From GCE to undergrad up till grad levels the programs in Women to [Trans]-Gender Studies and then to designing the curricula and syllabi, especially chapters on sexualities and gay-lesbian and queer studies put us as teachers of liberal arts and humanities in a “queer” position where we teach the lit.-crit. theory and its possible precariats “queerly.” Such ontologically semi-participatory and partial-performative practices may sound a bit resilient and somewhat reductive but they do lead to empowered subjectivities, productive classrooms and social-rooms of care communities that the resistant energies of Pakistani pedagogical precarity may itself release!

Waseem Anwar is Professor (English) at Forman Christian College Lahore. Dr. Waseem Anwar is Former Dean and Chair. Twice Fulbrighter, he is Gale Group (American Scholar) and HEC “Best Teacher-2003” (Pakistan). His publications include “Black” Women’s Dramatic Discourse, South Asian Review (2010) and JELLS. He serves SALA Executive committee for the second time, the first time was in 2011-13.

Sameer Afzal is a Beaconhouse system faculty and curricula coordinator/consultant of World History and English Literature for the [GCE] Advanced Level. He is a Theatre Studies “honored” graduate from GC University Lahore. He has authored two books that highlight Pakistani drama in terms of its prophetic and tabooed nature.

Muhammad Waqar Azeem, Binghamton University-SUNY
Qawwali and Resistance: A Study of The Reluctant Fundamentalist (Film)
In our “age of anger” when ressentiment provokes a persistent “global civil war” (Pankaj Mishra, Age of Anger: A History of the Present 2017), we the academicians confront the challenge of devising thinking strategies to negotiate differences in non-binary, non-violent spaces. Edward Said borrows the notion of “counterpoint” from Western music to be simultaneously aware “of the metropolitan history that is narrated” and “other histories against which…the dominating discourse acts” (Culture and Imperialism 1993). I propose an alternative interpretative model that I derive from South Asian musical genre called qawwali. For Regula Qureshi, qawwali is an ethnomusic form interpretable through its Islamic/Sufi context (Sufi Music of India and Pakistan 1986). Virinder S. Kalra on the other hand reads “style or aesthetic quality of accompanying music” in a qawwali outside its sacred settings and alludes to a non-Sufistic, non-religious connection between the qawwals (qawwali singers) and the audience (Sacred and Secular
Musics: A Postcolonial Approach 2014). From stylistic and aesthetic perspective, I explore in contemporary Pakistani qawwali an oscillation between the sacred and secular. A qawwali performance facilitates an interpretative model that assimilates the secular and the religious thereby nourishing an outlook responsive to our contemporary crises produced by religion-inspired terrorism and the resultant, allegedly anti-religious, War on Terror.

I employ this qawwali-based framework to analyze the film version of The Reluctant Fundamentalist that opens with the performance of a qawwali intercut by kidnapping of an American professor coming out of a theater in Lahore. The film dramatizes the qawwali as an art form that resists the American imperial interventions into the social fabric of Pakistan. As an art-form, qawwali embodies non-generic stylistics encouraging a borderless sensibility and awakening us to “Other’s precariousness”, a prerequisite for global peace (Judith Butler).

Muhammad Waqar Azeem is a PhD candidate (Fulbright Fellow) at Department of English Literature, Binghamton University (SUNY), NY, US. He has been teaching at Forman Christian College (A Chartered University) Lahore and GC University, Lahore, Pakistan. His work focuses on the representation of trauma, War on Terror and drone strikes in post-9/11 art and fiction.

Amit R. Baishya, University of Oklahoma
A Botany of Death: Disavowed Pasts and Horizons of Futurity in “Sambhabya Kaal”
This paper draws on the infrastructural turn in studies of vulnerability to analyze a short story by the Assamese writer, Manorama Das Medhi. It argues that an exclusive focus on the speedy temporalities of necropolitics risks obscuring the long term and extra-lethal effects of infrastructural damage in situations of political terror.

Amit R. Baishya is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Oklahoma. He teaches courses in postcolonial studies and cultural studies.

Lopamudra Basu, University of Wisconsin-Stout
Dangerous Liaisons: The Nexus of High Finance and Terrorism in Ayad Akhtar’s The Invisible Hand
Ayad Akhtar’s 2015 play The Invisible Hand portrays the inherent insecurities of a global financial capitalism juxtaposed against overt resistance to globalization in the form of Islamic militancy in Pakistan that engages in kidnapping, extortion and murder as routine operations. Akhtar’s play gradually exposes this intimate relationship between terrorism and high finance through the central episode of the kidnapping of Nick Bright, a Wall Street banker by a Pakistan based jihadi group. Nick is able to negotiate with his captors that he will earn the ransom money through trading in the stock market. Bashir, Nick’s captor, becomes so thoroughly schooled in Nick’s craft that by the end of the play he has successfully executed a political assassination that leads to the free fall of the Pakistani rupee. Jeffory Clymer’s research connects the earliest examples of terrorism on American soil to radical labor movements and anarchists’ campaigns against capitalism as demonstrated in the Haymarket bombing of 1886 and the 1920 bombing of the JP Morgan building on Wall Street. This forgotten history is very relevant to post 9/11 discussions of terrorism. In its early iterations, terrorism was deployed against the anti-human policies of a new corporate capitalism emerging in the turn of the twentieth century America. Al Qaeda’s attacks on September 11 were also targeted against symbols of American corporate
culture such as the World Trade Center. However, we witness the insidious penetration of corporate ideology into the minds of terrorists. While overtly opposing capitalism, present day terrorists are active participants in global financial networks, engaged in a variety of legal and illegal financial transactions. Akhtar’s exposure of the nexus of capitalism with radical Islam deconstructs central assumptions of Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilizations thesis as a framework for understanding post-Cold War global politics.

**Lopamudra Basu** is Professor of English at University of Wisconsin-Stout. She is the co-editor of Passage to Manhattan: Critical Essays on Meena Alexander, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, UK, 2009. Her articles, have been published in *South Asian Review, Nebula, Social Text, Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies*, and in anthologies *Rites of Passage in Postcolonial Women’s Writing* (Rodopi, 2010), *Drawing From Life: Memory and Subjectivity in Comic Art* (University of Mississippi Press, 2013), *Masks of Threat: South Asian South Asian Racialization and Belonging after 9/11* (Lexington 2016). She is working on a monograph on Ayad Akhtar

**Ayelet Ben-Yishai, University of Haifa / Cornell Society for the Humanities**

**Emergency Thrillers and the State of Security**

In June 1975, Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi famously imposed a State of Emergency in response to what she called “the deep and widespread conspiracy” against her. One of the first novels to engage with this period was Manohar Malgonkar’s *The Garland Keepers* (1980), a little-known, fast-paced, and highly entertaining political thriller set in a lightly-fictionalized Emergency. In the novel, the debauched son of the (significantly genderless) “Great Leader”, and his ruthless caucus of corrupt lackeys spare no one standing in the way of their international money-laundering scheme. The result is a scathing condemnation of the twinned scourges of authoritarianism and economic corruption.

Indeed, while the Emergency generated some of the central novels in what we have come to consider “world literature” – most notably Salman Rushdie’s 1980 *Midnight’s Children* – it also served as fertile soil for the production of a wide range of genre fiction. Malgonkar uses the genre of state security – the spy thriller – to challenge this "security", challenging the contours and limits of political literary representation. Moreover, the boilerplate form of genre fiction is used to critique the period both as crisis and continuity: both the one-off Emergency and the iterative emergency of ongoing corruption. I thus examine the workings of power and knowledge as a reflection of discursive differences between highbrow and lowbrow and between modernism and realism.

**Ayelet Ben-Yishai** teaches in the English Department at the University of Haifa and is a Fellow at the Cornell Society for the Humanities in 2017-18. She specializes in Victorian and postcolonial literature and culture, and in the history and theory of the novel. She is the author of a book, *Common Precedents: The Presentness of the Past in Victorian Fiction and Law* (Oxford, 2013) and articles in *NOVEL, Modern Fiction Studies*, and the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, among others. She is currently at work on a book manuscript entitled *Emergency Fictions: Crisis and Continuity in the Indian Novel in English*.

**Anirban Bhattacharjee, Santipur College and the University of Kalyani**

**Ethics of Representation and the Figure of the Woman: The Question of Agency in Gayatri
Chakravorty Spivak’s “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

In her “Can the Subaltern Speak?” (1988), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak offers a systematic analysis on the problem of a subject that is not an agent for itself through the double meaning of ‘representation’ in Karl Marx. In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1851) Marx speaks of representation as *vertreten* that is political representation, the representation of the proxy or of “speaking for”, and representation as *darstellen*, translated as re-presentation. It is this double meaning, as Spivak has pointed out, that is collapsed in Deleuze’s pronouncement that “there is no more representation; there’s nothing but action”. My paper re-reads Marx’s *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1851) and *The German Ideology* (1846) along the Spivakian parlance and argues that the theories of ideology must engage with this two-fold play of representation, first in the philosophical staging of the subject and second, more importantly, within the State and law. By drawing upon Jacques Derrida’s (and also Emmanuel Levinas’) idea of ‘quite-other’, the paper here deals with the question of alterity as posed against authenticity, as method for attending to the politics and heterogeneous “mechanics of the constitution of the Other” [as elaborated in the ‘epistemic violence’ in the codification of Hindu law]. The paper attempts a critique of Ranajit Guha’s theorization of the subaltern space as *identity-in-difference* and argues that the space of subalternity is a space at once outside and autonomous from hegemony but simultaneously inside as its condition of possibility. Subalternity is an otherness which is radically open but perfectly inaccessible. The paper tries to gauge this ‘unconcealed’ interiority of subaltern perception through the reading of (Bengali) Dalit autobiographies like Manohar Mouli Biswas’s “My World: My Own Space” (2013) and Manoranjan Byapari’s “Memoir of a Čándāla” (2012 & 2016). Thinking subalternity is, the paper argues, thinking death. The peculiar perception of subalternity is anterior to ‘intercourse with the State’. By taking stock of some of the critical contributions of the Subaltern Studies collective, the paper would try to argue and justify that the nature of cognition is structurally incomplete without the recognition of the perception of subalternity. This, in turn, necessitates a more intimate analysis on Spivak’s notion of “imaginative activism”, i.e., her recent engagement with how we ‘learn’ to conceive of this alterity in order to ‘respond’, and here the function of literature appears as the strange institution in which “imagination is trained”. And finally we move to the social text of *sati*-suicide, the violent production of the female subject, the discontinuity of subjectivity and agency, and a call to the ethics of responsibility. The paper talks of a certain *stylization* of being when it is afflicted with the perception of death. Here I would put forward the idea of phenomenological suicide, the feel of (constant) combustion inside the fleshted being, which unravels how the woman can perform her transcendence by remaining within the structures of immanence.

Anirban Bhattacharjee (PhD, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta (CSSSC) & Jadavpur University, India) is an Assistant Professor in English at Santipur College, Nadia and an Adjunct Faculty at the University of Kalyani (KU), West Bengal, India. He has published widely in the fields of postcolonial studies, cultural studies, critical theory, Indian philosophy, and Nineteenth Century Bengal. He has delivered public talks at Presidency University, Jadavpur University, Hyderabad University, Delhi University, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), IIT, Guwahati, and the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), India and at 13th South Asian Literary Association (SALA) conference in Boston, USA.
Melancholia and Violence in selected works of Bharati Mukherjee

A western-educated postcolonial author, Bharati Mukherjee, after three decades of living in different parts of North America with her Canadian husband makes a forceful claim for being considered an American novelist. Mukherjee is aware of the tremendous personal and cultural transformation such a claim requires and the politics of publication that surrounds the works of writers born in developing nations. Yet an irredeemable desire to be assimilated into the mainstream American intellectual elite has led Mukherjee to face the risk, uncertainty or precarity of leading a life of fragmented identity.

Often modelled on her own persona, Mukherjee’s fictional characters suffer from an identity crisis which manifests itself in various forms of psychic, sexual and physical violence. Neither their transformation from the home culture, nor their assimilation into the American society is complete. As a result they appear precariously balancing themselves on a psychic precipice. However, a repeated encounter with the past makes them unable to continue with this dilemma forever. This paper will look into the role of past or ‘nostalgia’ in resisting the complete transformation of the migrant.

On one hand, there are characters who eradicate their previous docility, destiny, even pregnancy for reinventing themselves as Americans. On the other hand, there are those who in clinging to their cultural, religious and familial past wreck their lives. Besides these, foreigners visiting the East or the native returning home after a long time also fall prey to the violence of cultural exchange. The existent communities of care such as family and social institutions run by the government seem to be at best tenuous and at worst unconcerned. In light of this, the paper seeks to examine whether embracing the adaptability of a ‘middleman’ as Mukherjee suggests is at all a possible solution to banish the sense of precarity

Rima Bhattacharyya is currently working as a PhD Research scholar at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, India. She has completed her M.A and M.Phil Degrees from the Department of English, Presidency College, Kolkata and University of Calcutta respectively and taught at a College (affiliated to Calcutta University) for two years as a lecturer. She graduated with English Honours from Loreto College, Kolkata. She has already published papers in the field of Postcolonial writings, American literature and Children’s literature. She was also a founding member of an e-journal called The Inclusive.

Maaz Bin Bilal, O.P. Jindal Global University

The Indian Mushairah as Space of Dissent, Solidarity, and Critique

The Urdu Mushairah has always been a far more participative and interactive space of poetry than the spaces afforded to poetry in the West, perhaps barring the American rap battles. The poignancy of the interactions afforded here has only gained in importance over time as many of the participants of the mushairah with their different stakes in South Asia have found themselves in an increasingly precarious situation. In independent Pakistan, the poetry of Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Habib Jalib, has been notable for its revolutionary zeal against theocratic regimes. In contemporary India, where Urdu, due to the politics of two-nation theory, has been attempted to be made the sole prerogative of Muslims, the Mushairah continues to establish the secular beliefs
and politics of its otherwise often marginalized patrons, and to voice dissent against an increasingly right-leaning state apparatus. This has gained a new vibrancy in the last three years, when atrocities against various minorities have seen a serious rise. The purpose of this paper is to record and elucidate the nature of the contemporary Indian Mushairah as the site of dissent, solidarity, and critique. The paper shall analyze the content of poetry closely as well as scrutinize the demographic of the mushairah to postulate what the texts and the performative networks imply, and particularly what emotions they translate into for the larger populace and especially the communities (Muslim-dalit-women) facing precarity in India.

Maaz Bin Bilal is Assistant Professor at Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities at O. P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat, India. He earned his PhD from Queen's University Belfast in 2015 for his dissertation on the politics of friendship in E. M. Forster. His other research interests are in South-Asian literatures in English, Urdu, and Hindi, South-Asian Muslim identity, and multiculturalism. Maaz is also a poet in English and a translator. His first collection, Ghazalnama: Poems from Delhi, Belfast, and Urdu, is forthcoming in 2018.

Madhavi Biswas, University of Texas at Dallas
Romancing Widows: Insecure Women in Ishqiya and Dedh Ishqiya
Krishna and Begum Para, in Abhishek Chaubey’s Ishqiya (Concerning love) and its purported sequel Dedh Ishqiya (One-and-a-half times love), though strikingly dissimilar in terms of their class, community and temperament have one thing in common. They have dead husbands. The plot of both films center on romancing the “insecure” widows. The romance narrative and the endgame of the romance in both films is to re-situate them into their secure gender roles as wives and sweethearts. The divergent and the disruptive goals of the two women revealed in the final twists in the plot play with the gender perceptions of the characters in the film as well as the audience watching the film. My paper explores the women’s perception of their state of “insecurity” and types of resistance they express by not articulating their new desires but hiding them in plain sight.

I will employ theories of globalization to explore how the bodies of these women are constructed as global bodies that express local concerns. The two female characters are a fascinating amalgam of local realism and genre construction. Both Krishna and Begum Para are small-town women who are defined in global terms. While Krishna’s character has definite echoes of the femme-fatale of film noir, Begum Para seems to emerge straight from the pages of fairy-tale and romance. These multiple frames of reference enable the audience to be both duped by and yet empathize with the women’s strategies of resistance triggered by their divergent perception the threats they face.

Madhavi Biswas is a PhD candidate at the University of Texas at Dallas. Her research interests include film adaptation, translation, Bollywood, anime and fandom. She is working on globalization and contemporary Bollywood with specific reference to films directed by Vishal Bhardwaj, Abhishek Chaubey and Anurag Kashyap.
Madhurima Chakraborty is Associate Professor of English at Columbia College Chicago. She has co-edited *Postcolonial Urban Outcasts: City Margins in South Asian Literature* and a special issue of *South Asian Review* on The Nation and Its Discontents. Her articles on Postcolonial and South Asian literature and film can be found in *Journal of Postcolonial Writing, Literature/Film Quarterly*, and *Journal of Contemporary Literature*. She is also finishing a book on Mahasweta Devi.

Sagnika Chanda, University of Pittsburgh

Precarious Derealisation as a Mode of Protest in *Animal’s People*

Dominant narratives of poverty in the global south exacerbate the invisibility of the marginalized poor, blinding observers to all but a spectacle of abject destitution. Bhopal has become defined by the spectacle of the Union Carbide pesticide plant explosion occurring on 2 December 1984. The narrator of Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*, embodies the spectacle: he walks on all fours, a hunchback owing to the toxic fumes, earning the nickname Animal. Symbolically, he bears the burden of the disaster. He is a compressed image of destitute, deformed poverty all too familiar to cosmopolitan eyes. Animal and his people are "invisible" in the sense that, even when literally seen, they are only seen through the spectacle of "third-world poverty" that structures seeing in the novel. Animal and his people are invisible to their own government and to the "Amrikan kampani". I examine this form of global spectrality that the poverty of Animal and the people of Khaufpur are seen through. In *Animal’s People*, dissociation from the human realm of justice, welfare and anthropocentrism empowers Animal to counter this specter of marginality. Judith Butler coined the term “violence of derealization” to describe a form of normative violence wherein certain groups fail to count as human according to the dominant regime of intelligibility. I investigate the potential of this violence of derealization as one that is harnessed to point toward a conceptualization of posthumanist justice. Animal and his community of invisible derealized Bhopalies call for a politics of recognition contingent on a precarious mode of existence. The unreal and nonhuman body becomes the site for denying an existence intelligible by dominant standards of human suffering. It denies the social death imposed through erasure by the globalized state and becomes a mode of protest through shared understanding of suffering and vulnerable networks of community.

Sagnika Chanda is a doctoral candidate in the English Department at the University of Pittsburgh. Her research interests are cyberpunk literature, gender and new technologies that problematize migrations of bodies, knowledge and power. She has been published in a special issue on “Gender and the Posthuman” of La Camera Blu, gender studies journal published by the University of Naples Federico II. She has received the Richard C. and Barbara N. Tobias Fellowship for 2017-18 for her project. She was also nominated for the Andrew W. Mellon Predoctoral Fellowship by the Department of English.

Suchismita Chattopadhyay, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies

Of Personality Grooming Schools and Neoliberalism: Fashioning the New Working Woman

The globalization of the Indian economy signaled the advent of neoliberalism and the beginning of an aspirational culture in India. The active enterprising citizen is no longer dependent on state, but she is a self-regulating, self-disciplined subject, who treats her life and self as enterprise. A related development has been the feminization of labor and new avenues of employment
opportunities for women, with the expansion of the service sector. A liberalized economy has resulted in the suspension of trade unions and an increase in the informalisation and casualization of labour, thereby making precarity a way of life. The BPOs and the hospitality industry that rely on contractual and casual labour, require women to equip themselves with specific skills that make them suitable for the globalized market. Keeping this trend in mind, the paper looks at the phenomena of the increasingly popular personality development and grooming centers for women in Delhi that aim to “transform lives” and “polish their personalities to a global level”. What is the significance of training modules like “International Etiquette”, “Personalized English Conversation”, and “Interview Skills Training” in the neoliberal discourse of self-development? How do we understand the role of the grooming classes that fashion young women to become employable in a highly precarious service sector? How do grooming centers create new bodily dispositions that are deemed “employable” and simultaneously, impart a sense of belonging to cosmopolitan sites for classes, until now distant from such spaces? The paper will probe into the self-fashioning of the new female laboring subject of the neoliberal regime and also analyse the space of such personality development and grooming institutions that claim to address the insecurities of the body/self, which are considered to render oneself even more precarious in the job market.

Suchismita Chattopadhyay is a doctoral candidate in my second year at the Department of Anthropology and Sociology of Development in the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva.

Mrunal Chavda, University of Cape Town
South African Gujarati Literature: An Inventory and Critical Commentary
While literatures written in English by writers of Indian origin are well studied, literatures written in Indian languages by diasporic writers might not appear on the radar of many literary scholars. This article aims to produce a critical inventory of South African Gujarati literature and provide a critical commentary on the genres produced in South Africa from the 1920 onwards. The article first traces early history of Gujarati migrants from Gujarat (India) to South Africa using historical records such as Diwali issues, complied bhajan books, and Usha Desai and Uma Dhupelia-Mesthrie’s research resulting out of her oral interviews in Cape Town (Dhupelia-Mesthrie) and South African cities (Desai). This article then uses cultural identities, emotional places, and local spaces as theoretical frameworks to examine literatures produced by South African Gujarati writers. Building on these theoretical frameworks, this article examines poems, short stories and editorial and short essays written in Gujarati. Finally, the article discusses how these creative writing reflect cultural, ethnic and religious identity. By doing this, the article locates undocumented literatures written in Gujarati language outside Gujarat.

Mrunal Chavda is a Post Doctoral Research Fellow at the University of Cape Town in the department of linguistics. Prior to this, the author wrote his doctoral thesis in drama at the University of Exeter. He has published two chapters and a research article in South Asian Popular Culture. His research interests include South Asian diaspora, theatre, culture and Gujarati language and literature.

Iqra Shagufta Cheema, University of North Texas
Ostracized Pakistani Hijras and Transmisogyny in Bol

Iqra Shagufta Cheema, University of North Texas
Ostracized Pakistani Hijras and Transmisogyny in Bol
In Pakistan, religious and cultural stigmatization along with social ostracism are only a few of multiple significant factors responsible for the dehumanization of the LGBTQ—and in particular the *hijra* community. While the recognition of lesbian, gay, queer, or any non-binary identities is almost impossible for the time being, the trans* community has garnered some public and governmental attention in recent years. The media’s positive representation of trans* problems, namely their social stigmatization and cultural exclusion, has been helpful in this regard. Though there are rarely any positive film or television representations of homosexuality because of the religiously controversial nature of the issue, the trans* community has been given some representation. One of the films that highlights the trans* identity problem and the transmisogynistic character of Pakistani society is *Bol*. This paper analyzes the cinematic representation of the transmisogynistic character of Pakistan’s deeply patriarchal society in the film *Bol*. The film portrays multiple issues—primarily over-population, necessity of family planning, religious orthodoxy, patriarchy, sexism, forced marriages, poverty, prostitution, legal and political corruption—but I am limiting my focus to film’s portrayal of the problems that trans* face in a patriarchal and transmisogynistic society, which refuses to acknowledge all non-normative gender identities. I do not hope to propose any solutions in this paper, neither does the film; my hope is to participate in the conversation of transmisogyny that *Bol* initiated.

Iqra Shagufta Cheema is a third year graduate student in English at University of North Texas, Denton specializing in Postmodernism and postmodern literature; simultaneously, studying post-postmodernism, postcolonialism, and feminism as minors. Besides that, she is a Teaching Fellow in English department at UNT.

Nupur Chawla, Jamia Milia Islamia

**Literary Representation of Conflict and Insecurity: The Case of Nagaland in Temsula Ao’s Short Fiction**

The proposed paper shall explore literary representation of socio-political conflict in Nagaland, a state in Northeast India. The ethnic, social and political insecurities lead to conflict and change form as turmoil progresses. Temsula Ao’s short fiction, as it engages with the issue, gives rise to questions about the nature of politics and aesthetics of such writings. Is there a unique aesthetic to writings originating from conflict zones? Why is it not adequate to approach these writings only politically? How do, if at all, the aesthetic and the political intertwine as literature represents conflict and the allied issue of insecurity. These questions will be addressed in the context of the northeastern states of India in general and Nagaland in particular. Temsula Ao’s short fiction will be studied to arrive at tentative answers to the above questions.

Nupur Chawla submitted M.Phil dissertation to the Department of English, Jamia Milia Islamia on June 30th, 2017. Cultural materialism is one of my interest areas, studying how literature as a cultural tool interprets and intervenes in society. The manner in which various socio-political and economic phenomena take shape and impact cultural expressions has been one of the aspects that has intrigued me through my academic pursuit. The genre of short-fiction is another domain that has been of particular appeal

Colleen Lutz Clemens, Kutztown University

**Considering the Pedagogical Importance of Sri Lankan Literature: Insecurity and Healing in Rohin Mohan’s The Seasons of Trouble**
Considering the Pedagogical Importance of Sri Lankan Literature: Insecurity and Healing in Rohin Mohan’s *The Seasons of Trouble*. When in Sri Lanka I learned that the civil war was not a distant memory but instead a phantom standing right behind its people, as it only officially ended in 2009. The level of insecurity is still palpable in the country and in the texts coming out of the nation. Testimonials of the war are just coming to light as people begin to recover and feel they can tell their stories. This paper will look at Rohini Mohan’s *The Seasons of Trouble* and argue that the way Mohan uses the narratives of three people—Sarva, Indra, and Mugil—to tell the story of Sri Lanka’s war and the ongoing recovery addresses social and political issues in a way nascent to the island nation’s literature and will argue that we should be considering using this text in our classrooms, as Sri Lanka is a current and rich example for students of what it means to come together as a nation and a population after a civil war taught generations to see the other side as the enemy. Studying the Sri Lankan efforts to reconstitute itself as a whole nation will give students the opportunity to ask critical questions about civil war: Why do wars start? How do people that see each other as friendly neighbors come to believe those same neighbors are the enemy in a short period of time? Who controls the narrative during wartime? What does it mean for children to grow up during a war? What does it mean to be a displaced person on the same soil you used to cultivate? How does a nation come back together and heal while simultaneously learning the stories that were kept silent during the decades of war?

**Colleen Lutz Clemens**, associate professor of non-Western literatures and director of Women’s and Gender Studies at Kutztown University in Pennsylvania, earned her PhD in postcolonial literature at Lehigh University. Her academic work has been published in Feminist Formations and Journal of Postcolonial Writing, and she serves as an academic consultant for Gale’s Contemporary Literary Criticism series, where she focuses on women’s postcolonial writing. She can be reached via her blog ([kupoco.wordpress.com](http://kupoco.wordpress.com)).

**Amrita De, SUNY Binghamton**

**The ‘Other’ Side of Silence: Resisting Anonymity in Mahasweta Devi’s *Draupadi***

This paper interrogates the constitution of anonymity and what it means to be socially anonymous. How is anonymity socially constituted? Is there a way by which anonymity can be challenged or destabilized through a moment of agency or through a fracture in the existing social system? Or is it further reified through that moment? I attempt to do a Fanonian reading of the text, in order to understand and unpack the complexities of this specific societal construction. The text that I have chosen for analysis, Mahasweta Devi’s revisionary feminist short story “*Draupadi*” (1988), captures the experiences of a subaltern tribal woman within the context of the Naxalite movement. The central character Draupadi or Dopdi, as she is often referred to in the text, is involved in this social movement which could be understood as a protest against feudal masters or more popularly recognized as uprising by the peasant class against their feudal masters (landlords). While Dopdi is presented as a strong woman from the outset, it is at the very moment that she should become the “silenced victim” according to traditional schema that she instead emerges as an agent. In this essay, I shall discuss how in doing so, she morphs into a “super object” (Spivak) by projecting her body on the colonizer (masters) as a spectacle. In doing so, she becomes a dangerous body which destabilizes existing social structures. My reading aims to analyze, this moment of precarity in the form of her embodied protest, where she momentarily manages to subvert the feudal hegemony. My paper unpacks the underlying complications of this act, through which she resists anonymity, by morphing into a ‘super-object’, where she
momentarily claims her ability to speak, from her position of subalternity, in the process, managing to complicate Spivak's reading of the subaltern woman.

**Amrita De** is currently affiliated to the Comparative Literature doctoral program at SUNY Binghamton. My proposed dissertation focuses on a critical examination of different forms of hegemonic masculinity existing in South Asia, from partition to contemporary times. I specifically intend to explore or rather unearth the idea of 'fragile' masculinity as an important appendage to the idea of hegemonic masculinity by examining, the sustained power dynamics that are coded within this idea. I also intend to explore how the idea of the heteronorm is given political and almost institutional legitimacy in the workings of the present right wing government in India.

**Gaurav Desai, University of Michigan**

**Precarious Futures, Precarious Pasts: Climate, Terror and Planetarity**

This talk will focus on the figure of the migrant and the refugee as presented in contemporary media. I am interested in the continuities and discontinuities in the experience of migration from the nineteenth century to the present, particularly, though not exclusively, for vulnerable populations. I then attempt to connect that experience to challenges posed to us by environmental changes and vulnerabilities in the same time frame. The aim is to think through the figure of the migrant not just as someone who moves from one sociopolitical context – village, town, city, nation – to another, but to think through migrant experiences as they relate to larger planetary concerns.

**Gaurav Desai** is Professor of English at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Author of *Subject to Colonialism: African Self-fashioning and the Colonial Library* (Duke University Press, 2001) and editor of *Teaching the African Novel* (MLA, 2009) he has guest edited a volume of essays on “Culture and the Law” (*South Atlantic Quarterly*, 100.4, 2001), on "Actually Existing Colonialisms" (*Journal of Contemporary Thought*, 24, 2006), on “Asian African Literatures” (*Research in African Literatures*, 42.3, 2011), and co-edited a volume of essays on “Multi-Ethnic Literatures and the Idea of Social Justice” (*MELUS*, 28.1, Spring 2003). *Postcolonialisms: An Anthology of Cultural Theory and Criticism* (Rutgers University Press, 2005) which he co-edited with Supriya Nair has become a standard reference and classroom text since its publication. Among Desai’s other publications are articles in edited collections and journals such as *PMLA, Genders, Representations, Boundary2, Interventions, Research in African Literatures, African Studies Review* and *Cultural Critique*. Recipient of a residential fellowship at the National Humanities Center in 2001, Desai has also been awarded a Rockefeller Foundation award for a residency at the Bellagio Center in Italy, a visiting fellowship at the Center for Research in the Arts, Social Sciences and the Humanities at Cambridge University, and an ACLS Burkhardt Fellowship for his research. In 2004, Desai was made a life member of Clare Hall, Cambridge University. His latest book on narratives of Indian Ocean connections between Africa and India, *Commerce with the Universe: Africa, India and the Afrasian Imagination* (Columbia University Press, 2013) received the 2014 Rene Wellek Prize from the American Comparative Literature Association and was a finalist for the Bethwell Ogot Prize from the African Studies Association as well as the Asia-Africa Book Prize awarded by the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden.
Nisha B. Eswaran, McMaster University

Creating Communities of Care: Spirituality and Friendship in the Age of Insecurity

Following SALA’s invitation to consider precarity, insecurity, and care communities for the 2018 Annual Conference, my paper explores the spiritual space as an intervention into the turbulent politics of the “age of anger” and of heightened security and border-policing. This paper emerges out of a larger project in which I explore friendship across race, nationality, and language as a form of radical anticolonial and anti-identitarian politics in South Asia. Focusing on the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Pondicherry and the friendship between the Indian anticolonial activist/spiritualist Aurobindo Ghose and his French disciple and friend Mira Alfassa, in this paper I suggest that we can read the devotion to mystical thought and spiritual practice as a form of community-building that challenges the politics of precarity, insecurity, and violence. In other words, the spiritual space can defy the logics of racial and national identity to instead foster collaboration across identity differences. Using as an example the anticolonial and collectivist roots of the Aurobindo Ashram, I explore how spirituality is deeply intertwined with politics, functioning as both a realization and a harbinger of a socially just and decolonized future.

Nisha Eswaran is a PhD Candidate in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario. Her research focuses on friendship, queerness, and colonial South Asia.

Jana Fedtke, American University of Sharjah

Precarious Politics: Gender-Based Violence in Recent Digital Graphic Novels

This paper analyzes representations of gender-based violence in recent digital graphic novels. It focuses on two texts: Priya’s Shakti by Ram Devineni and Vikas Menon (2014) and its sequel, Priya’s Mirror, by Ram Devineni and Paromita Vohra (2016). Set in contemporary India, the texts address gender-based instances of violence such as rape and acid attacks on women. I argue that, even though the two digital graphic novels attempt to portray gender empowerment through Priya and her successful activism against rape and acid attacks, they ultimately invalidate Priya’s agency and her fight by attributing more power to the involvement of Priya’s companion, the tiger, and Priya’s reliance on deities such as goddess Parvati. The texts show the precarious situation of gendered power. While the two novels do exist as print versions, they were originally published in their digital format and their popularity has grown primarily online. Both texts are easily accessible on the Internet at http://www.priyashakti.com/ at no cost to the audience. This paper critically analyzes the two didactic novels as products within the growing digital humanities. It argues that, through their accessibility that feeds into the post-2012 Delhi rape “hype,” these digital works have had a wide-reaching effect on identity formation in terms of gender in India and beyond. The texts disguise a reliance on animals and supernatural powers as gender empowerment, which is problematic as this practice underlines the precarious construction of gender identities.

Jana Fedtke is Assistant Professor of English at the American University of Sharjah. Her research and teaching interests include contemporary transnational literatures, postcolonial studies with a focus on South Asia, gender studies, and the theory and practice of world literature. She is currently working on a book manuscript on representations of asexuality in literature, film, and new media.
Robin Field is an Associate Professor of English at King’s College in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. She is co-editor of *Transforming Diaspora: Communities beyond National Boundaries* (2011) and has published articles on Jhumpa Lahiri, Sandra Cisneros, and Alice Walker and author interviews with Bharati Mukherjee, Chitra Divakaruni, and Diana Abu-Jaber.

Kathleen Fernando, Kenyon College

**Putting People Back Together: Caring for the militant body and Tamil Femininity in V.V. Ganeshananthan’s Love Marriage**

In *Frames of War*, Judith Butler maintains that “Precariousness implies living socially” with the knowledge “that one’s life is always in some sense in the hands of the other…a dependency on people we know or barely know, or know not at all.” Using Butler’s idea of precariousness as my point of departure, this paper examines the relationship between violence, care, and Tamil femininity as it figures in V.V. Ganeshananthan’s novel, *Love Marriage* (2008). The narrative centers on Yalini, a second-generation Sri Lankan-Tamil-American, who relocates from the US to Toronto to “care” for her uncle, a former LTTE leader, who leaves Sri Lanka so he could “die without shame”. In this paper, I examine what it means to care for, and forgive, perpetrators of violence in the context of the doctor-patient relationship; as well as those who provide daily care for the ailing militant’s body. If a physician’s ethical responsibility lies in “putting people back together” in a bodily way (Ganeshananthan 138), what counts as care in such extenuating circumstances and how is this care gendered? What is the relationship between care, melancholia/trauma, and healing? How do the effects of trauma and care manifest on the bodies and minds of the care-givers? Does caregiving also imply forgiveness and love, especially when the patient is a perpetrator of violence? And more broadly, what is the relationship between (traumatic)memory, the archiving of testimonies of violence, and the body?

Kathleen Fernando teaches postcolonial literature at Kenyon College. Her current research project explores the relationship between the gendered nature of care-giving, precariousness, and violence in diasporic fictional writings that focus on the Sri Lankan civil war.

Rahul Gairola, Independent Researcher

**X Marks the Spot: Critical Notes on Queer Eroticism in Postcolonial India**

This contribution seeks to expand and transpose Kimberlee Crenshaw Williams' notion of "intersectionality" in the geographical and historical context of contemporary India. It offers the theoretical heuristic of "interseXtional" identity to re-think the erotic lives of Hijras in India following the Supreme Court of India's legal recognition of the so-called gender. I begin by establishing the rationale for doing so, and then briefly move into a history of the pathologization of Hijras as non-conforming genders from British colonial times to now. Following this introduction, I examine the (lack of) representation of Hijras in digital pornography, this expanding my scope to the sexual purview of Digital India.

The questions which I ask and propose to answer in this turn are: in what ways are digital articulations of Hijras as erotic figures complicated through technology? Are these new modes of subjectivity that challenge the erstwhile colonisers' pathology of non-gender-conforming subjects? Does the Hijra in contemporary India complicate the binaristic ways in which we view gender roles? Finally, does this figure complicate current models of erotic representation of transfolks in and through the digital milieu of online pornography? In answering these questions,
I return to questions of law and censorship in India, specifically the 2016 repeal of the banning of online pornography in India. My contribution thus seeks to offer a new analytic for understanding transfolks' eroticism at the intersection of gender, digital, and South Asian pornography studies.

**Rahul K. Gairola** was Assistant Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, India. He is the author of *Homelandings: Postcolonial Diasporas and Transatlantic Belonging*, and a Co-Editor of *Revisiting India's Partition: New Essays in Memory, Culture, and Politics*. He is a co-author of the forthcoming *Migration from Garhwal: Gender and Home Economics in Rural North India* (Lexington, 2018), and an Article Editor for *Postcolonial Text*. He is currently working on a new book project contracted with Routledge (Taylor & Francis) that explores recalibrations of home and belonging in digital cultures of contemporary India.

**Radhika Gajjala**, Bowling Green State University

**Locating Human Labor in the Age of the Anthropocene: Digital Subalternity, Leisure/Work and Digital Financialization**

On the one hand we have claims being made that smart technology will replace the need for human labor – and other we are told that we are in an “age of the anthropocene” where human activity has caused current climate change catastrophies. In both these narratives we see a desire to eliminate and make invisible human labor and action where utopic visions are based in a world without the human. At the same time however, we also live in an age of neoliberal empowerment – where empowerment works to “produce self-governing and self-caring social actors” (Sharma, 2008). (Gendered) subaltern empowered agents are increasingly writing into the digital present as “empowered, autonomous, agential subjects of history are the only ones who could find novelty in digital media’s social factory” (Jarrett, 2017). Such agential subjects emerge as digital subalterns – that are different from (yet linked with) what the subaltern studies collective conceptualized as “the subaltern.” This presentation will map digital subalternity through discourses of digital inclusion and access through spaces of leisure, work and financialization.

**Radhika Gajjala** is a Professor of Media and Communication and of American Culture Studies at Bowling Green State University, USA. She has researched non-profit organizations and also engaged in community partnerships with biracial communities in the U.S. Books include *Online Philanthropy: Connecting, Microfinancing, and Gaming for Change* (forthcoming in 2018); *Cyberculture and the Subaltern* (Lexington Press, 2013) and *Cyberselves: Feminist Ethnographies of South Asian Women* (Altamira, 2004).

**María-Dolores García-Borrón**, Independent scholar

**Aspects in the Cinema on Migrants, and the Cross-culture Flow of Concepts**

A brief discussion about different problems in some famous Indian and Pakistani desi/videsi films concerning migration, seeing how securities/insecurities, resilience and care communities compare –also with some movies from several Hispanic and other Western countries (Western Migrant and Diasporic Cinema as well as “Accented Cinema” in the words of H.Naficy); explicating their historical importance as a cultural form and political practice, and discussing how implicit philosophies and imaginations in different states change, or not, overtime.
Influenced by identities, cultural policies, educational or socio-political interests, these very abundant films include everything from drama and poignancy to comedy and hilarity; from classics like Chaplin’s *The Immigrant* (1917), to S. Frear’s/H.Kureishi’s *My Beautiful Laundrette* (UK, 1985), R. Bahrani’s *Man Push Cart* (2005), K. Johar’s *My Name is Khan* (2010) or A. Kashyap’s stories on Indian domestic/global “perpetually-inmotion migrant”; up to works like *Immigration Game* (K. Zlatnik, 2017, Germany), on a dangerous internet and TV show as the sole way to get residence permits, or till Mira Nair’s *The Migration* (Bollywood, 2017; not to be mistaken for *The Migration*, K. Hamilton, 2017, New Zealand, on future global migrations due to climate change). For instance, in the 1958 Spanish comedy *Una chica de Chicago* (“A girl from Chicago”), by M.Mur Oti, a girl returns to her Spanish village, imbued with American feminist ideas; at first everybody gets confused, even scared, when she challenges old ways. This plot reminds obviously of Indian films from the 1990s and 2000s, on the comeback of NRIs to their towns in India. Whereas today in the 2010s, we are again steps ahead with films like first Pakistani Oscar-nominated *Zinda Bhaag* (2013), 2016 superhit *Janaan*, taking girls’ migration and comeback for granted, while promoting Pakistani culture, and *Chalay Thay Saath* (2017), on a woman doctor in-motion.

**María-Dolores García-Borrón** lectures on Comparative Linguistics and on Film, Drama, Opera, and Literature in Spain, China, India, Japan, Canada, United States. Her articles, photographs, films, translations, and doctoral dissertation “Introducción a la Historia de las Artes del Espectáculo en China” (URV 2003) are published by international media and scholarly reviews.

**Gourab Ghosh, Jawaharlal Nehru University**

**Sports, Desire and Law: Who is Afraid of Forbidden Sex/Body?**

The last couple of decades, marked by wide-ranging neoliberal reforms, have witnessed an increasing communalization of our society. This has strengthened the most reactionary facets of our social world — from caste structures to neo-liberal policies to domination based on gender and sexuality—-in South Asia. Though sexuality rights’ movement is very young in India as well as in South Asia, significant developments in legal and social terms can be seen in many places of South Asia. In the context of India, the gender-sexuality movement have witnessed moments of state-interventions, resistance, public outrage and assertions of rights and choices in the fields of love, sports and law. In this process, the campus-collectives, NGOs, activist forums, literatures, and films become successful to bring out both the erotic/phobic and the precariat/resistant of India.

Through selected case studies and activist-experiences, this paper wishes to bring out certain debates and fissures on sexuality rights, invisibilization of certain identities within the queer movement and ‘illegibilities’ in understanding of agency and autonomy; thus, questioning the idea of masculinities/feminities, ethics/ morality, law/ rights. The paper seeks to focus on the role, resilience, care and politicization through case studies on sportsperson, transgender professionals and same-sex desire in an age of commercialization and authoritarianism campaigned by neo-liberal and communal forces who want to suppress any form of protest and identities of the deviant Other.
Gourab Ghosh is a doctoral student at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU. His PhD is on the Political Jatras of Bengal. He is currently the recipient of Fulbright FLTA fellowship at the University of Notre Dame, USA. He has been actively involved in the LGBTIQ+ activism in JNU and Delhi.

Meghan Gorman-DaRif, University of Texas at Austin
Post-Magic: The Female Naxalite at 50 in Arundhati Roy’s The Ministry of Utmost Happiness
In the preface to Gender and Radical Politics in India: Magic moments of Naxalbari, Mallarika Sinha Roy takes her title from the transcript of an interview with a former Naxalite woman which Roy identifies as representative of the female perspective on such engagement. The interviewee explains, “Those were the best days of my life . . . in those years I lived as a human being . . . seta chillo ekta ashchorjyo somoy (Those were magic moments)” (x). The import of this metaphor, Roy explains, is its ability to “convey [the] duality” of “[p]ersecution, pain and tribulation” along with “wonder, surprise and hope” (xi). The early stage of the Naxalite Movement from roughly 1967-1975, is often represented as embodying this powerful duality. If one considers Mahasweta Devi’s “Draupadi” (1978) from this angle, one can read Dopdi/Draupadi’s final confrontation with Senanayak as precisely such a magic moment of struggle and pain, but also of victory. This paper considers how such representations of and metaphors for the experiences of the female Naxalite have changed over time, focusing on literary representations of female Maoist guerilla fighters active in India today. 2017 saw the 50th anniversary of Naxalbari, along with the publication of Arundhati Roy’s much-anticipated new novel, which presents a very different version of the female Maoist fighter. This paper argues that Roy’s iteration of this figure is ‘post-magic’, and suggests that despite the author’s sympathy for the current guerilla movement, particularly its female participants, “wonder, surprise and hope” are evacuated from her depiction in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness. Through a consideration of both literary form and contemporary history, I engage with the reasons for this shift and their consequences when it comes to the potential and imaginary of violent resistance.

Meghan Gorman-DaRif is a PhD Candidate in the Department of English at The University of Texas at Austin. Her dissertation analyzes representations of historical revolutionary violence in contemporary novels in the context of the global war on terror, focusing on the Naxalite movement in India and the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya.

Uddipana Goswami, University of Pennsylvania
This paper focuses on Anglophone writer Jahnavi Baruah’s fiction and analyzes the vulnerability that Baruah’s characters face in both the public and private domains. It also situates Baruah’s female characters amidst the specters of fear and violence besetting the conflicted questions of home/land in the region.

Uddipana Goswami is a Fulbright-Nehru Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania. She is writing on gender and ethno-nationalist conflicts in Northeast India.
Sukanya Gupta, University of Southern Indiana
Writing the Bacha Posh & Literary Care Communities
Both Jenny Nordberg’s *The Underground Girls of Kabul: In Search of a Hidden Resistance in Afghanistan* (nonfiction) and Nadia Hashimi’s *The Pearl That Broke its Shell* (fiction) bring to light the little known and clandestine Afghan custom of *bacha posh*—which allows young girls to live their primarily pre-adolescent years as a boy, before they are forced to convert back and resume their “normal” lives as women. The *bacha posh* are created by their immediate families, who also help keep up appearances. The larger society allows a *bacha posh* to remain concealed as a boy till the girl physically matures, and it is no longer possible to present her as a boy. But the *bacha posh* are not supported emotionally, both during their time as boys and after they resume their “normal” lives. This paper compares the different writing styles with which Nordberg and Hashimi approach the sensitive subject and examines how these two texts illustrate the precarious existence of the *bacha posh*—who for all official purposes don’t exist. As this paper shows, by providing a platform for the *bacha posh* to voice the precarity of their lives these texts generate much needed discussion, dialogue, and provide a basic understanding of a quaint custom. Ultimately, the texts may be seen as sites of what Lorey calls “care community in which our relationality with others is no longer interrupted but is regarded as fundamental” (99) and “the point is first of all to generate common notions in order to probe and establish what is commonly shared—by way of which the potential for changing existing conditions can be emphasized” (100).

Sukanya Gupta is Associate Professor of English and the Director of International Studies at University of Southern Indiana. Her research and teaching interests include Post-Colonial Studies, South Asian Diaspora Studies, Bollywood, and World Literature. She has published articles in anthologies like *Negotiating: Gender and Sexual Identity in Contemporary Turkey* and in journals such as *South Asian Popular Culture*, *South Asian Diaspora*, and *South Asian Review*.

Khem Guragain, York University
Dalit Victimisation: Recasting the Nation and Re-Claiming the Pariah Identity in Bama’s *Sangati*
Dalit remains outside the Indian nationalist imaginary. Dalit victimisation is even more scary in current Hindu fundamentalist political leadership, which has adopted the slogan of “Hindutva” deliberately pushing the lower castes Dalits to the margin. In order to explore and re-evaluate the impact of Dalit victimisation in subaltern literary discourse, I seek to unpack the complex connections between gender and caste, and their intertwined relations in Bama’s *Sangati* (1994), which presents the “stories not only about the sorrows and tears of Dalit women, but also about their lively and rebellious culture; their eagerness not to let life crush or shatter them, but rather to swim against the tide”. Bringing stories directly from the oppressed women in their own voice Bama interrogates the postcolonial discourse which tends to universalize the postcolonial experiences undermining the specificities of the local. Bringing the voices of victimised women from the lowest strata of the Indian society, Bama not only demonstrates the continuum of women’s historical suffering but also interrogates and destabilises the nationalist narrative that tends to overlook the presence of the subaltern. This paper analyses how *Sangati* questions the Indian nationalist rhetoric that imagines a society based on the male Brahmin’s superiority and his power as a privileged “white man” taken for granted, and, also, the discrepancy between the
professed beliefs of the Catholic Churches and their practices in Indian society. I argue that, challenging the patronising notion that Dalits cannot speak and represent themselves, Bama shows that there are ways in which Dalits can shout out loud and claim their subjectivity despite their perpetual victimisation under caste atrocities and Hindu religious social structure. Bama’s attempt is, in a way, a response to Gayatri Spivak’s provocative question in “Can the subaltern speak?”

Khem Guragain is a Doctoral candidate in English at York University. He received his first M.A. in English from Tribhuvan University, and second M.A. in Literatures of Modernity from Ryerson University. He taught graduate courses on non-Western literatures and Postcolonial literatures, and undergraduate courses on creative writing, communications, and non-fiction at Tribhuvan University. He is interested in exploring the intricate relationship of Hinduism with caste, class and culture in South Asian literatures. A study of the emergence of Dalit literature as a response to Hindu nationalist discourse, and its interrogation of the mainstream literature fall under his area of investigation.

Ambreen Hai, Smith College

Domestic Servants and Feudal Narrators in Attia Hosain’s Short Stories

A front-page news item in yesterday’s New York Times (Sunday, July 16) titled “Maid’s Dispute in India Erupts into Class War” describes how an unprecedented violent riot broke out between maids and their “madams, or the maids’ families and their employers in a luxury gated community outside New Delhi as a culmination of longstanding disputes and fundamentally discrepant perceptions. While “conflicts between domestic workers and their employers are a regular feature of Indian crime logs”, such a full-scale expression of anger, resentment and misunderstanding between the rich and the poor, or between socially marginalized, precarious domestic workers and affluent, socially powerful employers, is new, even as it recognizes their mutual “symbiotic” dependence in a social system built on deference, stigmatization, and inequality. This paper will explore early iterations of the complex relationships between domestic servants (maids, cooks, gardeners, gatekeepers) and their employers in Attia Hosain’s neglected short stories (from her 1953 collection Phoenix Fled). (Hosain is better known for her 1961 post-Partition novel Sunlight on a Broken Column) It will argue that Hosain, writing as an expatriate living in Britain, looked back both nostalgically and analytically to examine with unusual empathetic attention the intimate lives, gendered micropolitics, interdependencies and mutual misunderstandings between feudal employers within a pre-Independence taluqdari system. It will also argue that while Hosain was among the first South Asian English writers to devote attention and empathy to domestic servants and their interactions with each other as well as with their employers, her execution both enables and impedes her project. While the short story form allows her to attend to multiple perspectives and give greater space to marginalized, subaltern subjectivities, her use of upper or middle class narrative voices prevents her from imagining or realizing the full potential of the consciousnesses of those marginalized figures, and her narratives occasionally lapses into negative stereotypes about servants and servitude. The paper will both highlight the extraordinary pioneering work and progressive, surprising insights of Hosain’s early short stories, and address their limitations as they attempt to explore a multi-layered, lost world, key elements of which nonetheless continue, and demand attention in later South Asian English literature.
Ambreen Hai is Professor of English Language and Literature at Smith College, where she teaches Anglophone postcolonial literature, contemporary literary theory, and literature of the British Empire. She is the author of *Making Words Matter: The Agency of Colonial and Postcolonial Literature*, and many scholarly articles on postcolonial writing, and is currently working on a book project on domestic servitude in South Asian English literatures.

**John Hawley, Santa Clara University**

*Manohar Mouli Biswas, Amitav Ghosh, and The Great Derangement: Countering Androcentrism in an Age of Precarity*

Surviving in My World: Growing Up Dalit in Bengal (2013/ trans. 2015), Manohar Mouli Biswas, a dalit literary activist for over three decades, writes about his deprived childhood, where he struggled to receive an education in the Kulna district bordering the Sundarbans. There was no colonial governance, no railways, health care or police. He depicts a people facing a precarious existence with solidarity that encompassed Muslims and that was undergirded by the Matua religious sect, which questioned the caste system while emphasizing self-worth. Another advocate for the preservation of the Sundarbans and its people, novelist Amitav Ghosh writes in *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (2016) that “my ancestors were ecological refugees long before the term was invented” (3). In this paper I would like to read these two works against the backdrop of the CFP’s reference to Carol A. Stabile and Carrie Rentschler, who have pointed out how precarity results in “an arrogant and androcentric militarized culture.” Can literary writers inspire the care communities in which “our relationality with others is no longer interrupted but is regarded as fundamental”? Or must we follow the trajectory outlined by Ursula Heise, who writes in *Imagining Extinction: The Cultural Meanings of Endangered Species* (2016) about “the sixth mass extinction of species in the history of life on Earth. . . the first one caused by humans.” What are the rhizomatic connections between readers of these books who observe the states of insecurity and consider the role that humanities can actively play in this world?

**John C. Hawley** is Professor of English at Santa Clara University. Past president of the US chapter of the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, former chair of his department, and former member of three executive committees of the Modern Language Association, he has edited 16 books and published many articles on postcolonial topics. He is a recipient of a Rockefeller Foundation study grant at their Bellagio Center, and of five NEH summer stipends.

**Shalim Muktadir Hussain, Jamia Millia Islamia**

*Sub-National Fantasies in Genre Fiction- a Study of Kanchan Barua’s Asimot Jar Heral Sima*

This paper reads a post-war fantasy novel by Kanchan Barua that has been understudied in critical accounts of Assamese literature biased more towards realism. His reading reveals how the maligned genre of fantasy can be a powerful vehicle for articulating anxieties about an emergent discourse of sub-national identity.

**Md. Shalim Muktadir Hussain** is a doctoral candidate at the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia. His research interests include Literary Historiography and Popular Culture.
Asif Iqbal, Michigan State University

A Postcolonial Analysis of the Fragments in Akhteruzzaman Elias’s Chilekothar Sepai

A postcolonial analysis of the fragments in Akhteruzzaman Elias’ *Chilekothar Sepai* (1995) depicts the mass movement of 1969 against the Ayub Khan regime in East Pakistan. Moreover, we find the novel engaging the urban and rural realities of struggle against oppressive regimes, be it the state or the feudal chieftain of the village lording over the subaltern. The bold depiction of Unoshotturer Gono-ovvuthan (the mass movement of 1969) can prompt the readers to identify the novel as a paean for the Bengali national struggle culminating in the Liberation War of 1971. The novel does indeed engage the Bengali national struggle. But the lens through which it views the conflict between East Pakistan and West Pakistan cannot be understood from a framework that is fully focused on nationalism. In fact, Elias prompts us to ask if belonging to a space or a place is at all possible. That is, if we exist as an individual, or, if we function as a community. Or, it is as if we are perpetually disintegrating by becoming subjects of the powers of different stripes? How can then we decolonize our minds? What about Osman’s psychological disorientation at the end of the novel? Can we read it as an example of his escaping the bondages of the self, the community and the nation? To find answers to the above questions this paper will engage the works of postcolonial critics, notably Aamir Mufti, Gayatri Spivak and Ranajit Guha. I aim to argue that *Chilekothar Sepai* is engaging the fragments of the narrations that would be fused together to float the concept of the “Bangladesh” nation during the Bangladesh War of 1971.

Asif Iqbal is a doctoral student of English at Michigan State University. He has completed his Masters in English at the University of Maine in 2014. His research focuses on the intersections of British literary representation of India, literatures in South Asian languages and Anglophone South Asian literatures. He is also a bi-lingual essayist and poet with publications in *Maps & Metaphors: Writings by Young Writers from Bangladesh and United Kingdom* (2006) and in *9th Edge: Creative Writings from Bangladesh* (2012).

Nalini Iyer is Professor of English at Seattle University. She is co-editor (with Bonnie Zare) of *Other Tongues: Rethinking the Language Debates in India* and co-author (with Amy Bhatt) of *Roots and Reflections: South Asians in the Pacific Northwest*, and co-editor (with Amritjit Singh and Rahul Gairola) of *Revisiting India’s Partition: New Essays in Memory, Culture, and Politics*. She has published articles on Bharati Mukherjee, Lalitambika Antherjanam, and M.G. Vassanji, among others. She is Vice President of SALA.

Maryse Jayasuriya, University of Texas at El Paso

Migration and Sexuality in S. J. Sindu’s Marriage of a Thousand Lies and Rahul Mehta’s No Other World

If migration always carries with it some degree of precariousness, this uncertain condition is magnified for LGBTQ immigrants and refugees from South Asia, particularly for second-generation immigrants who often are compelled to struggle against the expectations and assumptions of their first-generation parents and diasporic communities. Two recent books have confronted this double precarity directly: S. J. Sindu’s *Marriage of a Thousand Lies* and Rahul Mehta’s *No Other World*, both of which are debut novels published in 2017. Sindu writes within the context of the Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora in the United States, offering a story that complements influential accounts of Tamil diasporic life in North America like V.V.
Ganeshananthan’s *Love Marriage* and Shyam Selvadurai’s *Hungry Ghosts*. Mehta, meanwhile, offers a gay coming of age narrative for its Indian American protagonist that is shaped by both the pressures of life in the Indian diaspora in the United States and by the intersection of race and sexuality. My paper, which draws on my earlier work on Ganeshananthan and Selvadurai, considers the complex interrelationship of nationality, gender, sexuality, and diaspora in these rich and compelling new novels. Sindu and Mehta both examine the intersection of immigrant and gay identities; where they differ is that Mehta’s protagonist seeks to learn how to negotiate between his family responsibilities and his own needs and desires by going back to the homeland, India, while Sindu’s protagonist comes to a realization of what she wants by staying firmly entrenched within the hostland.

Maryse Jayasuriya is Associate Professor in the Department of English and Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Texas at El Paso. She is the author of *Terror and Reconciliation: Sri Lankan Anglophone Literature, 1983-2009* (Lexington, 2012). She has published articles on South Asian and Asian-American literature in such venues as *South Asian Review, Journeys, Margins*, and *The Journal of Postcolonial Cultures and Societies*.

Asha Jeffers, University of King’s College

Situating Kwai-Yun Li’s *The Palm Leaf Fan* in Diasporic South Asian Literature

Kwai-Yun Li’s 2006 collection of short stories, *The Palm Leaf Fan*, offers snapshots into the twentieth century lives of Calcutta’s Chinese community as well as a glimpse into the second migration of some members of the community to Canada as political shifts in both India and China unsettle their already precarious positioning in the Bengal metropolis. This collection is one of the few fictional texts to focus on this particular concentration point of the Chinese diaspora. The stories’ intimate focus on the streets and homes of Chinatown, with a particular emphasis on the lives of girls and women, weaves a compelling narrative of the ways that inter- and intrastate relationships, colonial legacies, and political revolutions interact with personal relationships, religious practices, and individual embodiment, and the way that all of these forces are felt and navigated by ordinary people whose existence is barely even considered by those in power. Calcutta’s Chinatown is a site of both care and conflict for the community represented in the collection, often simultaneously. In this paper, I suggest the importance of seeing South Asia not just as an origin point for diaspora but also a site of diasporic settlement and double-diasporic dispersion. I also consider how the novel’s depiction of the second dispersion situates the stories within the larger world of diasporic Indian literature, particularly in the way that the stories approach the frequently written city now known as Kolkata from an uncommon direction.

Asha Jeffers is a Faculty Fellow in the Foundation Year Programme at University of King’s College in Halifax, Nova Scotia. When you see her at SALA 2018, she will have defended her dissertation in English at York University in Toronto. She is the outgoing Graduate Student Representative on the executive committee of SALA. Her articles “Means of Escape, Means of Invention: Hindu Figures and Black Pop Culture in Rakesh Satyal’s Blue Boy” and “Unstable Indianness: Double Diaspora in Ramabai Espinet’s The Swinging Bridge and M.G. Vassanji’s When She Was Queen” appear in *South Asian Review* 36.3 and 37.1 respectively.

Saiyeda Khatun, Johnson & Wales University

Precarity and Resistance: Women in Chitra Diva Karuni’s *Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs*
and *The Thing Around Your Neck* by Chimamanda Adichie
Both stories of diaspora by Divakaruni and Adichie represent the cultural alienation of their protagonists and the precarious space that they inhabit in the host country (U.S). Both authors focus on how identity is shaped and contested in the precarious space of diasporic culture, specifically for women. In Divakaruni’s story, the author not only represents the main character Jayanti’s experience of confusion and anger, but also focuses on the struggle of her uncle and aunt, a couple in diaspora, living a life of alienation and fear. The story traces Jayanti’s shocking discovery of how removed she is from the silver pavements and golden roofs that she aspired to while coming to America. But there’s another discovery at the end. Jayanti experiences the first snowfall of the winter, “the silver marvel of snow” as she calls it. The symbolism of snow at the end of the story signals hope and demonstrates how the main character transcends fear, and is emboldened to reclaim belonging and a space for herself. “The Thing Around Your Neck” is the interior dialog of an immigrant from Nigeria, named Akunna, who struggles to find her identity while fear and doubts wrap around her neck with heavy weight. This story, by utilizing the second person narrator, powerfully depicts the fracture within the narrator. The story exposes various instances of cultural alienation and disjunction between expectation and reality. However, Akunna’s ability to critically understand, interrogate and cope with the “thing” around her neck makes Akunna a strong character who struggles to find a space for herself in the precarity of her immigrant life.

Saiyeda Khatun, Ph.D. is a professor of English at Johnson &Wales University. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Rhode Island with a specialization in postcolonial literature. She has published in *MELUS, Genders* and *South Asian Review*.

Alison Klein, Duke University
**The Poetics of Precarity: Images of Indenture in Indo-Caribbean Poetry**
Many Caribbean citizens of Indian descent experience an ongoing state of precarity. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, British colonizers fostered distrust between those of Indian and African descent in order to prevent solidarity between workers. In the 1960s, as colonialism fragmented in this region and nations fought for self-rule, political parties divided along ethnic lines, leading to violent clashes between groups. This tension continues in the Caribbean today: even though those of Indian descent are the largest ethnic group in countries like Guyana and Trinidad, they are frequently viewed as playing a minor role in Caribbean culture and society. Seeking a sense of belonging in this often-turbulent climate, many Indo-Caribbean poets have turned to their ancestors, exploring the experiences of the women who migrated to the Caribbean under indenture. However, poems written by Rajkumari Singh and Mahadai Das in the 1970s tend to be nationalist and anti-imperial, drawing attention to the colonial view of female migrants as mere bodies, useful for labor or sexual gratification. At the same time, these authors celebrate Indo-Caribbean women’s capacity for reproduction, indicating a belief in the fertile possibilities of the people and the land. By contrast, for authors David Dabydeen and Lelawattee Manoo-Rahming, writing in the wake of the violent and dictatorial political movements of the 1970s, this hopefulness has dissipated. While these authors also focus on the bodies of the women laborers’ and their connection to the land, they do so not to celebrate their reproductive capability, but to create a sense of rootedness. This paper will analyze poems by these authors to demonstrate a shift from anti-colonial, nationalistic sentiments to a sense of displacement. I
suggest that for many Caribbean citizens of Indian descent, the sense of precarity has not decreased since the end of imperialism, and may indeed have increased.

Alison Klein is a Lecturer in International Writing at Duke University. She earned her Ph.D. in English literature from the CUNY Graduate Center. Her book manuscript, Seductive Hierarchies, is an exploration of gender roles in the literature of Caribbean indenture. Her work has been published in the anthology Indo-Caribbean Feminisms and the journals Anthurium, South Asian Review, and The Journal of Commonwealth Literatures.

Samadrita Kuiti, University of Connecticut
The Graveyard of Utmost Happiness: Resistance, Resilience, and a Requiem for the “Disappeared” in Arundhati Roy’s The Ministry of Utmost Happiness
In context of the existence of opposing discourses about India as an emergent South Asian soft power and a nation increasingly making international headlines for its rampant political corruption and instances of sectarian violence against religious minorities, I analyze Arundhati Roy’s The Ministry of Utmost Happiness as a narrative which successfully mirrors the multidimensional contemporary political reality of India by taking its readers on a tour of its zones of geopolitical tension. I go on to claim that despite its focus on the grim horrors of the Indian occupation of Kashmir and the aftermath of the revival of aggressive Hindu nationalist politics, the novel celebrates the invincibility of the marginalized subject's fragile rebellion against the brute force of the state. By examining textual clues and the recent political history of the subcontinent, I identify three leitmotifs found in the novel and establish their legitimacy as strategies of endurance and resistance against the increasingly volatile and fraught political climate of the country – (1) the coming together of a band of social rejects who defy great odds to cultivate bonds of emotional solidarity and sympathy to forge a care community that strives to protect values constantly under threat in the world outside the confines of the derelict Old Delhi graveyard which unwittingly becomes a site of revolution, (2) queer portrayals of motherhood and womanhood (as embodied by the two central characters of Anjum and Tilo and their relationships with abandoned girl children) that represent a dialectical counterpoint to the notions of domesticated motherhood and femininity, (3) and the deliberate and inadvertent blurring of narrow identity markers of some of the characters that bring into question the infallibility of righteous identity-based politics that has remained an unchanging fixture in the subcontinent’s political landscape.

Samadrita Kuiti is a PhD student in the English department (with a specialization in gender studies & sexuality and postcolonial & world literatures) at the University of Connecticut. Her research and teaching interests also include gender in dystopian young adult narratives, the depiction of otherness in contemporary popular entertainment, and feminist science & speculative fiction. More specifically her work examines the role played by South Asian literatures authored by women in shaping the discourse on transnational feminism.

Rebecca Kumar, Morehouse College
Sanitation and Civility in Rohinton Mistry's Squatter
Rohinton Mistry’s short story, “Squatter,” features Sarosh, an Indian man who moves to Canada for work. Before leaving his hometown, Sarosh promises his friends and family that if he does not become a “full Canadian” in 10 years, he will return. Upon arriving in Canada, he struggles
to use the Western, sitting toilet. He consults the help of immigration counselors and medical professionals, but despite his decade long efforts, he is unable to use the bathroom the Canadian way, and, in his failure to assimilate, shamefully returns to India. While seemingly comedic Sarosh’s predicament invites salient questions for South Asian studies. For the broader genealogy of scatology and sanitization signifies what German sociologist Norbert Elias calls a “civilizing process” that was initiated in the European Early Modern Period, and informs our contemporary understandings of waste, containment, and civility. In the (post)colonial context, sanitation has been historically coded as Western/Eastern, progressive/backwards, clean/dirty. And as it's popularly understood, Western sitting toilets have been deemed more civilized because they lift human bodies off what has been perceived as their primal haunches in order to sit properly upright. It’s clear that Sarosh internalized these colonial codes. This paper takes “Squatter” as a point of departure to discuss the complex relationship between sanitation and civility. It will not only consider the ways in which sanitation has been used to enforce European colonial mores. It will also engage with present-day debates around toilets in India, intersecting longstanding postcolonial concerns with immediate issues regarding gender and class. In particular, it will study Prime Minister Modi’s national “Clean India” campaign and grassroots movements in which Indian women demand toilets from their future husbands before marriage. Ultimately this paper suggests that toilets powerfully illustrate the precariousness of contemporary South Asian identity abroad and at home.

Rebecca Kumar Ph.D. is a professor of English Literature at Morehouse College. Her scholarly interests include: Global Shakespeare Studies, Postcolonial Studies, Critical Race Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Pop Culture. She is also pursuing an MFA in Fiction at Georgia State University.

Robert LaRue, Moravian College
One Cannot Speak What One Does Not See: Queer Sexual Identities and Hybridity in Postcolonial Discourse
While concerns of queerness are not particularly foreign to postcolonial discourse (these concerns undergird both those arguments promoting a universal human experience, and those urging the importance of cultural specificity), there remains a dearth of analysis of the relationships between queer sexual identities and hybridity. Taking seriously Spivak’s assertion that the subaltern cannot be made to speak—especially through the very language that has been used to erase his presence, this essay pays special attention to the consequences of failing to recognize postcolonial queer sexual identities.

Reading the discourse surrounding Uganda’s 2014 anti-gay act, this essay explores what it means for queer postcolonial citizens to speak in the context of a heteronormativized postcolonial discourse which marks queer-identified postcolonials as outside the postcolony. I work to extend Spivak’s seminal question, asking not can the postcolonial queer speak but does the postcolonial queer want to speak? In what ways might such speaking be performed, and what might such speaking ask of us in order for it to become intelligible?

Because a continued (re)presentation of postcolonial subjects as heterosexual simply displaces systems of oppression onto other bodies rather than dissolving those systems, I suggest that attending to the propagation of a heteronormativized discourse offers a more complete analysis
of postcolonial experiences. Articulating postcolonial queer identities as hybridizations, I challenge assumptions that a single mode of political resistance exists for postcolonial queers, offering instead the possibility for a multiplicity of politics and modes of resistance. Ultimately, I argue that recognizing postcolonial queer sexual identities as hybrid engenders not only a re-orientation away from the defensive moves of recovery, denial and mobilization, but also a re-evaluation of the very foundations of (post-)colonial discourse themselves.

**Robert LaRue** is Assistant Professor of English at Morovian College, PA, and the author of a number of essays and is working on an edited volume titled *Bodies at Work: Reimagining the Lines of (Re)production* with co-editor Stephanie Peebles Tavera (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). He has presented his research at a number of venues, and examines the intersection between queer and black studies.

**Anuja Madan**, Kansas State University

**Precarity and Resistance in Zubaan Books’ Drawing the Line: Indian Women Fight Back**

Zubaan’s graphic anthology *Drawing the Line: Indian Women Fight Back* (2015) comprises of 14 vignettes that represent urban Indian women’s lived experiences. The book originated in a workshop organized by Zubaan and Goethe-Institute as a response to the horrific 2012 rape of a Delhi girl, which caused widespread outrage. The young women artists represent the precarity of being a woman in India by addressing a range of issues: sexual violence and abuse, street harassment, circumscription into gender roles, the fairness industry, misogyny, the pressures of marriage, workplace discrimination, and government apathy. In her introduction, Nisha Susan acknowledges the prevalence of sexism and sexual violence in India, but emphasizes that Indian women are so much more than the “victim” label that Westerners slap on them. She reminds us that misogyny, sexism and rape are global problems. My paper argues that *Drawing the Line* is very effective in countering the still-persistent production of the “third world woman” as a monolithic subject (Mohanty 51), since it gives Indian women control over their own narratives, while showcasing the complexity and multiplicity of their experiences. Women are shown to navigate daily stresses and oppression in different ways, from forming care communities comprised of women, to political protest. For instance, Diti Mistry’s ‘Mumbai Local’ narrates the story of a woman protected and helped by others in the ladies compartment of a local train in a moment of need, while Ita Mehrotra’s rendering of Irom Sharmila’s life highlights Sharmila’s advocacy of women’s rights. In a few texts, the resistance takes a mythical/fantastical turn, as in ‘Someday’ by Samidha Gunjal, a triumphant goddess fantasy in which a young woman devours lecherous male predators. While the book is in itself an act of transnational feminism, the artists suggest that frequently, the battle against oppression is fought individually.

**Anuja Madan** is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at Kansas State University, where she teaches courses in world literature and cultural studies. She has published a co-authored book on English textbooks used in Indian schools, titled *Notes of Running Feet*. She has published articles on an Indian graphic novel, Sita's Ramayana, picturebook adaptations of the Mahabharata, Jean-Luc Godard's films, and *The Arabian Nights*. An article on Indian mythological animation films is forthcoming.

**Auritro Majumdar**, University of Houston

**Is the Precarious the same as the Postcolonial?**
My presentation initiates an exploration of and comparative framing between two key terms of pedagogic cultural theory. I provide an intellectual genealogy of the precarious and the postcolonial, through a brief rehearsal of the work of theorists such as Gilles Deleuze, Antonio Negri, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak et al illuminating some of the common or shared conceptual vocabularies therein. I wish to argue that the concepts of the precarious and the postcolonial arise from specific socio-historic constellations underpinned by changes in global capital: as such, any theoretical exegesis of these terms necessitates an engagement with and re-illumination of the categories of capital itself. My presentation, finally, underscores the key importance of these seemingly abstract topics by touching on the current debate in literary circles around the postcolonial and world literature categories, and how these can be better understood by foregrounding the SALA conference's themes of "precarity, resistance, and care communities".

Auritro Majumder is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Houston. His work on global Anglophone literature, cinema and critical theory has appeared in several venues, including Comparative Literature Studies, Critical Asian Studies, Interventions, Journal of Postcolonial Writing, Mediations, Research in African Literatures etc.

Rituparna Mitra, James Madison College
Precarious Duniyas: Post-Human Subjectivity and Politics in The Ministry of Utmost Happiness
In The Posthuman (2013), feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti asks us to urgently examine the anthropocentricism that characterizes the Humanities. The post-human condition in the contemporary phase of late-capitalism, she contends, emphasizes solidarity with multiple others – it seeks a relationality, a connection with geo/bio/techno environments, is premised on “a-together-but-not-Oneness” that can lead ultimately to an ethical relationship with radical Others. Rejecting the ontological foundations of politics in bios, Braidotti’s vision calls for a zoe-centered politics and ethics. She thus provides a framework to examine precarity and the possible solidarities through which a new “post-human” subjectivity and politics may emerge. In my paper, I will examine Arundhati Roy’s novel, The Ministry of Utmost Happiness (2017) arguing that her literary practices consummately carve a space for this post-human subject and relational politics. Disparaged by some critics for its desultory structure and lack of central characters, the novel represents an acute enlarging of the novel form – what a character calls “becoming everyone - no everything” – to embody “an aggregate”. The novel’s structure, according to Roy is meant to mirror that of a sprawling metropolis in the Global South – where planned spaces are constantly ambushed by encroachments by the “surplus and the unwanted.” The novel thus spatializes both precarity and the embryonic communities that emerge teetering on the porous borders between life and death, human and non-human, toxic and sustainable, abandonment and community. My paper will examine this spatialization through two sites that are central to Ministry: the borderland of Kashmir and the urban crannies of Delhi – Old and New – where Roy locates affirmative alliances amidst debris and dereliction. For Roy, the necropolis – both the deathworlds of Kashmir and graveyards in Old Delhi – become settings for the emergence of a particularly salient community creating strong webs of attachment and making strident claims on the future.
Rituparna Mitra is a Visiting Assistant Professor at James Madison College. Her scholarship maps the affective and psychic terrains of statehood and political subjectivity in South Asia. Her publications include “Affective Histories and Partition Narratives in South Asia” in *The Postcolonial World* (2016) and “‘A Powerful Sense of Inhabitance’: Lyric, Memory and Enduring Community in South Asia” scheduled to be published in *Beyond Partition: Mediascapes and Literature in Post-colonial India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* (Forthcoming). Rituparna teaches courses on Trauma, Memory and World Literature and on Migration, Displacement and Borders, drawing on literature, philosophy and cultural politics.

Payel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee, Ahmedabad University

**Unhomely Home: The Precariousness of Being, Belonging, and Becoming**

This paper anticipates the need to recognize an existential anxiety with an estranging sense of unbecoming that postcolonial homes incur, being enunciated as “differential sites of social formation” while becoming the disruptive discourse of global precariousness. I examine the ways in which home has emerged as a conspicuous motif in the South Asian literary imagination, encapsulating the perplexity of living (146), and “the ambivalent interrogation of agency” (148), through Nayomi Munaweera’s fictions. The idea is to tease out the critical investigations into the “paradigmatic postcolonial experience” and interpret home which Homi Bhabha theorizes as, the “unhallowed spaces” of ambiguous associations among the discordance of plural ethnicities. In *Island of a Thousand Mirrors*, home emerges as an overlapping space of exile and belonging for individuals negotiating with their distorted histories and burdens of disgruntled realities amidst a civil war in Sri Lanka. While Yashodhara, an expatriate Sinhala, struggles to relocate her lost home within the imposed de-rootedness, Saraswathi a young Tamil girl, is seduced by the dream of a home promised through the frenzied violence of radical regionalism. The other text, *What Lies Between Us*, has Ganga who embodies both the resistance and a virulent anger against the irreconcilable extremities of her simultaneous belonging to two homes/nations. I argue that home in these postcolonial discourses emerge as a precarious predicament and an unhomely space, situated within the dilemma of becoming and unbecoming. While conjuring the “archeologies of desire” within the idealized longing, it also accentuates an inescapable homecoming to a failed reconciliation between an imagined belonging to communities and the shifting paradigms of unsettled identities. Among these irate resistances of unbecoming selves in the literary space of South Asia, home is a precarious locus of discontent which surfaces as a systematic psychological lacuna in the critical sensibilities of a postcolonial belonging.

Payel Chattopadhyay Mukherjee is a Humanities researcher whose specializations include Postcolonial, Subaltern, and South Asian Studies; Cosmopolitanism; and Home. She has written for several scholarly publications including Routledge Research in Postcolonial Literatures, *South Asian Review, Journal of Human Values, The Book Review* and has presented her research at academic forums like The European Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies (EACLALS), The South Asian Literary Association (SALA), and Association for Asian Studies (AAS). She is also the recipient of the 2014 SALA Graduate Paper Prize.

Aniruddha Mukhopadhyay, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

**South Asian Bodies in American Television: Representation and Resistance**

In recent times, many American television shows have had a major South Asian lead in the cast ensembles. But while the inclusion of South Asians follows the positive trend in increased
casting of Asian minorities in mainstream media, these representations are still grappling with entrenched stereotypes. So South Asian men are represented as effeminate “mama’s boys” with “heavy Indian” accents who struggle to form romantic relationships in the US. South Asian women are severely under-represented even compared to their male counterparts. In my paper, I look at various representations of South Asians in contemporary TV, including Aziz Ansari in Parks and Recreation and Kunal Nayyar in The Big Bang Theory. These characters embody many of the representational problems of these shows while others like Ansari (again) in Master of None (a show scripted by Ansari) and Mindy Kaling in The Mindy Project address these representational issues and at the same time present nuanced South Asian leads. In my paper, I look at how alternate television platforms, like Netflix, with their global reach, create avenues for South Asian writers, directors, and actors to develop shows that can decenter the typical “WASP” protagonist, and thereby, deconstruct the normative in the circulation of stereotypes in the national imaginary. At the same time, while problematic, even stereotypical portrayals make South Asian bodies visible and thereby enable future spaces of self-representation. Characters like Raj in TBBT insert the South Asian into the American "imagiNation." And in the process, these problematic portrayals reveal the persistent insecurities of the South Asian-American diasporic community along with the insecurities of the heteronormative White majority regarding “brown” America. I explore how this recognition of both different and coincident insecurities enable South Asian-Americans to map themselves onto a larger multi-ethnic multicul-tural American community.

Aniruddha Mukhopadhyay, Assistant Professor of English at Texas A&M University-Kingsville, wrote his PhD dissertation on the subaltern and native informant in diasporic Indian English fiction. His research interests also include film studies and animal representations in postcolonial literatures. He organizes Professional Development workshops for the students in the Department of Language and Literature at TAMUK, and serves as Secretary of the English Program. He has served as Executive Committee member of the South Asian Literary Association, and is currently the Web Manager for the organization.

Tahira Naqvi is a Senior Urdu language lecturer at New York University. Author of two collections of short stories titled Attar of Roses and Other Stories of Pakistan and Dying in a Strange Country, she has also extensively translated works of Urdu fiction and prose. She is also known for her translations into English of a long list of stories, novels, novellas and essays of prominent Urdu author, Ismat Chughtai, as well as other well-known writers of Urdu fiction that include Premchand, Manto, Khadija Mastoor, Hajira Masroor and Ahmed Ali. She has completed a first novel and is currently working on translations into Urdu of stories by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Shaweta Nanda, Central University of Himachal Pradesh

Trans-forming the lives of Transgenders in India

Taking its cue from the title of the conference, this paper is divided into three sections. The first part seeks to examine the manner in which the condition of the Trans population is extremely precarious one of the largest democracies in the world that ostensibly promises equality, fraternity and liberty to all. Falling at the utmost periphery of “the charmed circle” (Gayle Rubin’s term) in the hetero-patriarchal society as it were, the lives of Transgendered population, especially of kinnars are marked by a series of rejections, oppressions and humiliations. Literary
works of trans activists such as A. Revathi and Lakshmi force us to rethink our conceptions about family, sexuality and identity. Using Pramod K Nayar’s approach to study Dalit autobiographies, the second part of the paper explores the how these literary voices not only serve as “testimonio” that give voice to their pain but also serve as tools of resistance that seek to dismantle the master narrative and stereotypes about sexual minorities. Studying Dr Nanda’s work, the paper explores how these writers become “resisting readers” (Judith Fetterley’s term) and seek to re-vise and re-read the dominant myths and mythological narratives from an alternate perspective. Furthermore, by taking into account the work which is done by care communities and NGOs such as Naz, Humsafar and Sangama foundations, the last part of the paper seeks to unearth the multiplicity and complexity of the margins itself as LGBTQ groups are fractured across class lines. The paper explores how their struggle continues despite attaining voting rights as most of the Hijra population is still forced to take recourse to either begging or sex work. Deploying the frame work of the Human Rights, the paper engages with issues of dignity, socio-economic, familial and property rights and health care including threat of HIV AIDS.

Shaweta Nanda has M.Phil in Literature in English from University of Delhi and is currently working as an Assistant Professor in Central University of Himachal Pradesh, India.

Summer Pervez, Lahore School of Economics
New Directions in Pakistani Fiction in English: On the Formation of Care Communities in Mohsin Hamid’s Exit West and Faiqa Mansab’s This House of Clay and Water
Two recent novels which have emerged out of Pakistan in 2017 are Mohsin Hamid’s Exit West and Faiqa Mansab’s debut novel, This House of Clay and Water. I propose to undertake a study of the formation of care communities in these novels, which the protagonists form in response to widespread distress resulting from political instability in the nation as it particularly affects minority communities such as women, children, and hijras. As Judith Butler argued in a 2009 lecture in Madrid, a state of “precarity” designates a “politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death.” In Exit West, the turbulent situation of terrorism and imagined civil war in an imagined nation, presumed to be Pakistan, causes Nadia and Saeed to become displaced refugees in a precarious world which results in a total dependency on one another as well as a deep bond of love. Nadia, in This House of Clay and Water, rebels against prescribed gender roles for women by forming unlikely friendships with a hijra named Bhanggi, an upper-class, married escort named Sasha, and Sasha’s young daughter, Zoya. I contend that in both novels, the formation of these relationships are central not only for mutual care which can heal trauma, but also for overcoming states of insecurity which cause the protagonists to feel trapped within their own bodies and nations. The formation of these care communities, although in response to marginalization, results in a liberating transformation of the self in each character which speaks to the power of resistance and resilience; ultimately, the novels not only create important awareness of issues faced by migrants and minorities, but can also serve to mobilize certain kinds of political activism in the minds of their readers.

Summer Pervez Sultan holds a BA and MA from the University of Western Ontario and a PhD from the University of Ottawa in Canada. She is currently a specialist in South Asian Literature & Film and Film Studies. Along with teaching and researching, she is also a working filmmaker, photographer, imagist poet, and activist for minority rights. She recently moved to Lahore, where
she is working some upcoming short and feature-length films while serving as Associate Professor in the Department of Media Studies, Art & Design in the School of Business at the Lahore School of Economics (LSE).

M.G. Prasuna, BITS Pilani-Hyderabad
The Agitator's Voice: Trials and Tribulations in Regional Muslim Literature in Telugu

The State of Telangana was formed in 2014 after prolonged agitation by the people. This agitation has triggered a new interest in issues of identity. Minority literature is one of the major trends in Telugu literature in the postcolonial period which found a new platform during the agitation for the new state of Telangana. Muslim literature in Telugu, which has emerged in the postcolonial era, assumes significance as it has successfully articulated the anxieties and social aspirations of the community in poetry, novels, short stories and other literary forms. The community feel marginalized politically, economically and socially and this gets highlighted in their writings. Many writers have voiced the identity problems of their community and the constraints of living harmoniously in the present social order.

This paper will investigate the relationships between ‘individual’ and ‘society’ and look for common trends between narratives which are personal as well as social, with particular reference to the works of Sk. Yusuf Baba (popularly known as Sky Baaba). He is one of the pioneers of ‘Muslim Vaadam’, a contemporary concept in Telugu literature. His articulations primarily deal with poverty, illiteracy, and helplessness of his community. There is a constant clash with the values and beliefs of the society he resides in and this gets reflected in most of his works. His works have had a major impact in exposing the injustice meted out to his community. His poems and short stories have been translated into English.

The plight of Muslim minorities is something that needs to be given more attention and consideration. This paper will examine how this community has been affected by social norms, social roles and cultural traditions, as reflected in the works of writer Sky Baaba.

G. Prasuna is currently Associate Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, BITS, Pilani – Hyderabad Campus. Her doctoral thesis is in the area of Comparative Literature. In an academic career spanning over 20 years, she has held teaching and administrative positions in various academic institutions. Her areas of research interest include English Language Studies, South Asian Literature, Diasporic Literature, Comparative Literature, Translation Studies and Minority Literature.

Jayana Jain Punamiya, Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster and University of Mumbai
Exit and (Re)Enter: Traversing through Doorways of Insecurities

From the year 1649 to 2018, it has been a long journey for the term “insecurity”. This paper will, at first, trace the roots of the term “insecurity” (dating back to King Charles I’s execution) in order to map its route of meanings and comprehend how “insecurity” over migration has become so palpable across the world today. It will then explore how, in particular states of insecurity, certain kinds of bodies will appear more precarious than others depending on the frames and scales we use to perceive them. Since literature is one such frame through which precarious bodies can be perceived, represented and contested, this paper will critically examine the notion
of insecurity and precarity through Mohsin Hamid’s latest novel *Exit West* (2017). The “chronotopic” frame of the allegorical doors in the novel both limit and provide its characters and readers the space of freedom to engage in metaphorical visual endeavours that are fundamental for the act of thinking, and to blur the boundaries between interiority-exteriority. This paper also argues that the protagonists Saaed and Nadia’s bodies assume a position of “transgredience” (Bakhtin 1929, 1984) to bring to fore the more flexible dimensions of Muslim cultures. Finally, by using Walter Benjamin’s metaphor of constellation (1977) and Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion of architectonics (1986), this study shows how congruency gets build between seemingly disparate and scattered entities in the novel to narrate the shared precarity and insecurity of humans across the world. In times where the “dangerous delusion” that all international disputes can be settled by military means (Einstein, A. “The Military Mentality,” 1947) hovers around us, this paper argues that Hamid’s *Exit West* offers several doorways and windows by calling for “planetary” (Spivak 2003) intervention from human subjects in the present moment through which optimism and hope can enter.

Jayana Jain Punamiya is a DAAD funded doctoral fellow (2016-19) at the Graduate School Practices of Literature, WWU Münster. She was awarded the EU funded Marie Curie Fellowship for ITN CoHaB project. She was offered the Heinrich Hertz Foundation Scholarship to pursue research in post-9/11 diasporic trajectories in South Asian novels and films. She completed M.A (Hons.) in English Literature, University of Mumbai and B.A (English & Hons. in History), St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai. She has recently started serving as an editor of *TextPraxis: A Digital Journal for Philology* and has taught at the English Department, WWU Münster, Germany.

Moumin Quazi is an Associate Professor of English at Tarleton State University. In addition to being a longtime member of SALA, he has edited CCTE Studies for 10 years; he also edits the book series, “*South Asian Art, Literature, and Culture Studies*” (Peter Lang Publishing); and, *Langdon Review of the Arts* in Texas.

Masood Raja, University of North Texas
**Humanistic Education, Radical Pedagogy, and Semiocapital**

In one of his recent books, Franco Berardi asserts that the ultimate fight for human dignity needs to be staged within the aesthetic realm: the realm of literature and feelings. Similarly, quite a few scholars of critical and radical pedagogy also mobilize the affective aspects of literary texts in order to train the ‘imagination’ and ‘praxis’ of our students. Furthermore, the neoliberal global order itself, a la Guy standing and others, relies inherently on precarity and precariat as an ideal workforce mostly for the benefit of the rich and the powerful. Taking the insights provided by Franco Berardi and others, in this paper I hope to propose an engaged method of reading and teaching literary texts in a way that our students not only understand the structuring mechanisms of neoliberal capital but also understand their responsibilities and obligations to their global others. Postcolonial studies, with its focus on issues of agency, hybridity, and cross culturalism, I believe, can be a revolutionary pedagogical field in teaching the kind of human subjectivities that are more tolerant and accepting of differences. Using the Aravind Adiga’s *The White Tiger* as my exemplary text, I hope to propose a method of teaching that broaches the subjects of individual responsibility, native agency, and the implication and overdetermination of human subjects through the forces of global capitalism. On the whole, my attempt would be to foster and encourage the kind of thinking and feeling that keeps us grounded within the local sans
nativism and enables our students to become nuanced global citizens without jettisoning the best practices of their own national/ regional cultures.

**Masood Raja** is the author of *The Religious Right* and the *Talibanization of America* (Palgrave 2016) and *Constructing Pakistan* (Oxford 2010). He specializes in postcolonial studies, globalization theory, and the study of Islamic cultures and politics. His critical essays have been published in various journals such as the *South Asian Review, Caribbean Studies, South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, Prose Studies, Mosaic, Radical Teacher* and others.

**Rajeswari Sunder Rajan** is Global Distinguished Professor at New York University, in the Department of English. Before that she taught in the English faculty at the University of Oxford, where she was Professorial Fellow of Wolfson College. She has been a Senior Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi and a Shansi Visiting Fellow at Oberlin College, Ohio. Sunder Rajan works in the areas of postcolonial studies, feminist theory, gender, law, and religion in South Asia, British Victorian literature and the Anglophone novel in India. Her publications include *Real and Imagined Women: Gender, Culture and Postcolonialism* (1993), *The Scandal of the State: Women, Law and Citizenship in Postcolonial India* (2003) and the volume *Crisis of Secularism in India* (2007) co-edited with Anuradha Dingwaney Needham.

**Romy Rajan, University of Florida**

**Coordinated Resistance in Arundhati Roy’s The Ministry of Utmost Happiness**

The neoliberal nation state progressively renders the lives of its inhabitants precarious. Judith Butler points out that members of a nation who can perform and reproduce pre-assigned legible roles are deemed citizens, whereas the rest lead precarious existences. Characters in Arundhati Roy’s novel, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*, occupy positions of precarity owing to their atypical identities which deviate from roles prescribed by an increasingly neoliberal state. As the Swiss-Italian Autonomist thinker Christian Marazzi argues, the precariat in the modern nation occupies a position outside a unifying symbolic order. In a similar vein, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak asserts that the correspondence of the nation and the state was a historically specific phenomenon, one that no longer holds, leaving the precariat outside the fold of the nation but within the state. The precariat in Roy’s novel is constituted by the Hijras from Delhi, Kashmiris and Dalits. Through the course of the novel, these characters converge onto a single space, a graveyard transformed into an inn named “Jannat Guest House.” The novel ends with the characters resolving tentatively to raise a child, whose genealogy is untraceable. My paper employs Maurizio Lazzarato’s concept of political coordination to analyze decisions made by these characters. Lazzarato defines political coordination as the creation of a collective composed of singularities, individuals who maintain their difference as a function of equality. Coordinated resistance involves the introduction of discontinuities into the political system through the destructuring of current reality and the deployment of new possibilities, consciously occupying positions that cannot be defined. Precarity then becomes the site of the death of the old without the new having been born. The convergence of the precariat onto a temporary residence built on a graveyard is indicative of the deliberate ephemeralty of this collective, created to produce discontinuity, rather than a stable movement.

**Romy Rajan** is a second year PhD student at the Department of English, University of Florida. He completed his M.A. and M.Phil at the University of Delhi, where his work focused on post-
Emergency (1978- present) Indian Literature. His work continues to revolve around literature produced during the second half of the twentieth century, specifically in the Anglophone post-colonies.

Zakia Rashid, Riphah International University
Epistemology of Precarity: A Study of Pakistani Anglophone Writing
This paper offers a reading of contemporary Pakistani writing in English from the perspective of neoliberalism and precarity. With an accent on epistemological factors, it explains, how, as a zeitgeist of our times, neoliberalism controls, dominates and trespasses personal domains, favors the moneyed class and necessitates a transformative ontology that governs relationships within such a human society. It further shows how precarity, quite often, leads to a solidarity that transcends personal or national differences and that, at times, such solidarity works as a defense against the onslaught of neoliberal machinations. By offering a study of contemporary Pakistani novels, Between Clay and Dust (2012) by Musharaf Ali Farooqi and The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007) by Mohsin Hamid, the paper, discovers ways in which precarity impacts social relationships and brings about a change in which objects of knowledge are constructed. It also discusses the possibilities, with reference to Pakistani writing, which lead to conditions in which precarity fails to induce a transformed epistemology of precarity and the subjects continue to adhere to older forms of knowledge construction. An attempt has also been made to compile examples of conditions in which subjects are prone to epistemological transformation and hence are more adapted to cope with precarity, as compared to the ones mentioned earlier i.e. those more resistant to the new precarious conditions. The paper, thus, endeavors to illumine ontological and epistemological aspects of precarity with the help of selected texts from Pakistani Anglophone literature.

Zakia Resshid is working as a Senior Lecturer at the Riphah Institute of English Language and Literature, Riphah International University, Lahore Campus. She has over 13 years of university teaching experience to her credit. She has published research in the South Asian Studies Journal and has presented her papers at both national and international platforms. She aspires to contribute constructively in the field of literary research, therefore she looks forward to become a permanent member of US-based, South Asian Literary Association. Her areas of interest are Post-Colonialism, Shakespearean Studies and Critical Theory.

Pallavi Rastogi, Louisiana State University
War of the Words: Fighting out the Geopolitical Disaster
This paper explores how nearly seven decades of built aggression have contributed to the catastrophic relationship between India and Pakistan and the rise in religious fundamentalism, militarization, nuclearization, and terrorism in South Asia. The Geopolitical Disaster changes the lives, perceptions, and ideologies of those who live in its shadow, especially in terms of how the personal and the political interact with each other. Dailiness is always negotiated in the all-pervasive, yet ghostly, presence of Partition, war over/in Kashmir, terrorism, fundamentalism, and constant hostility between national neighbors. The rhetoric of international relations, especially tethered to geographic proximity and military discourse, suffuses even the deeply affective language of personal relationships. Fiction can potentially dilute Otherness through the merging of the political into the personal, offering a temporary corrective to military conflict. The three novels examined in this paper—Jaspreet Singh’s Chef (2008), Moni Mohsin’s novel
The question of how people live under the penumbra of slow-moving or historically extended disasters, especially those that portend a world-ending event, such as a nuclear holocaust—that has still not come to pass—also underpins this paper. Fictions of the Geopolitical Disaster use the language of politics and war in which international conflict invades all aspects of private life. Since the invader is the neighboring Other, who was the same before Partition, the novel discourse of a compassionate politics allows a deconstruction of the Self and the Other by showing the Otherness of the Self and the Selfhood of the Other.

Pallavi Rastogi is an Associate Professor in the Department of English at Louisiana State University where she also serves as the Director of Graduate Studies. She has published widely in South Asian and Southern African Studies. Her first book, Afrindian Fictions: Diaspora, Race, and National Desire was published by Ohio State University Press in 2008. She has just completed her second monograph, entitled "Postcolonial Disaster: Narrating the Catastrophe in the 21st Century."

Shazia Sadaf, Western University Canada
Of Borders and Magic Doors: New Directions in Pakistani Fiction
The decade following 9/11 witnessed a new surge of Pakistani English writing that has coincided with a renewed interest in the intersections between literature and human rights, especially against a backdrop of the war on terror. Most fiction written in this period reflects Pakistan’s difficult position in the war on terror and highlights the loss of human life and dignity as a result. Authors like Mohsin Hamid feel that it is time that writers look forward rather than backwards: ‘I think we need to radically reimagine the future. Citizens, artist, writers, politicians, everyone. What’s happening now is our failure to come up with radical new futures that we think could maybe come in to existence. If we don’t, then that space is abandoned to people who are peddling nostalgic disasters.’ Focusing on his recent novel, I examine the literary devices employed by Hamid to address socio-political issues in a post post-9/11 world of global insecurity. Hamid’s shift from writing back, to writing beyond 9/11 is evident in his most recent novel of speculative fiction, Exit West (2017), that eerily predicted a post Brexit-Trump future. Through the story of Saeed and Nadia, who are citizens of an unknown country, Hamid moves past colonization woes, and hurtles into the politics of global citizenship where the presence of magical ‘doors’ open into destinations around the world, literally defying the ‘borders’ that divide people today. These doors that allow access, unchecked by barbed wires and walls, are wormholes through the border security concerns that have hampered cross-cultural understanding in recent years. I argue that through this new speculative fiction, literary doors can be opened to foster dialogue among clashing states.

Shazia Sadaf holds an MA in English Literature from King’s College London, and a PhD in English Language from the University of London, UK. She is currently completing her second doctoral degree in postcolonial literature at Western University in London, Ontario. Dr. Sadaf was associate professor of English at the University of Peshawar, Pakistan before moving to
Canada in 2013. Her research focuses on the intersections between post 9/11 Pakistani Anglophone literature and studies in terrorism, Islamization, and human rights.

Naila Sahar, SUNY, Buffalo
The Laws and Politics of Precarity
Religious groups and political parties have steeply increased their street political power in Pakistan for the past few decades, and blasphemy laws are now used more as a means to intimidation rather than to challenge the religious discourse. Blasphemy laws, that were introduced in subcontinent during British colonial rule, were later amended by General Zia-ul-Haq in Pakistan during the process of Islamization in 1980s. The law prescribes that defiling the name of prophet could trigger death penalty and the accused could be arrested without any substantial evidence. The unquestionable nature of this law has strengthened the ‘mullah mafia’ in Pakistan to an extent where blasphemy law has now become a power tactic through which religious extremist groups manipulate and mobilize the common masses by exploiting their religious sentiments. In this paper, I will look at blasphemy law in Pakistan as an instance of insecurity within the state, where bodies and state clash while further contributing in political turmoil. Common perception is that blasphemy law has been used to marginalize the minority Christian population in Pakistan, however the fact is that many Muslims coming from elite backgrounds have also been victimized through this law. Considering the cases of Salman Taseer and Junaid Jamshed, I will discuss instances where belonging to the upper echelons of society couldn’t save certain people from extermination after they were accused of blasphemy. The paper will contend that it’s not only religious impetus but there have been political and social motivations behind these incarcerations. Paper will also discuss how media represented these incarcerations during the process of prosecution and how Pakistani government’s resistance to dealing with religious extremism and repealing the blasphemy law has added to Pakistan’s burden of history.

Naila Sahar is a fifth year PhD student in English department at SUNY, Buffalo, and her area of research is transnational literature, Islamic feminism, religion and transnational encounters with Islam. She is a Fulbright scholar from Pakistan and before coming to USA, she was working as Assistant Professor at Forman Christian College, Lahore. She has presented at SALA in 2015 and 2017 and looks forward to another chance to take part in this intellectually enriching experience.

Charlotta Salmi, Queen Mary University of London
Touching, Feeling, Reading: Genre Fiction in the Age of Precarity
Genre fiction has often been hailed with the power to combat state and social divisions. Whether it is the romance, the thriller, or the human rights investigation, critics like Sommer (1991), Cleary (2002), and Slaughter (2007) argue, particular genres can present models for uniting communities, addressing injustices and healing trauma. However, in a time of widespread precarity, such genres offer little redress. They rely on particular forms of reading, recognizing, and inscribing bodies that replicate the regulatory and classificatory moves of biopower. In this paper I look at two South Asian novels of internecine violence that explore the possibility of resisting the biopolitical discourse behind both sectarian conflict and different literary allegories. While Pakistani writer Uzma Aslam Khan’s Trespassing (2003) and Sri Lankan born Canadian author Michael Ondaatje’s Anil’s Ghost (2000) appear to follow the logic of the love story and
the human rights narrative, they play with the expectations of genre, to present, critique and ultimately resist different forms of reading and writing bodies. Through such metatextual play, I propose, they offer a form of reading, texts, bodies and the resultant body politic, that is modelled on epigenetics – what Catherine Malabou (2016) has described as the biological resistance to biopolitics inherent in genetic processes. Via touching, feeling, and different modes of affect characters circumscribe the erotic logic and diagnostic drive behind the romance and the human rights narrative, and gesture towards ambivalent, open-ended forms of reading bodies that can register precarity even without a discourse of ‘recognition’. Ultimately, texts like Aslam Khan’s and Ondaatje’s suggest that popular genres can potentially model resistant ways of writing, reading and recognizing bodies in the biopolitical present.

**Charlotta Salmi** is a Lecturer in Global and Postcolonial Literature at Queen Mary University of London. Her research focuses on the mediation of conflict and resistance in different global literary forms and genres, including human rights narratives, graphic novels and travel writing. She is currently writing a book on *Bordering the World in Contemporary Partition literature*.

**Farah Siddiqui, University of Texas at Dallas**

**The Precariousness of the Afghan Identity in Khaled Hosseini’s *The Kite Runner***
The process of “othering” demarcates people into those who deserve protection by state and those who don’t. In other words, according to Isabell Lorey in *State of Insecurity*, “precarious” is a term used for the “others” who are not capable of integration in a community. I want to demonstrate how Khaled Hosseini portrays the Afghan identity as precarious in the novel by the projections of Afghanistan as dominated by the religious fanatics. Taliban began to rule the country after the invasion by Russia. The first half of the novel deals with the idyllic vision of Afghanistan before invasion where there is prosperity and celebrations irrespective of the racial differences between Shias and Sunnis. The protagonist Amir is portrayed as a weak character as he stays a mute witness to the rape of his friend cum servant Hassan. He becomes a strong character in the novel through his immigration to America. Amir becomes powerful and successful ready to face the monstrous face of Taliban alone because of his assimilation in the American culture. Baba who is symbolic of masculinity during the stay in Afghanistan undergoes a complete metamorphosis in America and becomes a weak and sick person. Assimilation in the new culture and the society, is a crucial factor in the formation of strong identity for an immigrant. Through assimilation and education, Amir becomes a strong character. He endorses the idyllic vision of America, “America was different. America was a river, roaring along, unmindful of the past. I could wade Into this river, let my sins drown to the bottom, let the waters carry me someplace far. Someplace with no ghosts, no memories, and no sins” (119). The transformation of Amir into a powerful character proves that precariousness can be overcome through cultural assimilation.

**Farah Siddiqui** is currently a fifth year PhD student in Literary Studies at the University of Texas at Dallas working on her dissertation proposal. She has a M.A. in Communications from Notre Dame of Maryland University. Broadly conceived, her doctoral work will explore the nature of subjectivity in light of the affective turn and how affect is related to emotions in literature. She is more inclined towards a hybrid model of emotions which includes both affect and cognition. She is so excited that that scholarship on emotion and affect is increasing and she wants to contribute to it one day.
Amidst the bashing of IIT-Madras scholar R. Sooraj for participating in a beef festival organized in the institution on 29 May 2017 and the murder of the sixteen-year-old Muslim boy Hafiz Junaid (called “beef-eater” and “anti-national” by his attackers) on 23 June 2017, issues regarding food habits have re-ignited the caste and religious fervor which seems to threaten the complacency of the Indian nation-state by exposing its rigid social stratification. Such acts of violence, which have become a norm rather than an exception, have rendered people belonging to certain castes and religions precariat. In India, where eating habits are often tied to caste and religious identities, Dalits who are placed at the bottom of this hierarchy have faced scarcity and uncertainty when it comes to food and their eating habits. In much of Dalit literature, food choices and lack thereof can be seen as an important metaphor for caste hierarchies and religious exclusion. This paper focuses on Baby Kamble’s *The Prisons We Broke* (1986) and Omprakash Valimiki’s *Joothan* (Leftovers; 1997) to examine how precarity is projected upon food such that it acts as what Gayatri Spivak calls a “double bind,” invoking, at once, the subjugation of one’s caste while also providing an impetus for resistance. I examine how food and consumption in these texts signify power relationships, issues of purity and pollution, desire, and defiance of social and cultural restrictions. Using this context, I argue that the strategies of resistance in Dalit works and activism is conceptualized in terms of access to and celebration of certain food cultures that includes but is not limited to events like “Beef Fest,” and initiatives like “Dalit Foods” in the present context.

**Ruma Sinha** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of English at Syracuse University. She is currently working on her dissertation that examines how Dalit women assert their presence in the public sphere in order to challenge their exclusion from regional, national, and global forms of political and aesthetic representations. Her research and teaching interests include postcolonial and anticolonial studies, critical race and gender studies, Anglophone and vernacular South Asian literature.

**Amritjit Singh** is Langston Hughes Professor of English at Ohio University, has published well over a dozen books, including, most recently, *Postcolonial Theory and the United States* (2000); *The Collected Writings of Wallace Thurman* (2003); *Interviews with Edward W. Said* (2004); and *The Circle of Illusion* (2011). Past President of MELUS, SALA and USACLALS, he also currently serves as adviser to the SALA executive committee.

**Vandana Singh** is an Indian speculative fiction writer and professor of physics at a small and lively state university near Boston. Her short fiction has appeared in magazines such as *Lightspeed* and *Mithila Review*, and anthologies ranging from "So Long Been Dreaming: Postcolonial Science Fiction & Fantasy" to numerous Year's Best volumes. The US publication of her first book for children (*Young Uncle Comes to Town*, Viking/Penguin) earned an ALA Notable recognition in 2007. Her first collection of speculative short fiction, "The Woman Who Thought She Was a Planet and Other Stories" (*Zubaan/ Penguin India, 2008*) is shortly to be followed by a second collection, "Ambiguity Machines and Other Stories" (*Small Beer Press, 2018*).
Gayatri Chakavorty Spivak is University Professor, and a founding member of the Institute for Comparative Literature and Society. B.A. English (First Class Honors), Presidency College, Calcutta, 1959. Ph.D. Comparative Literature, Cornell University, 1967. D. Litt, University of Toronto, 1999; D. Litt, University of London, 2003; D. Hum, Oberlin College, 2008; D. Honoris Causa, Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2011; D. Honoris Causa, Rabindra Bharati, 2012; Kyoto Prize in Thought and Ethics, 2012; Padma Bhushan 2013; D.Honoris Causa, Universidad Nacional de San Martin, 2013; D. Litt, University of St. Andrews, 2014; D. Honoris Causa, Paris VIII, 2014; Presidency University, 2014; D. Hum, Yale University, 2015; D. Litt, University of Ghana-Legon, 2015; D. Honoris Causa, Universidad de Chile, 2016; Lifetime Scholarly Achievement from the Modern Language Association of America, 2018. In 2013, she received SALA’s Distinguished Achievement in Scholarship Award.

Nidhi Srivastava, University of Western Ontario
Mass Rape during the 1947 Partition and its Representation or Silencing in Hindi Cinema
Since 2012, there has been an increasing visibility of the global rape crisis in India in social media, journalism, and through films. I argue that there is an absence of the discourse on mass rape that took place during the 1947 partition and its absence in India’s national imagination. I suggest that the partition was a form of “retributive genocide,” a term I borrow from international studies scholar, Paul R. Brass (2003). Brass observes, “There was organization and planning that has been largely ignored in the scanty literature on a subject of such enormous violence, but there were also local acts of violence carried out for a multiplicity of reasons and motives that were not genocidal in intent: loot, capture of property, abduction of women. Moreover, much of the larger scale violence was mutual. (72) In my research on the subject, I have found that Brass is the only scholar thus far who has made this observation but this notion has not been developed further. The 1991 Bosnian-Herzegovina genocide and the 1947 partition eerily share similarities that will be further etched out in my presentation. My core argument is that a raped woman’s body lies on the intersections of hyper nationalism, violence, shame, honor, and silence. The “national myth” is a term that is regularly used by feminists who have worked on the Bosnian genocide. Through the discussion of the films Apna Desh (1949), Challia (1960), and Lahore (1949) as well as recent depictions of raped victims in Gadar (2001), Pinjar (2003), Silent Waters (2003), I will make the argument that the government and media’s insecurity about female sexuality and shame prevents the discussion of the mass rape that took place during the 1947 partition come to light. This paper is part of my overall dissertation.

Nidhi Shrivastava is a fourth-year PhD Candidate at University of Western Ontario. She holds double masters in South Asian Studies (University of Michigan) and Women's Studies and Feminist Research from UWO. Her undergrad was in English and India studies from UCONN. Currently, she is completing her dissertation and teaching at Sacred Heart University.

Pennie Ticen, Virginia Military Institute
“By slowly becoming everybody”: Building Community for the Unconsoled in Arundhati Roy’s The Ministry of Utmost Happiness
Twenty years ago, in 1997, Arundhati Roy burst upon the international literary scene with the publication of The God of Small Things. Readers and critics were captivated by what Michiko Kakutani characterized as Roy’s “musical, densely patterned prose...[and] the mythic power of her tale.” Since then, Roy has channeled her writerly gifts into the production of essays focused
on social issues and political action, to the chagrin of critics and a reading public hungry for a second novel. The 2017 publication of "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" has finally given us that second novel: a complex and challenging mix of genres, characters, and locations. Isabell Lorey reminds us that the precarity of living in modern, industrialized nations means dealing with "governing mechanisms [within which] cracks and potentials for resistance are to be found" (2). In my presentation, I will explore how Roy’s novel gives us glimpses of the cracks and potentials through which characters like Aftab/Anjum navigate lives marked by danger, marginalization, and disjunction. They do this by self-consciously building what Lorey calls "ciudadanias," or care communities, via alliances strategically made across boundaries of gender, ideology, nationalism, caste, and age. Rather than telling us a story which wraps itself up with a happy ending, "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" presents its readers with a narrative that challenges us to weave together disparate elements of a precarious story, offering viable but not permanently sustainable communities of care. This can serve as a warning shared by the novels' characters and its readers: “all security retains the precarious; all protection and all care maintain vulnerability; nothing guarantees invulnerability” (Lorey 20).

**Pennie Ticen** is an Associate Professor at The Virginia Military Institute, where she has been a member of the English Department for 14 years. She earned her MA/PhD at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and has been a member of SALA for 17 years, serving as conference co-chair, executive committee member, and treasurer. Her research interests include the role of the essay in post-colonial literature and the pedagogy of teaching South Asian Indian Literature.

**Chirag Trivedi, Ahmedabad University**

**The Class Called Literary Precariat: The Question of Canon-formation and Literary Elitism in Gujarati Literature**

Precarity essentially is an offshoot of class division and hegemony of dominant values in society. The complexities implied in terms such as precarity and precariousness, when applied to literary canon-formation processes point at traces of literary elitism that leads to monoculturalism that confirms tradition, valorises the univocal and the singular, subtly upholds segregation and marginalization and emanates into homogeneity. This paper on reflections of elitism in Gujarati Literature aims at problematizing the amnesic acceptance of canonical literature. The paper hints at rise of precariousness as a process as well as an output of the long-breeding literary elitism through detailed evaluation of aestheticization of Gujarati poetic language by Umashankar Joshi and ornateness, open-endedness and obscurity in Gujarati fiction by Suresh Joshi. Gujarat has always been a multicultural region; given the history and organic growth of arts and literature, this present-day credence that only the privileged know, appreciate and relish arts and literature, is telling about what Gujarat has become as a society. Where that thin line from where the exclusive becomes exclusionary is a question to those who operate from the Ivory Tower. The paper questions the idea of canon and canon-formation process with specific references to Umashankar Joshi and Suresh Joshi and thereby points out how this process hauls insecurities for upcoming writers and poets – the class called ‘literary precariat’. The paper highlights a completely different set of political and social concerns by hinting at the insecurities and worries of a budding literary talent behind being able to meet the established norms of literary merit and getting her work published by an acclaimed publishing house. In its philosophic attainment, the paper aims at critically examining if literature is an intellectual and aesthetic produce of the
privileged class only and how does this privilege get understood, misunderstood, used and abused.

**Chirag Trivedi** is a Faculty in Communication Area at Ahmedabad University, India. He is pursuing Ph D on Reflections of Elitism in Gujarati literature. His interests lie in Identity politics in literature, Partition Literature, Dalit Literature and Culture Studies. He is presently involved in teaching courses on Literature, Culture Studies, Business Communication and Gender Sensitization. He fondly takes to creative writing and translation of literary texts.

**Tana Trivedi, Ahmedabad University**

**Precarious Poetry: Institutionalized ecological destruction and the changing idea of home in Fijian Literature**

Epeli Hau’ofa, Tongan and Fijian anthropologist argues, that Oceania must use the “notion of natural cycles and our traditional ecological relationships to formulate our own philosophies and ideologies for resistance against the misapplication of modern technologies on our societies.” A lot of migrations to “greener pastures”, as Hau’ofa terms it, is a result of precariousness of the environment, from nuclear destruction to disposal of toxic waste, all heirlooms of a colonial past that also institutionalised western notions of development.

This paper looks at Hau’ofa’s arguments through the lens of precariousness and its embedding in Fijian writing, particularly poetry. Sudesh Mishra, a contemporary Fijian-Indian-Australian writer, through poetry, expresses the structural violence and ecological destruction embedded in the political system of Fiji. Mishra keenly examines the slow alienation of Fijians from their ecology and its replacement with ideas that, can be argued, is the first moment of displacement. The aim of the paper is to examine Hau’ofa’s idea of changing ecological relationships and the resulting precariousness as illustrated in Mishra’s poetry to argue that a study of Fijian history is a study of changing ecological realpolitik.

As Judith Butler says, “If we are interested in arresting cycles of violence to produce less violent outcomes, it is no doubt important to ask what, politically, might be made of grief besides a cry for war.” In a world standing on the precipice of the unparalleled changes due to global warming, the examination of the changing island life and its precariousness are an urgent need. Poetry offers strong possibilities to a troubled precarious present by making visible the violence of global processes, ecological destruction and conditions that make social life precarious and have contributed to systemic changes in the past.

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**Sukshma Vedere, George Washington University**

**An Economy of Broken Bodies in Animal's People**

*Animal’s People* (2007) by Indra Sinha is a fictionalized telling of the Bhopal Gas disaster in December 1984. It details the catastrophic leak at Union Carbide’s Bhopal factory where over 500,000 people were expose to the toxic gas and which killed and maimed over 3000 people.
Sinha probes the underbelly of India’s economic growth; he highlights the widening gaps between the rich and the poor, between and within the First and the Third Worlds. *Animal’s People* underscores how the ecological degradation caused by the leakage directly affected the lives of the poor and how transnational corporations refused to be accountable for the disaster. I draw from the works of environmental scholars such as Rob Nixon, Ramchandra Guha, Frantz Fanon, and Stacy Alaimo to examine how ecological violence in the years leading up to economic liberalization, affects and shapes subaltern bodies in postcolonial texts.

**Sukshma Vedere** is a 4th year Ph.D candidate in the Department of English at the George Washington University. She is interested in postcolonial literaure and disability studies. She is currently writing her dissertation which examines the representation of disabled bodies in postcolonial Indian fiction and film.

**Melanie R. Wattenbarger, Bishop Gorman High School**

**Caring for the Precarious: The Ethics of Retelling Life Stories**

In 2014, a theater troupe in London recreated Katherine Boo’s anthropological study of life in a Mumbai slum for the cosmopolitan stage; both works were titled *Behind the Beautiful Forever*. This paper analyzes the transformation of individual lives to a textual object for study and then for elite entertainment on the other side of the world, notably the epicenter of the former colonizer. Care and precarity dialogue in the analysis as socio-economic and racial ontologies clash between subject and observer. Spivak’s enduring question “Can the Subaltern Speak?” echoes as we see how the subaltern speaks, or is made to speak, on a global stage. This paper takes the field of literary anthropology forward as it engages with the intersections of textual form and adaptation with lived realities, both those of the lives depicted and the individuals who engage in their life stories: the authors, director, stage actors, and audiences. The paper concludes with an eye to the ethics of spectatorship—of privileged audiences as well as researchers—both in relation to the nonfictional lives and the fictional retelling thereof.

**Melanie R. Wattenbarger** teaches English at Bishop Gorman High School. She graduated from the University of Mumbai, Ohio Dominican University and Ohio Wesleyan University. She specializes in contemporary South Asian and Canadian literatures, Diaspora Studies, and Gender and Sexuality Studies. Her publications include articles for the *South Asian Review*, *Symbolism: An International Annual of Critical Aesthetics* and the edited collection *New Perspectives in Diasporic Experience*. She serves as the Editor of *Salaam*, the newsletter for the South Asian Literary Association.

**Alden Sajor Wood, University of California, Irvine**

**Racialized Encoding: Hari Kunzru’s Transmission, Capitalist Realism, and the South Asian Laboring Body**

Alison Shonkwiler and Leigh Claire La BERGE argue in *Reading Capitalist Realism* (2014): “the relationship between capitalist realism and narrative and visual representation demands recognition of their mutual imbrication in current conditions of crisis and contradiction.” Hari Kunzru’s novel *Transmission* (2005) symptomatically expresses the crisis-laden contradiction of India’s position within contemporary globalized neoliberal capitalism as both an emergent producer-consumer society within the BRICS neoliberal economic bloc and one of the largest overseas exporters of skilled migrant labor in the world in the precarious foreign national...
formation of the Non-Resident Indian (NRI). This bifurcated identity, the tension between the flight of skilled-labor and a form of domestic consumption becoming increasingly sustained by overseas remittances, is written into the literary depiction of the laboring body within Kunzru’s narrative by transposing this political economic tension as the contradiction between neoliberal capital’s immaterial “borderlessness” and its dependence on a mode of precarious tech-labor that becomes inherently racialized and “encoded” onto the South Asian laboring body.

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**Zunaira Yousuf, Binghamton University-SUNY**

**The Precariousness of Muslim Women in Post-9/11 United States: A Study of Shaila Abdullah’s Saffron Dreams**

Shaila Abdullah’s *Saffron Dreams* (2009), a post-9/11 novel, narrates the story of a Pakistani-American female protagonist, Arissa Illahi. After her husband’s death in 9/11 attacks on Twin Towers, she mourns her loss and struggles to re-assimilate in the changed climate of the US. Her condition becomes precarious while she, a victim of 9/11 herself, faces racial hatred for being a Muslim; in Judith Butler’s words, her loss “become(s) unthinkable and ungrievable” (Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence 2004, xiv). Desperately, she takes off her veil, a religiously marked attire, that she promised her husband to wear after their marriage but that now invites discrimination and racist assaults. Within theoretical framework of Transnational Feminism, I explore how the field imaginary of Postcolonial Feminism gets impacted by the unique precariousness Muslim Women embody in the post-9/11 United States. Jasmin Zine and Lisa K. Taylor observe in Muslim Women, Transnational Feminism and the Ethics of Pedagogy (2014) that “veil as a complex and shifting signifier is… rooted in imperial legacies,” and that “veiled colonial women undermined the conquerors’ power” (4). Arissa’s removal of veil complicates this observation because in the post-9/11 neo-imperial discourse, the subject confronts a situation where unveiling protects her against the racialized state oppression. Jasbir K. Paur terms this paradox as “gender exceptionalism of the United States” that, according to her, claims to “rescue Muslim women from their oppressive male counterparts,” but simultaneously subjects the Muslim Women to racist oppression in the US (*Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalims in Queer Times* 2007, 5). Reading Muslim Women as precarious victims of gender exceptionalism of the US, I study how gendered and racialized discourse of War on Terror animates the neo-imperial agenda of the United States.

**Zunaira Yousaf** is currently enrolled in Masters in English at Binghamton University-SUNY, US. She did her MPhil in English from Government College University, Lahore and has been working as a lecturer in English (2009-14) in Punjab Education Department, Pakistan. She has translated a Sindhi novel *Zeenat* (University of Sindh, Pakistan: 2009) into English. She is interested in postcolonial Fiction and transnational literature, and has presented her research in various international conferences.
Abdollah Zahiri, Seneca College, King Campus, Toronto
Sikhs in Afghanistan at the Cusp of Taliban Rule in 1990 and After

It is little known that West Asia, Afghanistan, in particular has been home for the Sikhs for over two centuries. In the two centuries of residence Afghanistan was not just the ‘host’ society for them, it became ‘home’. Despite the Muslim majority rule in Afghanistan, the Sikh community reterritorialized in different parts of the country, mostly concentrating in urban areas. The community had a reputation for honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness. Hence Sikhs won the trust of other Afghans who relied on their services in finance, currency exchange, commerce especially at the time of adversity begun with the Soviet occupation in 1979. However, with the withdrawal of the Soviet forces in 1989, the time for unprecedented precarity, persecution arrives at the cusp of the Talibans. The thrust of this paper is to trace the trail of dislocation, trauma, exile that ensues since the 1990 Taliban takeover when the Sikhs were forced to leave as well as the ongoing precarity and insecurity for those who chose to stay or could not leave. The present paper also gauges how this notion of precarity affected the daily practices, professional and educational aspects of the diaspora residing in Afghanistan during the Taliban rule and the post-Taliban era. Spatially, this paper would also attempt to broaden the ‘ethnoscape’ through engaging with the Sikh diaspora geographically decoupled from the ‘hub’ that is South Asia from the south to the west.

Abdollah Zahiri teaches at the School of English and Liberal Studies, Seneca College (King Campus). He has published papers on V.S. Naipaul, Postcolonial theory and Translation. He is currently working on a book on Sikh diaspora in West Asia: Iran and Afghanistan. He has also translated books and articles on resistance literature and orientalism, Iqbal Lahuri, Mariano Azuela, foundations of drama, and Resistance literature.

Bonnie Zare, Virginia Tech University
Drawing attention: Artists Opening the Way Towards Safe Public Space

Judith Butler, speaking in 2009, characterized precarity as a contemporary condition backed by political policy that makes certain groups more vulnerable to long-term violence without protection. The frequency of sexual violence creates a heightened sense of precarity for Indian women, impacting the degree to which they can confidently travel in public and be autonomous agents. The circulation of the details of the December 2012 gang rape and fatal injury of a New Delhi medical student returned the subject of rape to public discourse and led to mass protests and, eventually, stronger anti-rape laws. Two years later, Zubaan, Ad Astra Comix and the Goethe Institute collaborated to bring forth a collection of graphic art about women’s right to safety and the right to move freely in public. This text, Drawing the Line: Indian Women Fight Back, seeks to engage with the constraints and threats women experience but also illuminates women’s capacity for buoyancy and boldness. Shadows, fears, frustration and anger are all present in various frames but so are light, self-love, self-care, and power. The book in its own way forms its own supportive net or a ciudadania, a care community that regards becoming indispensable for one another as a fundamental commitment. This talk will examine Drawing the Line, specifically work by Kaveri Gopalakrishnan, Samidha Gunjal and Vidyun Sabhaney to explore the following questions: how is the vulnerability of being a gendered and sexual being acknowledged and yet also given proportionate importance? How do social norms shape the production of consent (or lack thereof) by Indian women who travel on city streets? What forms
of resistance are being imagined and how are the drawings able to convey the importance of structural change?

**Bonnie Zare**’s research focuses on discourses of identity, feminism and activism in contemporary India and in South Asian women’s fiction. Zare’s articles have appeared in *Women’s Studies International Forum, International Journal of Cultural Studies, the Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, and *South Asian Review* among others. With Nalini Iyer, she is the co-editor of *Other Tongues: Rethinking the Language Debates in India* and teaches a course for US students in Hyderabad, “Social Justice in Culture and Practice.” She is the founder of The Keep Girls in School Project, which assists low-income girls in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

**Afrin Zeenat, University of Dhaka**

**Precarity, Ressentiment and Negative Solidarity in Zia Haider Rahman’s In the Light of What We Know**

Zia Haider Rahman’s *In the Light of What We Know* characterizes the precarious existence of two Oxford educated South Asian men. Despite being products of a reputed western university, the protagonists of Rahman’s novel are disgruntled. Spanning both spatial and temporal boundaries, Rahman’s novel connects the personal travails of the protagonists, of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, to the current geo-political situation of the world. Through their friendship and rivalry, Rahman revives the memories of Bangladesh’s independence struggle and reveals the personal tragedy of Zafar, son of a Birangona, to illustrate how a troubled past can continue to haunt the present. On the other hand, the unnamed Pakistani narrator, belonging to an affluent educated family, seems to have no such sorrowful past. Yet, they become friends. Through this friendship, Rahman weaves the personal and the political reality of all human existence. Specifically, Rahman’s novel explores the limits of knowledge acquired at renowned universities and the subsequent failures one might experience as a result of possessing too much knowledge. This paper will try to understand the evolving relationship between the two friends in light of Hannah Arendt’s notion of how global citizens live in a “common present,” (“Karl Jaspers: Citizen of the World”), although “this common factual present is not based on a common past” (Mishra). In his book *Age of Anger: A History of the Present*, Pankaj Mishra states that in the “common present, advancements in technology and communication have redistributed wealth and power to create new hierarchies” that have created “men of ressentiment,” who share a “negative solidarity.” Mishra feels that this overwhelming sense of ressentiment is a reaction against both Western capitalism and Russian communism. Similarly, the protagonists of Rahman’s novel, belonging to very different social classes, live in a common present, share a negative solidarity and experience ressentiment.

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