ABSTRACTS AND BIOS

Nasia Anam  
UCLA  

The Immigrant Enclave as a Borderland in Monica Ali’s *Brick Lane*

Monica Ali’s realist rendering of the quotidian lives of late-twentieth century Bangladeshi immigrants living in London belies an innovative meditation on contemporary borderlands. The titular immigrant enclave of *Brick Lane* is an elastic, transitional, contradictory borderland—one that houses a claustrophobic, overly-intimate community while simultaneously crystallizing all world historical and geographic contingencies that comprise the postcolonial condition. The boundary between colony and metropolis shifts in *Brick Lane* as geopolitical borders change between India, East/West Pakistan, and Bangladesh. These borders are reconfigured in the hallways and narrow streets of estates housing on the East End of London. *Brick Lane* brings together age-old questions of migration from rural to urban spaces and compounds them with the complex, postcolonial cultural matrix of late twentieth century England. The immigrant enclave comes to be a space of manifold borders that constantly shift and multiply. The novel brings the question of the rural and urban directly into that of emigration from the post colony to the metropolis, and makes distinctions within the depicted Bangladeshi community that would not necessarily be evident to U.K. culture at large. This paper will focus upon two figures of Bengali masculinity that embody the ever-changing borderland of the immigrant enclave. The character of Chanu represents a figure of elite colonial urbanity from a bygone era who has little to no efficacy in a post 9/11, multicultural London. Chanu’s foil in the novel is Karim, a second-generation immigrant in the Estates. He is a youth who has spent his life simultaneously exposed to the clattering noise of Caribbean sound systems and the azaan of his local mosque. These two figures manifest the myriad temporal and spatial borders present in the immigrant enclave of *Brick Lane*—between the Subcontinent and England; Bangladesh and India; colony and post colony; urban and rural; secularism and Islam; youth and obsolescence.

Nasia Anam is a doctoral candidate in Comparative Literature at UCLA. Her dissertation, "Other Spaces: Novels of Immigration in London and Paris," compares postwar and contemporary novels of immigration in the U.K. and France. Her dissertation approaches the
question of the postcolonial condition of the metropolis through examining urban space in the depiction of the immigrant enclave. She is interested in figures of postcolonial urbanity such as the migrant intellectual and the migrant laborer, as well as intersections of race and religion, subject hood and citizenship, and legal and literary discourse in the novel of immigration.

Waseem Anwar
Forman Christian College University

Pakistani Trans-national Poetics: A Disaporic Reconfiguration of the Ideological Boundaries

This paper offers a survey of poetry written by selective Pakistani diaspora poets. It places their works against the backdrop of poetic cum political tradition in terms of displacement and belonging. Based on their skepticism about divided cultures and identities the paper traces some thematic connections and concerns to see how it helps these poets develop any trans-national poetics and therefore widen the scope for Pakistani English poetry. Overall, one finds in the imaginative ventures of these diaspora poets a reconfiguration of Pakistan’s ideological boundaries for it to become a land of the pure in true sense.

Waseem Anwar, Dean of Humanities, Professor and Former Chair (English), Forman Christian College (FCC), Lahore, Pakistan; President Pak-US Alumni Network (PUAN) Lahore; Former President Fulbright Alumni Lahore (2004-07); Fulbright Fellow (1995 & 2007); Member Executive Committee, SALA (2011-13); Author “Black” Women’s Dramatic Discourse (2009); Editor in Chief JELLS (FCC journal) Co-Guest Editor 2010 South Asian Review (31.3)

Savitri Ashok
Independent Scholar

Borders and the Liminal in The Moor’s Last Sigh

"Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residual of an unnatural boundary....The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants." Gloria Anzaldua

Geographic borders are set up to signify territoriality but are loaded with epistemological and emotional connotations. Often, they become the symbolic dividing line between the normative and the different, the pure and the impure. Treating borders and boundaries as synonymous terms, and borderlands as psychological spaces adjoining them and inhabited by those with in-between identities, my paper will argue that in The Moor’s Last Sigh, Salman Rushdie uses liminality or the in-between both as metaphor and reality to corrode both geographic and psychological boundaries that inform individual and national identities. The narrating protagonist is Moraes Zogoiby (known as the Moor), whose identity is interstitial. The son of a half-Christian-Catholic mother, and a half-Jew, half-Muslim father, Moraes Zogoiby is a complex configuration, a historical hyphenation and an outsider in the Hindu India projected by Fielding, who Rushdie models on the real-life politician Bal Thackeray. Indian-Spanish, Catholic-Jew, Man-monster, the Moor’s wise tale, culminating in his reflections on the need "for the dropping of the boundaries" (Moor’s Sigh 433), comes from a liminal space--neither India nor Spain--that encapsulates the collapse of the boundaries of nation. As Maria Root
powerfully argues, the mixed race being is a human being living in borderlands, but
borderlands can become new frontiers. The paper will argue how by centralizing the Moor, who is neither one nor the other and who has nothing to hold his center, Rushdie posits liminality as a counter force to the fixed fanaticisms that boundaries can generate. As the narrating moor evokes and erases boundaries, liminal modes of existence, uneasy and complex as they may be, inform the novel’s politics and aesthetics controverting notions of purity and essence. Central to the idea of liminality is perversity, which the Moor’s mother embraces as a defining aspect of her boundless art and life. Hybridity is perversity, which in the words of Bhabha, is "a contingent, borderline experience [that] opens up in-between colonizer and colonized” (Location 206). While some writers look upon hybridity as positive, others see it as "a violated authenticity.” The paper, treating hybridity as an unavoidable condition of those living in borderlands, collects all its resonances and reads the many ways in which hybridity destabilizes the univocal/nativist discourse of nationalism. The politics and the polemics of the novel lie in this destabilizing power of the liminal encoded in the characterization, language, and spaces in the novel. The paper will reason how and why Salman Rushdie, a self-professed political provocateur daringly redesigns and ‘corrupts’ sanctified national space with what Homi Bhabha calls "its transgressive boundaries and ‘interruptive’ interiority” (“Introduction,” Nation and Narration 5) whose in-betweenness is a threat to notions of purity.

Amit R. Baishya
University of Oklahoma

Looking East: Frames for Studying Partition Narratives from Northeast India

In the third paper for the Partition panel, Amit R. Baishya will look at the impact of partition on people currently residing in northeast India, a region that has traditionally fallen outside the purview of partition studies, despite a few studies that call for its inclusion (Dasgupta et al). Bringing the exodus of people from British-ruled Burma to India also into purview, Baishya will discuss two Assamese novels "Jangam" by Debendranath Acharya and "Upotyokar pora Upotyokaloi" by Dipok Borkotoki, a few short stories from the Barak valley in Assam that have recently been translated into English and Siddhartha Deb’s English novel "The Point of Return." Of these texts, "Jangam" is based on the exodus from Burma and will be studied following van Schendel’s argument that partition studies should have a bigger comparative focus. The paper explores the existential costs of "not-being-at-home-in-the-world" for refugees who are transformed into “nomads” within nation-states. The predicament of the protagonists, who exist as superfluous entities after being displaced for a second time from “home,” is a haunting representation of the effects of the processes via which internal borders begin to bristle with “barbed-wire teeth” for refugees. Deb’s novel shows how the “transition” of Bengali Hindus to “Indians,” as opposed to Muslim, is usually presumed to be seamless in official narratives in South Asia. However, the text reveals that the transition from a “Hindu” to an “Indian” identity in India’s northeastern region—the locale where the text is set—often came into conflict with local tensions. In the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, Bengalis were viewed by numerous “autochthonous” identity-movements in the region as “foreigners.” The rest of the texts revolve around the enduring effects of the partition of British India in 1947 and its subsequent impact on this contentious borderland region.
Amit R. Baishya is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Oklahoma. He is currently completing a book project on representations of political violence, states of terror and modes of survival in post-1980 literatures from northeast India. He teaches courses on postcolonial studies, cultural studies and film.

Nandini Bhattacharya

Texas A&M University

Life and Death Borders, or the Return of Spirit in Contemporary South Asian Culture

Why is the beseeching ghost (Derrida 2006) making a comeback in South Asian culture, and what might that mean about the homeland-diaspora relationship? Looking at ghosts who refuse to respect the border between life and death in recent films and novels – Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s Oleander Girl (2013), Bhuter Bhabishyat ([Future of the Past/Ghost], 2012), Indira Ganesan’s As Sweet as Honey (2013), etc., -- I suggest that self-constitution in precarity offers itself in Indian stories of where ghosts appear as evidence of time and being out of joint upon the public/private and homeland-diaspora continuums. Is the ghost a pure source of self, a pure privileging of history or the past? Or, is it an allegory of the relationship between diaspora and homeland as co-constitutively, recursively each other’s past and present? Though the ghost also is often a dead parent (like Hamlet’s ghost), one might dismantle a too neat equation of the parent-child motif with a chronology of the present as what comes after the (knowledge of the) past, and the diaspora as what comes after the (knowledge of the) homeland? Spectrally unflushed in these narratives is the staging of parent-child, ghost-survivor relations as not one of unilateral durability but of “dupe-ability.” The ghost is not always a knowing trickster making the living return to original trauma to master a true pedagogy of self by repetition: a “Remember me.” Ghosts nowadays are urgently crossing over into disjuncture spatial and temporal flows of the living and the transnational to complete or even read the story. No crucial truth is handed over from past to present, from parent to child, from the homeland to the diaspora. The living are limited and accidental recipients of partial "ghost stories."

Nandini Bhattacharya teaches English at Texas A&M University. Her most recent publication is a book on Indian cinema’s stance toward history as a vehicle of repetition and a vector of liminal identities titled Hindi Cinema: Repeating the Subject (Routledge 2012). She teaches courses on Gender Theory, Film, South Asian Studies and Postcolonial Studies, and is currently working on a book on Affect and Aesthetic in South Asia.

Madhurima Chakraborty

Columbia College Chicago

Adaptation and the Reassertion of Boundaries: Deepa Mehta’s Midnight’s Children

The transition of Salman Rushdie’s Midnight’s Children into film was fraught with many sociopolitical challenges that remind us of the power of national boundaries in a seeming transnational world-- fearing religious opposition in both India and Pakistan, director Deepa Mehta shot the film mainly in Sri Lanka. Despite this and other early reminders about the limitations of national borders, Mehta’s film seems to reassert the importance of distinction, boundaries, and borders, in seeming denial of the politics of Rushdie’s novel. In particular, the
film reverses the novel’s commitment to a heterogeneous and complex daily life, one in which magic and non-magic merge as easily as do individual lives and political circumstances. The film concentrates on reproducing the plot points of the novel—protagonist Saleem Sinai’s lineage, some key historical events—and misses out on what Walter Benjamin identified as the key of any true translation: the reproduction of the affect in the new language that was created in the original. By presenting the magical world of Saleem’s *Midnight’s Children* as a separate and discrete sphere of Saleem’s life, the film is a largely realistic rendition of what was a magical-realist narrative. The consequence of this is not so much that the film simply presents us with a different story; adaptation studies warns us against privileging the written text over its filmic adaptation and urges us to see film adaptations as new texts in conversation with their novel “sources.” More importantly, it is that the lack of the intricate relationship between Saleem’s magical access and postcolonial India’s politics argues, instead, that the individual is a recipient and not an agent of national politics. Ultimately, the film’s abstinence from magic decouples the fates of individuals from states.

**Madhurima Chakraborty** is Assistant Professor in the English literature and Cultural Studies programs at Columbia College Chicago. Her research and teaching interests include Postcolonial, Indian Diaspora, and British literature, and her work has been published or is forthcoming in *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies, Literature/Film Quarterly, South Asian Review,* and *Journal of Contemporary Literature.*

**Shumona Dasgupta**

**University of Mary Washington**

Partitions of Memory: Trauma and Narrative in Jyotirmoyee Devi’s *The River Churning*

I will read Jyotirmoyee Devi’s 1967 Partition novel *The River churning* as a trauma narrative. Set against the backdrop of the Noakhali riots, the novel details the experiences of a young, Hindu girl Sutara who spends a protracted period of time convalescing in a Muslim home after an attack on her village. Sutara’s traumatic memory loss forecloses the possibility of verifying the fact of her sexual violation with most of the narrative detailing Sutara’s experience of a “social death”, a pithy comment on how violence creates community by defining its limits. Repeated allusions to the gaps and elisions of formal historiography weave themselves into the fragmented and fragmentary narrative of *The River Churning* such that the textual and the sexual emerge as symbolic doubles. The text is a function of memory—one hand, the text depicts Sutara’s failure to remember, and on the other hand, the novel serves as a point of critical entry into how the Partition was collectively re-memoried in the 1960s in Bengal. The novel focuses on how the Partition was assimilated into the everyday, depicting the unspectacular “slow violence” of udbastu (refugee) experience as a perpetual homelessness, a forced silencing/forgetting with an attendant disciplining of the body, thereby writing the Partition not just as physical vivisection or territorial remapping but as a moment of socio-symbolic boundary making which led to the death of the social. For the female refugee, the experience of dispossession constitutes an absolute break in apprehensions of reality such that life is starkly divided into a before and an after, an internal, experiential border. Such is the epistemic violence
attendant upon the effacement of refugee women’s histories that the text ultimately stages its failure to recuperate Sutara’s narrative cohesion despite its empathetic concern with writing the silenced “stree parva” (women’s chapter).

**Shumona Dasgupta** is an Assistant professor of English and postcolonial literature at the University of Mary Washington. She is currently working on a book project on the Partition of India (1947). Her work on the Partition focuses on texts which interrupt hegemonic constructions of national identity and reveal the nexus between gender practices and the practice of violence, while exploring the representation of trauma, social suffering, mourning and the tentative survival of community in the wake of catastrophe.

**Prathim Maya Dora-Laskey** teaches English and Women’s Studies at Alma College after graduate school on three continents. An alumna of Stella Maris College in Chennai (India), her awards include scholarships from the Pennathur foundation, the FSA board at the University of South Carolina, and a Violet Morgan Vaughan award while at the D.Phil program at the University of Oxford (U.K.).
University of Oxford (U.K.). A poetry editor at *Jaggery* and a current moderator at SAWNET (sawnet.org), she has published work in *Contemporary South Asia*, *Interventions: A Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, and *South Asian Review*.

**Nisha Eswaran**  
**McMaster University**

“Stick[ing] to their own kind”: Melancholia, Migration, and Anti-Black Racism in Mira Nair’s "Mississippi Masala"

In Mira Nair’s 1991 film *“Mississippi Masala,”* Jay, an Indian man expelled from Uganda under Idi Amin, suggests that “cruelty has no color” and that it is, instead, a universal practice. While the film centers on the many forms of cruelty that emerge from colonialism and capitalism, of particular importance is the anti-Black racism perpetrated by the Indian community in Mississippi. Indeed, his daughter’s romantic relationship with a Black man becomes the vehicle through which Jay and his community’s racism is expressed.

In this paper, I explore how the anti-Black racism depicted in *“Mississippi Masala”* arises from and intersects with grief. While the origins of Indian racisms towards Black people are often and necessarily explored via the economic structures and social hierarchies imposed by the British during colonization (e.g. Visweswaran 1997), I consider here the affective and psychic dimensions of these racisms. How are the anti-Black attitudes of diasporic Indian communities bound up in the trauma of migration and in the grief that necessarily arises from being non-white? Focusing on the specific contexts of Uganda and the southern United States, I argue that melancholic grief, in particular, informs the desire within the Indian community in Mississippi to fortify the boundaries between Brownness and Blackness and, as such, importantly structures the anti-Black sentiments that circulate within the film.

**Nisha Eswaran** is a PhD student at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

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**Christopher Ian Foster**  
**The Graduate Center, CUNY**

“Migrants with Attitude”: On the Politics of Shailja Patel’s *Migritude* and Afro-Asian Diasporas

“Shailja’s book is not simply about migrants. It’s about the condition of migration—of migritude… a philosophical meditation on what it means to live within the concept of Migrant.” –Vijay Prashad. Shailja Patel’s multi-modal performance piece and accompanying book of prose, poetry, and history, *Migritude* (2010), represents something of an introduction to the literature of “migritude” for the Anglophone world; a new literature that, in our era of neoliberal global capitalism, philosophizes “about the condition of migration,” to quote Vijay Prashad, and challenges anti-immigrant sentiment embedded in structures managing the movement of people. Patel was born and raised in Kenya to parents of the South Asian diaspora in Africa; and, having emigrated from Kenya to the U.K. and later the U.S., Patel’s migratory trajectories and perspectives provide an incisive alternative to a bourgeois cosmopolitanism in praise of globalization. In this paper, I discuss Patel as a part of a wider group of younger African-
diasporic authors who indeed write about, negotiate, and challenge various conditions and structures of immigration. I argue that Patel’s *Migritude* is an activist, pro-migrant, feminist, and anti-imperialist critique that not only challenges the contemporary construction of borders, immigration, and the marginalization and de-humanization of migrants, but locates the historical processes of the management of movement in the colonial era. Patel’s migrant Afro-Asian text is important not only to South Asian Studies but also re-invigorates diaspora, gender, and immigration studies; African literature itself; and it provides an important intervention into postcolonial literary work.

**Christopher Ian Foster** is a Doctoral Candidate in English at the Graduate Center, CUNY, and a Dissertation Fellow with The Committee on Globalization and Social Change. He has taught widely in the English department at Queens College, CUNY. His publication in the journal *Small Axe: A Caribbean Platform for Criticism* entitled “The Queer Politics of Crossing in Maryse Conde’s Crossing the Mangrove” came out in March, 2014, and he has a forthcoming publication in *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*. His dissertation project tracks twenty-first century African migritude Literature and its relationship to the black radical tradition.

**Maria-Dolores García-Borrón, Independent Scholar**

Taking films by Kapoor, Chopra, and other artists of their generations as a start (living in India, not abroad, they paved the way for new imaginations which preceded those of diasporic filmmakers), as well as the work of a certain wave of newer movie makers (briefly mentioning Afro-Caribbean filmmakers working in UK in the 50s, 60s and 70s), we’ll present an overview on films from the earliest generation of desi filmmakers, first in the UK (with help and workshops by Channel 4, Greater London Council, etc) like Hanif Kureishi, Gurinder Chadha, Udayan Prasad, Ayub Khan Din, Meera Syal, etc, and then to some of the most recent feature films and documentaries (mainstream or avant-garde) by diasporic filmmakers of second or third generations, especially the Indian-American, and Indian-Canadian; like Srinavas Krishna, Deepa Mehta, Mira Nair, to Suresh Pillai and other mobile, newer personalities who seem to flow between countries, with a spirit of social renewal and a focus spanning from violent racial conflicts and marginalized cultures to neoliberalist perspectives. We’ll also briefly survey the work of certain ‘Return Migration’ filmmakers, and will also allude to cinema experience and artistry concerning other diasporas and international migrations, especially in the Americas.

**María-Dolores García-Borrón** lectures on Comparative Linguistics and Film, Drama, Music, and Literature in China, Spain, Cuba, Egypt, Thailand, India, and USA. Her works including her doctoral dissertation “Introducción a la Historia de las Artes del Espectáculo en China” (URV 2003) are published by international media and scholarly reviews.

**Amrita Ghosh**

Seton Hall University

Border Crossings and Women’s Recovery Bill in Bengali Partition Narratives

The second paper by Amrita Ghosh focuses on how the Eastern Partition and border complicates the ideas of belonging and citizenship with an added emphasis on the Women’s Recovery Bill.
How do women subjects figure in the history of crossing borders and how does it impact the construction of the postcolonial nation-state? Jyotirmoyee Devi’s short story "Crossing" focuses on the female protagonist Sutara who finds herself resettled in her original community-- her story problematizes the idea of resettlement of women in their erstwhile communities through their defiled "honor" and thus the tainting the "pure" nation-state. In the other story, "Border" by Salam Azad, one finds an interesting exploration of the border’s "menacing" influence on deracinated citizens caught by the Bengal border. Neelima standing at the border, in a red sari, becomes a symbol of the Hindu woman who cannot defy the statist force and visit her dying father on the other side. Such narratives raise the question whether crossing borders was particularly difficult for woman subjects, and the section also traces the larger question about changes in border politics in the sixty seven years of Partition in the subcontinent. The rationale behind the panel is to seek interconnected papers and to raise questions about the imagination of the postcolonial partitioned nation-state, and how it impacts the south Asian diaspora. The speakers would interrogate the idea of belonging and citizenship on post partitioned Indian subcontinent, focusing on questions like-- Who gets to become the bonafide citizen and who are the "problematic" (gendered) figures causing unease on both sides of the eastern and western border, and ultimately how does partition impact the larger diasporic immigrant identity?

Amrita Ghosh is a lecturer at the English Department, Seton Hall University, NJ. She is the co-founder-editor of an online journal titled, Cerebration and has co-edited the anthology, Subaltern Vision: A Study in Postcolonial Indian English Text. She is currently working on a reader on the Bengal Partition with Sage.

Jana M. Giles University of Louisiana at Monroe

Can the Sublime Be Postcolonial: Aesthetics, Politics and Ethics in Amitav Ghosh’s the Hungry Tide

Set in the vast Sundarban mangrove forest of Bangladesh in the shadow of the colonial past and the 1979 Morichjhapi massacre, The Hungry Tide traces the transformation of three metropolitan characters from disengaged spectators to invested insiders. The novel may be read as elaborating the theories of Jean-François Lyotard, who’s revision of the sublime as the “differend” in both aesthetics and politics and provides a compelling context for exploring the postcolonial sublime. Although not explicitly about climate change, the novel evokes the problems confronted in the “Age of the Anthropocene,” when humans--and other species--must contend with the consequences of humanity’s geological effects on the planet. In mapping out the conflict between the rights of local people and the Bengal tiger, a protected species under the Project Tiger conservation project begun in 1973, which established a substantial part of the Sundarbans as a refuge, Ghosh’s novel seeks a postcolonial ethics and aesthetics that transcend the ideologies of the past, even as it cautiously evaluates the extent to which such a utopian ideal is possible. Suggesting ecocentric ways of engaging the world that loosen the bonds of the colonial past, and critiquing the failure of the postcolonial state and the new cosmopolitanism, Ghosh rewrites aesthetics as interconnected with ethics and politics. In his novel, the postcolonial sublime no
longer reifies metaphysical or anthropocentric pure reason, but instead enables discovery of our interpenetration with the natural world, spurring us to witnessing and activism in partnership with those who have been rendered silent and invisible.

Jana M. Giles is Assistant Professor and McKneely Professor in English at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. Her publications on aesthetics, post/modernism, post/colonialism, and environmentalism have appeared in The Sublime Today, Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui, Ma’Comère, the Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry, and The New York Times Book Review. She received her PhD from the University of Cambridge.

Jeremy Gillette-Newman is Assistant Professor and McKneely Professor in English at the University of Louisiana at Monroe. Her publications on aesthetics, post/modernism, post/colonialism, and environmentalism have appeared in The Sublime Today, Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui, Ma’Comère, the Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry, and The New York Times Book Review. She received her PhD from the University of Cambridge.

Jeremy Gillette-Newman
Arizona State University

The Marginalized Sexual Identities of Hijras in Ash Kotak’s Hijra

In Ash Kotak’s play, Hijra (2000), sexual identities and performances are significantly at work, as the play features a cast of characters exhibiting an array of sexual differences, who move through gendered spaces in particular, performative ways. The text explores Hijra identity, and the identities/actions of other non-heteronormative sub-groups in India and England. The explorations of Hijra identity predominantly come, however, through performative depictions by gay, non-Hijra characters, thus relegating Hijra characters to supportive, secondary roles. The acts of gay Indian characters “performing” Hijra identity are instances of sexual boundary and border crossing, and constitute the major critical focus of this project. This paper contends that Hijra sexual identity is marginalized with respect to other non-heteronormative sexualities in Kotak’s play. This process occurs at the level of form, as hijra sexuality is relegated to liminal textual spaces. Hijras are also configured as unfixed and malleable subjects (demonstrated significantly through the drag/cross-dressing performances by homosexual characters), which subsequently reduces Hijra sexual identity to a performance feature. This project turns to ethnographic-cultural analyses of Hijras (from Serena Nanda’s research-study to Gayatri Reddy’s more recent work) while also utilizing criticism directly focused on Hijra sexuality, in order to distinguish Hijra sexuality from homosexuality and thus build a case of marginalization occurring in Kotak’s text. Critical texts on gender studies, drag/cross-dressing, and Hijra community organization will be put to use in the analysis of Ash Kotak’s textual treatments of Hijras. The critical inquiry of this project ultimately analyzes the significances and effects of particular sexualities serving as vehicles to explore other distinct sexual identities."

Jeremy Gillette-Newman
Arizona State University

Jeremy Gillette-Newman
Arizona State University

Jeremy Gillette-Newman is a doctoral candidate in English (literature) at Arizona State University. His research interests are in contemporary American and international Anglophone fiction, with particular emphasis on Caribbean literatures. Originally from California, he received his MA in English from Northeastern University, in Boston; and he earned a BA (also in English) from Sonoma State University, in northern California. While still in coursework, his focus for his dissertation is on language and sexuality studies in 20th-century Caribbean literary works.
Rebekah Renee Grado
M.A. Candidate, English and American Literature, University of Texas at El Paso

The Smell of Empire: Olfactory Oppression of the Colonized Subject in *Burmese Days*

Borders are indeed crossed while culture, race and gender are driven to the margins in George Orwell’s *Burmese Days*. Homi Bhabha might call these literal and figurative locales the “domains of difference” (The Location of Culture 1). Yet, the articulation of difference—in this case, between colonial English men and colonized Burmese men—creates a liminal space, which Bhabha says moves “beyond” borders. Scent is one way in which Orwell remarks on the encounters that occur within this space. The “orient” of Orwell’s novel smells of “coco-nut oil and sandalwood, cinnamon and turmeric…” (97). In acknowledging these ambient scents, Orwell also conveys England’s history of olfactory demarcation, deodorization and hygiene, which influence the scents that the narrator and various characters chose to note. This serves as motivation for racial and gendered prejudice, as well as instances of imperial theatricality—all of which originate with the scent of Burmese men. The olfactory sense becomes a way for colonial Englishmen to establish the boundaries of masculinity through difference. The boundary is set by the Englishmen, who’s “sense of smell [is] almost too highly developed” and is crossed by the “feral reek” of the Burmese men (Orwell, Burmese Days 145, 104). Beyond this boundary, the identity of the imperial male is explored. To continue drawing on Homi Bhabha, this time in his discussion of mimicry, I will argue instances of scent in Orwell’s Burmese Days, are used first to establish the status of the colonized Burmese male as “almost the same, but not quite” like that of the imperial English male (The Location of Culture 86). Furthermore, scent becomes an implement in the construction of national identity and masculinity, and is, subsequently, a way in which colonizers act for, identify (and are identified in opposition to) and subjugate the colonized male.

Rebekah Grado is an MA candidate and Teaching Assistant in the English Department at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). Her concentration is in English literature, with a focus on multicultural literature. Her research interests include the study of post colonialism, culture, gender and physiology. More specifically, she has examined such things as the digestive system in *Othello*, in addition to olfaction in Orwell’s *Burmese Days*. She currently teaches Rhetoric and Writing Studies, serves as president of the Texas Alpha Beta Chapter of Alpha Chi and secretary to UTEPs Graduate Student English Association.

Priyadarshini Gupta
Ohio University

The Cosmopolitan Oppression: Ambiguity and Alienization in Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

The 21st century United States takes pride in its multicultural society. Every immigrant irrespective of the country that he hails from looks at America as a “redeemer” nation that believes in equality of opportunity and can bestow material success if one is willing to put in effort and dedication. Mohsin Hamid’s 2007 Booker nominated novel *The Reluctant*
Fundamentalist is a story of such a Pakistani immigrant with a self-assured American dream. Changez, the protagonist is our cosmopolitan hero who voluntary takes up exile, leaving Pakistan and travelling all the way to Princeton University in New Jersey to build his identity in his invincible America. Hamid’s book takes an attempt to show that the acceptance of multiculturalism holds a different definition in post 9/11 America. The nation state is still aware of its cultural diversity—there is always a fetish for the stranger and the willingness to be knowledgeable about the stranger’s epistemology but there is also an active resistance to change the status of the stranger from “them” to “us”. Multiculturalism is no longer an active embracing of the motley of cultures, but it is living with a difference and being constantly vigilant of maintaining the binary of self/other due to a xenophobic mentality. With the help of Frantz Fanon, Edward Said and Sara Ahmed in this paper I am going to argue how Hamid’s novel has successfully painted the modern day version of a colonizing nation in The United States of America. Hamid further shows how it continues to be the epicenter of globalized terror if other countries frustrate its colonial enterprise and strips off the “friendly immigrant” of his human rights if he challenges its capitalistic mindset.

Priyadarshini Gupta is a 3rd year PhD candidate in Literature at Ohio University. Her area of specialization is Post-colonial and Transnational Literature.

Jim Hannan
Le Moyne College

“Words Do Not Stop at Borders”: The “Chrestomathy” and Global Literature in Amitav Ghosh’s Ibis Trilogy

Amitav Ghosh’s statement that “words … do not stop at borders” reflects the political dimensions to literature and Ghosh’s interest in the migratory habits of languages. In a “Chrestomathy” at the end of Sea of Poppies, Ghosh gathers words from South Asian languages “that have a claim to naturalization within the English language.” Ghosh refers to the “Chrestomathy” as a “vessel of migration” in which words are the passengers. In Ghosh’s work, literary and linguistic practice is global not as a result of westernizing hegemony, but as an exchange between origins and a changing series of destinations. Establishing words as the antithesis to borders, Ghosh creates nearness and familiarity within English as well as distance and instability caused by the use of a wide range of languages in his Ibis trilogy. This practice contributes to a global literary sensibility predicated on the primacy of textuality as such and of individual words in particular. Important to the “Chrestomathy” is Ghosh’s interest in the changes wrought upon English due to its encounters with South Asian languages. Often the attention paid to the Indian writer in English focuses on the status of English within India’s national and diasporic politics. Concerned less with what Bishnupriya Ghosh calls the “official travails of English in India,” Amitav Ghosh instead constructs English as an object altered by the agency of the languages and people of India. As Ghosh writes, the “Chrestomathy” “is devoted to a select number [of words] among the many migrants who have sailed from eastern waters towards the chilly shores of the English language. It chart[s] the fortunes of a shipload of girmitiyas.” As I suggest in this paper, represented thus, words are doubled as migratory,
indentured laborers (“girmitiyas”) whose lives and agency as border crossers become the substance of global literature.

**Jim Hannan** is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of English at Le Moyne College, Syracuse NY. I have published articles on Derek Walcott, Pauline Melville, and Dionne Brand, and I am currently working on a book called *Global Ghosh: Amitav Ghosh and the Production of a Global Literary Sensibility*. The book argues that Ghosh’s work should be thought of in terms not of national or postcolonial literature, but in relation to contemporary globalization. It will include chapters that discuss the following concepts in Ghosh’s work: Language, Commerce, Labor, Time, Place, and Biologics.

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**Syrrina Ahsan Ali Haque**  
Kinnaird College Lahore School of Economics

The Identity of “Paki” versus “Pakistani” Engendering Power Boundaries in Hanif Kureishi’s *My Beautiful Launderette*

This paper explores the identity of “Paki” versus “Pakistani” engendering power boundaries in the screenplay of *My Beautiful Launderette* by Hanif Kureishi. The aim is to study the power dynamics as they operate within the linguistic structure of the screenplay, whilst locating its corresponding relation to the socio-political structures. My reading of the text informs that the screenplay focuses on strategies of survival within the migrant, the previously colonized population of Great Britain, as well as the indigenous English populace. These strategies related to conflicting power struggle in the screenplay tend to evoke a politics of identities seen with the social and linguistic order. Thus, Kureishi’s screenplay mainly summons the theme of socio-political strife where language and in particular identity markers, “Paki” versus “Pakistani”, become a site for re-construction of hierarchies to correspond to pluralistic identities of the migrant and the local. Within the scope of the linguistic power dynamics, this paper specifically focuses on the word “Paki” and the socio-political enervation of power attached to it as opposed to the constant struggle of affirmation of reallocation of the word “Pakistani” by the second generation migrant. The paper aims to depict crisis within the socio-economic identities attached to each word leading to inversion of power attached to the word.

In this context, Michel Foucault’s work on Power along with John McLeod’s work on Diaspora and Displacement would be used as research tools to investigate the dynamics of the words “Paki” and “Pakistani” as used in *My Beautiful Launderette*. Theories on Linguistics would be used to elucidate the power of words in a written text. This paper may open a debate on the effects of words like “Paki” and “Pakistani” in the construction or deconstruction of identities. Future studies can be carried on hierarchies of ‘word’ borders.

**Syrrina Ahsan Ali Haque** is currently teaching English Literature, Creative, Academic Writing, and Research Methodology at Kinnaird College for Women and Lahore School of Economics. Haque’s book, *Sand in the Castle: A Collection of Short Stories* was published in USA in 2010. She has held many talks at universities and television and conducted workshops on writing,
Michaela M. Henry              Brandeis University

New ‘Legendary Histories’ in the South Asian Anglophone Novel: Bridging Postcoloniality, Contemporaneity, and Transnationalism in Rao, Joshi, and Kunzru

Come into being as a part of nationalist movements but written in the language of the colonizer, South Asia’s English-language novel has always served as a site of active negotiation between national boundaries and transnational influences, audiences, and concerns. For example, in the preface to 1938’s Kanthapura, Raja Rao explains that he attempted to write the novel in English but with an Indian rhythm and idiom. In his “Author’s Forward”, Rao explains that he must transgress the seeming definitive boundaries of colonizer/colonized and of history/contemporaneity in order to write his version of a “sthala-purana or legendary history...[only] from the contemporary annals of a village” (vii). I argue that Kanthapura’s troubling of these conceptual boundaries contributes to the imaginative work necessary for solidifying the idea of a new post-colonial India.

Today in Anglophone literary studies broadly, scholars argue for replacing “postcoloniality” with “transnationalism” as a privileged interpretative category. I will argue that, like in Rao’s time, the contestation at the boundary line between postcoloniality and transnationalism, rather than either term exclusively, more accurately represents the contemporary South Asian literary landscape. Specifically, this paper will argue that two postmillennial South Asian novels, Ruchir Joshi’s 2001 The Last Jet Engine Laugh and Hari Kunzru’s 2011 Gods Without Men, undertake Rao’s conceptual boundary troubling in order to produce a ‘legendary history’ for our time that is both old and new. Both texts represent the kind of imaginative work of conceptualizing the globe common in today’s ‘world literature’ landscape. However, linking Kunzru’s and Joshi’s both highly contemporary and transnational texts to the much earlier and nationalist Kanthapura illuminates continuity between postcoloniality and transnationalism, thereby refusing to discard a clearly significant postcolonial past, while also taking seriously the growing importance of a figure of ‘the global’ whose conceptual boundaries have yet to be satisfactorily theorized.

Michaela M. Henry is a PhD Candidate in the English Department at Brandeis University. She specializes in 20th and 21st century postcolonial literature, with an emphasis on the Anglophone novel in South Asia. Her dissertation considers to what extent ‘postcoloniality’ and ‘transnationalism’ are, and are not, useful interpretive categories for the contemporary English-language South Asian novel.

Kasim Husain              McMaster University
Sympathy for the Migrant: The Rushdie Affair, Hanif Kureishi’s *The Black Album* and the Emergence of the Neoliberal Novel

Ever since Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini’s fatwa against Salman Rushdie, mainstream commentary has reflected on this controversy as a challenge for freedom of expression both in a globalizing context and as fundamentalist variants of Islam gained influence during the 1980s (Hitchens, Pipes, Ruthven). Hanif Kureishi’s 1995 novel *The Black Album* addresses the uproar in response to *The Satanic Verses* through the eyes of a British student of Pakistani background, Shahid, whose coming of age involves being torn between a group of radical Muslim students and the wan leftism of his college instructors. Some critics find this binary of Muslim and liberal fundamentalism stereotypical in comparison with the hybridity of the writer’s earlier output (O’Shea-Meddour, Ramsey-Kurtz, Ranasinha), while Sara Upstone recuperates the diverse depth of the novel’s portrayal of British Muslims (2008). I argue that the inherited wealth that buttresses Shahid’s experimentation with rather flatly depicted identity categories—“everyone was […] coming out as a man, woman, gay, black, Jew” (102)—suggests the novel’s articulation of the then-emergent cultural politics of neoliberal multiculturalism in Britain (Melamed 2011). Class privilege underwrites Shahid’s freedom as the exemplary migrant subject to perform his gender, sexuality and religion otherwise, glossing over the condition to which he finally consigns his so-called “bredren.” After Shahid abandons them in the midst of their defense of poorer Muslim community members from white supremacist gangs, these Muslim students are satirized as in sufficient thrall to their charismatic leader Riaz to worship a supposedly divine (and conspicuously phallic) zucchini at his behest. While Shahid’s mobility allows him an ostensible escape from fixed identity via a heterosexual interracial coupling at the novel’s end, this individualized resolution of melancholic migrant grievance (Ahmed 2010) belies the increased racial and religious scapegoating of British Muslims following the Rushdie Affair, not to mention 9/11 and the 7/7 Underground bombings.

**Kasim Husain** is a PhD candidate in the Department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University. His research concerns contemporary British cultural production from the 1980s to the present, investigating coincidences between identity political struggles and resistance to neoliberalization. He has published two recent articles based on this research, examining neoliberal desi masculinity in Gautam Malkani’s *Londonstani* in a special issue of *South Asian History and Culture* on South Asian masculinities, and reflecting on current welfare state nostalgia via Buchi Emecheta’s *Second-Class Citizen* in *Postcolonial Text*. Other areas of interest include Asian diaspora literatures, multiculturalism, and postcolonial theory.

**Khandakar Ashraful Islam**

Metropolitan University, Sylhet, Bangladesh

American Dream: A Myth of Success or Mirage; An Investigation into Lahiri’s *The Namesake* and *Unaccustomed Earth*

This paper aims at re-reading American Dream in terms of the myriad diasporic experiences of Indian-American immigrants. Jhumpa Lahiri, in her fictions, portrays those Indian immigrants who believing in the American myth of success transgressed all spatial and cultural boundaries to
achieve social mobility, happy living and a ready-made fortune for their children. Being merged with the spirit of American Dream, although the first generation immigrants could attain economic success, their off-springs encountered quite opposite experience. In terms of achievements, though the second generation was supposed to be more successful than their predecessors, in reality they are found entangled in the quest of their cultural identity. Instead of pursuing any dream of success, assimilation to either American (host) or Indian (imposed) culture becomes so crucial for the second generation that in their identity formation it not only creates a psychological crisis but also spoils their professional success. Focusing on the economic aspect of American Dream, this paper is an attempt to seek the answer whether for the Indian immigrants, American Dream is a myth of success or a mirage.

**Khandakar Ashraful Islam** is a Lecturer in English at Metropolitan University, Sylhet, Bangladesh. His area of interest is Postcolonial Studies especially Diaspora Literature.

**Nalini Iyer**  
Professor of English, Seattle University

Multiple Migrations: Partition narratives in the South Asian Diaspora

This panel presents three varied ideas to rethink the Partition of India and its impacts on nationhood, belonging and gender in the postcolonial Indian subcontinent. In the first paper, Nalini Iyer investigates statements from many immigrants who move to America and explains that it was just another step in the migration process begun by partition. The children of those disrupted by Partition continued to look for a place to establish as home and coming to America was part of that. Such experiences of immigrants are reflected in many diasporic fiction—for instance, in Anita Rau Badami’s book *Can You Hear the Nightbird Call?* Partition shapes the discourse of citizenship and belonging for Sikh Canadians. The same idea is reflected in M.G.Vassanji’s *In Between World of Vikram Lall*. In that novel, Vassanji’s character, an uncle who leaves India because of partition, ends up in Kenya supporting the Mau Mau and partition displacement becomes part of the character’s understanding of how displacements are at the heart of South Asian diasporic identities.

**Nalini Iyer** is Professor of English at Seattle University and Secretary of SALA. Her publications include the following books: *Other Tongues: Rethinking the Language Debates in India*, co-edited with Bonnie Zare (Rodopi, 2009) and *Roots and Reflections: South Asians in the Pacific Northwest*, co-authored with Amy Bhatt (University of Washington P, 2013). She is currently co-editing with Amritjit Singh and Rahul Gairola a collection of essays on the Partition.

**Pranav Jani**  
Ohio State University

Rebels Without Borders: The Ghadar Party on Ireland and China

The internationalist politics of the Hindustan Ghadar Party, founded over 100 years ago, reveal the elasticity of radical anticolonial nationalism. The Party was explicitly oriented around Indian
freedom from British rule but was rooted, at the same time, in the struggles of Indian migrants to Canada and the US in the anti-Asian climate of the early 20th century. Again, the Party projected a model of global solidarity, but one that was seen as absolutely essential to any possibility of national freedom. In this paper, I examine the Ghadar Party’s form of internationalism through its reactions to two events: the Irish uprising of 1916 and the 1925-27 revolution in China. As Ghadar publications and external reports show, the Party’s embrace of the Irish rebels solidified its internationalist credentials and placed it in good standing with Irish-American labor unions at a time when whiter workers often turned to anti-Asian rhetoric and violence. And the Party’s defense of the Chinese revolution, which it sought to inculcate in its members at the local level, was expressed not only by statements of solidarity but appeals to (Panjabi) Indian soldiers of the British army to refuse to fight the Chinese and, in fact, to join them in fighting the British. Ireland and China become, in fascinating ways, key plot points in the Ghadar nationalist imaginary, eschewing parochialism and establishing new affinities while deepening the desire for national freedom.

Pranav Jani Ohio State University

Maryse Jayasuriya University of Texas at El Paso

Temporal and Spatial Boundaries in Romesh Gunesekera’s Noon Tide Toll and Lal Medawattegedera’s Playing Pillow Politics at the MGK

What is the boundary between a war-torn and post-war society? At what point do the effects of war stop impacting a nation and its peoples? To what extent does the end of a military conflict lead to genuine efforts at reconciliation? Two recent novels about Sri Lanka—Noon Tide Toll (2014) by Romesh Gunesekera and the Gratiaen Prize-winning Playing Pillow Politics at MGK (2013) by Lal Medawattegedara—consider these questions through narrators who themselves are marginalized but provide the link to the perspectives of a diverse group of individuals. In Gunesekera’s novel, the driver of a van for hire comments on post-war Sri Lanka through the experiences he gleans from his clients—ranging from tourists and journalists to soldiers and former guerrillas—in a series of interlinked stories. In Medawattegedara’s highly experimental novel, a young boy with a disability recounts the stories of a squatter community living on an isolated mountain whose struggles and victories are, counterintuitively, parallel to those of Sri Lankans in general. The borders in these two novels are at once temporal, metaphorical, and geographical: in Noon Tide Toll, the van driver is crossing the now effaced boundaries between what had been government and LTTE territory during Sri Lanka’s quarter century long separatist war, and in Playing Pillow Politics, the boundaries between ability and disability, the oppressed and powerful—and even the natural and the supernatural—in Sri Lankan society are being negotiated. Both are concerned with the contested state of boundaries in a nation that has been ineluctably transformed by a war that was in no small part about where ethnic and political borders would be drawn.

Maryse Jayasuriya is Associate Professor in the Department of English at the University of Texas at El Paso. She is the author of Terror and Reconciliation: Sri Lankan Anglophone
Asha Jeffers

Means of Escape, Means of Invention: Hindu Figures and Black Pop Culture in Rakesh Satyal’s *Blue Boy*

In this conference paper, I argue that texts focused on second generation South Asian North Americans can complicate the idea of marginality by mobilizing ambiguously positioned cultural symbols as a way of reflecting the simultaneous multiple insider-outsider positional ties of the children of immigrants. I do so through an analysis of the novel *Blue Boy* by Rakesh Satyal. The child protagonist, Kiran, finds himself doubly marginalized in the Cincinnati suburb where he lives with his parents. His dark skin, flamboyant personality, and love of beautiful things alienate him from his white classmates and the children of his parents’ Indian friends. He attempts to ameliorate his position, explore his identity, and shore up his self-worth through an identification with Krishna and an engagement with Black popular culture, particularly the music of Whitney Houston. These two highly disparate figures are both nevertheless concurrently mainstream and marginal; Krishna is worshipped but his characteristics are deemed unseemly for an ordinary boy to imitate, and while Whitney Houston is undoubtedly popular, part of her appeal for Kiran is her distance from the white beauty standards that surround him. I argue that the novel demonstrates with the way that engaging with the mythical and the popular can be a powerful and generative means through which the second generation can resist being over determined by history and social expectations.

Asha Jeffers is a PhD candidate in English at York University. Her research is focused on immigrant and second generation literatures through a comparative, transnational, trans ethnic, and intergenerational lens.

Nosheen Kapoor

Research Scholar at Panjab University

Escaping Gender Boundaries in Mahasweta Devi’s “*Dopdi*” and Mahesh Dattani’s “*Dance Like a Man*”

My paper will focus on investigating borders and escaping them in the face of stereotypical biases in the text ‘Dopdi’ and ‘Dance Like a Man’. On one hand there is a certain defaminisation in “*Dopdi*”, on the other is a sub-liminal feminization evidenced in Jairaj’s character in “*Dance like a Man*”, viewed from the point of locus of conventional gender identity. Borders, whether those of gender, race, culture or nations, are a result of manifested biases. Our need for borders is a deeply rooted need for divisions and binaries where none should exist. And when individual
existences are not in sync with these dividing needs of a society; conflict arises. Consequence of which is sometimes total existential breakdown as in the case of Jairaj in Mahesh Dattani’s play or physical oppression of the eponymous protagonist in Mahasweta Devi’s “Dopdi”. A life spent escaping biases and their manifested forms - borders, expresses an individual potential beyond our expected boundaries of ‘self’, thus a life that will always flow against the current of the conventional and will lead to a realization of a borderless human potential capable of escaping cultural, racial and gender borders. Although, not always successfully, as portrayed in the texts under review.

Nosheen Kapoor is currently pursuing her Ph.D. from Panjab University, Chandigarh, India. Her academic achievements include, graduating at the top of the class in her Master’s degree and securing 1st Rank in the entrance to the Ph.D. program of Panjab University. She has also presented papers in various conferences in India. Her Ph.D research topic is “The Metaphysical Approach to Identity: A Study in Select Literary Texts”. She is also working as a copywriter in an IT company for the past seven years.

Shahzeb Khan is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature, University of the Punjab

Mohsin Hamid’s Guarded Narrative Space in Mothsmoke

This paper explores the exclusionary politics of Mohsin Hamid’s writing in Mothsmoke (2000), his first novel. It sets out by explaining how this internationally acclaimed writer from Pakistan represents Pakistani reality with its entanglements and intangibilities, and injects in its narrative elements which resist easy unraveling to a foreign reader. It thus becomes an act of cultural assertion. Hamid’s Moth Smoke, I argue in this paper, is like a guarded narrative space that allows a foreign reader to enter it on terms set by the author and that anyone not willing to do can never truly enjoy the charms of a guarded but desired space. I intend to offer a reading of Hamid’s Moth Smoke as a text that sets up resistance to a reader who is not educated in the native culture. In doing so, the text tries to subvert the hegemony of the authors of the “great tradition” whose narrative space was replete with similar cultural signs that stimulated the readers from the colonized cultures to engage with the culture of the center. The author’s attempt can thus be seen as an effort at centering the erstwhile margins. The language in the novel reveals what Ashcroft calls the curious tension of cultural revelation and cultural silence. The author thus sets narrative tension and creates borders and boundaries for a foreign reader. The paper also offers a juxtaposition of Mothsmoke with Hamid’s later writing and that of his contemporaries in this aspect.

Shahzeb Khan is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature, University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. Before joining this department, he worked as lecturer at the English department of GC University, Lahore for seven years. He is currently working on his doctoral dissertation which is on institutionalization of English literature in Pakistan. His areas of interests include indigenization of knowledge, literature as an instrument of ideology and institutionalization of literary study.
Sobia Khan

Transnational Identity in Crisis in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*

In this presentation I have chosen to examine modern twenty-first century postcolonial transnational subjectivity anew as this population is a new and prevalent phenomenon in the world today. Mass and frequent movements across borders has created a subjectivity that is unique and differs vastly from previous generations. Through the analysis of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid, this paper investigates the complex personal and political journey Changez undertakes to redefine himself through his conflicting, complex, and uncertain life experiences. His story is of mobility and displacement, of survival and of worldly success, and of a quest to find a “true” sense of belonging in the world. In this paper I dwell on Changez’s search for an “authentic” identity and trace where it leads him as a result of his transnational experiences. Ultimately, the ways in which he reimagines his selfhood as a transnational Muslim Pakistani-American is what is under investigation. This study illuminates the ways in which transnational subjectivities reify their diasporic status through their writing and relocate their sense of belonging in multiple spaces, but ultimately finding themselves trapped in the margins and the spaces in-between departures and arrivals. This paper concludes via Jacques Derrida and Edward Said that the in-between spaces and the periphery perpetuate a transnational identities sense of homelessness by rendering them as outsiders and foreigners, and that is where they reside uncomfortably. This is where we find Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* as he sits at a roadside café in Lahore donning a beard and a political agenda—a new Pakistani identity, explaining himself to an American.

Sobia Khan is full time English Faculty at Richland College, Dallas. She earned her PhD in 2014 at University of Texas at Dallas. Her dissertation is titled “Transnational Identity in Crisis: Self Writings of Edward Said, Jacques Derrida, and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha.” Two scholarly essays by her are forthcoming in spring 2015 in *Journal of Contemporary Literature* and in *Geo Criticism and Edward Said: A Comparative Cultural Studies Series* published by Palgrave McMillan. She has published translations of Urdu poetry and other creative work. She has also presented and chaired sessions at numerous conferences including the MLA, ACLA, and SALA.

Saiyeda Khatun

“Multicultural Pedagogy: Teaching *The Namesake* and “*Hell-Heaven*” to a Freshman Class”

I’ll focus in my paper how students receive “*Hell-Heaven*” by Jhumpa Lahiri and the film version of her novel, *The Namesake* in the classroom. I’ll analyze strategies that encourage students to cross their boundaries of culture and appreciate the complexities of Lahiri’s characters who are constantly confronted with cultural dissonance and diasporic struggle. “*Hell-Heaven*” is both one of Lahiri’s best stories, and a challenging text to teach. In this story the issues of culture and identity intersect with existentialist questions. The mother-daughter relationship is layered with problems and conflicts. My discussion will include the following
inquiries: How can we build an empathetic understanding in our students of the issues in this story? What strategies does Lahiri use to engage a multicultural audience with her characters? Which cultural point of view is privileged, if any? Focusing on the film version of The Namesake based on Lahiri’s novel of the same title, the second part of my paper will explore the following issues: What is the concept of freedom in The Namesake? How does each character view and envision freedom? What is suffocating, what is liberating? Can we locate any intercultural spaces in The Namesake?

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. Her research and teaching interests include diaspora and cultural studies theory, and multicultural pedagogy.

Alison Klein

CUNY Graduate Center

Stretching the Bounds: Women’s Experience of Indenture in Peggy Mohan’s *Jahajin*

In the last twenty years, more and more novels have explored the nineteenth century imperial system of indentured labor, under which approximately 500,000 Indians traveled to the Caribbean. The scarcity of women indenturing shifted traditional gender roles; women may have gained some freedoms, such as the ability to choose a mate, but were also restricted, as women were seen as the bearers of culture. This dynamic has been under-explored in fiction, with one notable exception, *Jahajin* (2007), by Peggy Mohan. *Jahajin* focuses on three female protagonists: the unnamed narrator, a linguist recording older Indo-Trinidadian women talking about their journey to Trinidad; a 110-year old woman named Deeda who indentured with the narrator’s great-great-grandmother; and a folktale heroine named Saranga, who travels on her own journey from monkey to human. The novel shifts back and forth between these three women’s stories, which overlap in content and theme. This blurring of boundaries between genres and generations emphasizes the ongoing impact of indenture, particularly in the lives of Indo-Caribbean women. For example, the narrator’s great-great-grandmother, Sunnariya, is assaulted in the sugarcane fields by a Scottish overseer, an event that is echoed by the demeaning, racialized treatment the narrator receives at a country club. However, the narrator actively engages with the past, interviewing older women and enlisting her grandmother to help translate the interviews. By breaking through linguistic and generational barriers, she is able to recognize patterns of oppression and challenge restricting gender norms that trapped the generations of women before her. This paper will demonstrate the ways that *Jahajin* blurs the borders between three narrative strands in order to demonstrate the permeability between the past and the present. Mohan both draws attention to the cyclical nature of gender and racial oppression and advocates connections between generations as a means of breaking those cycles.

Alison Klein is a PhD candidate in the CUNY Graduate Center English Department, specializing in postcolonial literature. She is completing her dissertation on gender roles in Caribbean indenture narratives, and her research has been funded by the CUNY Graduate Center and the Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies. Her scholarly work has appeared in
Exit 9, and her fiction and nonfiction have appeared in The Sun, The Columbia Review, and Hot Metal Press, among others. She currently teaches writing classes at American University, and has taught at Georgetown University and the City College of New York, as well.

Navneet Kumar  
**Medicine Hat College**  

**Social Plurality and Cohabitation: A Critique of State-sponsored Nationalism**

Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition* (1958) argues that the nation-state is inextricably bound up with the recurrent expulsion of national minorities since it assumes that the nation expresses a certain national identity and people falling outside the purview of that identity are worthy of being expelled. This singular and homogeneous identity formation process allows any state to discursively confer modes of citizenship on a set of people and simultaneously take away the rights of citizenship from another set of people. In *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (2012), Judith Butler argues how as a result of Jewish nationalism and state-sponsored racism, Palestinians find themselves dispossessed. In this paper, taking my cue from Arendt, Butler and Edward Said, I propose that an ethic of plural cohabitation will necessarily force us to rethink the two-state solution and lead us to formulate a one-state solution within the ethos of binationalism. Such an ethical framework will obligate cohabitation, which does not derive, from cultural sameness but from the unchosen character of social plurality of the Jewish and the Palestinian people. Concomitantly, I draw upon Gayatri Spivak’s notion of the ethical and her attempt at a coercive rearrangement of desires where the ethical seeks to listen to the other as if it were a self, neither to punish nor to acquit. I argue that the solution to the problem lies in conceptualizing ethics that contests sovereign notions of the subject and ontological claims of self-identity. Ethics (in a Levin Asian sense) here are a way of being dispossessed from sovereignty and nation in response to the claims made by those one does not fully know. Such a conception of the ethical relation can take us beyond the narrow confines of nationalism here and towards a vision of cohabitation.

Navneet Kumar teaches courses in Literature, Composition and Liberal Arts at Medicine Hat College. His current research interests focus on issues of pluralism, religion and secularism in modern times and issues of citizenship and statelessness.

Cynthia A. Leenerts  
**East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania**

**Diasporic Epic Heroines: Nina Paley’s *Sita Sings the Blues* and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *The Palace of Illusions***

In *Epic Transformations: Reinscriptions of Sita and Draupadi in Twentieth Century Literature* (1997), I argued that nationalism, feminism, and the groundswell of justice for Dalit and Adivasi groups have inspired writers to re-present Sita or Draupadi, generally in a context of the liberation of a nation, of a gender, of a social class or ethnicity. The heroines have been rewritten into images of India as a nation; of a married woman torn between her husband and his rival; of a
women’s revolutionary collective; of the tens of thousands of women raped or abducted in the
take of Partition riots; of married, widowed, and single women trapped in domesticity; of the
land beneath one’s feet; of the wind in the grass; of a tribal ancestress.

But what about when the epic heroines cross borders, going diasporic? In my forthcoming work
Swaraj Sita, Diasporic Draupadi: Rewriting India’s Epic Heroines, of which this paper is an
excerpt, I expand my focus into this century, when, along with their earlier transformations of the
past century, which still hold true, I explore what it may mean for these desi characters to be re-
envisioned by American filmmaker Nina Paley and Indian American novelist Chitra Banerjee
Divakaruni. Drawing upon Amardeep Singh’s Animating a Postmodern Ramayana: Nina Paley’s
Sita Sings the Blues (2009), as well as upon Julia Hoydis’s A Palace of Her Own: Feminine
Identity in the Great Indian Story (2012), and other recent South Asian inscriptions of the
heroines, I discuss the rewards and pitfalls incurred by Sita’s and Draupadi’s oceanic crossings,
exploring where an inclusive move toward universalizing the heroines can run aground into
cultural appropriation, in the hope of helping to cut deeper channels for their voyage.

Cynthia A. Leenerts is Associate Professor of English, East Stroudsburg University. She is on
the Editorial board of the South Asian Review. Her most recent major publication (with Lopa
Basu) is Passage to Manhattan: Critical Essays on Meena Alexander (Cambridge Scholars

Qianqian Li  Philipps-University of Marburg, Germany

What Is My Color? The Problems of Racial Boundaries

Barack Obama’s victory in the presidential campaign in 2008 is hailed as a milestone in race
relations, for he is the first African American to hold the office. However, Obama is only half
black. His mother is white, and considering that Obama was born and raised in a white
community, he is more white than black. But why would people categorize him as black rather
than white? Similar confusion over the definition of race appears more often with the acceptance
of miscegenation in most communities. In this paper, I will examine some examples of racial
identification in American history (e.g., the judges’ decision on whether Asian Indians and
Syrians were white in the early twentieth century, and mixed-blood Native Americans’ self-
identification of their race) to demonstrate that the biological factor is not and has never been
adequate to define race. I will then interpret the difficulty in finding identity in Jhumpa Lahiri’s
novel The Namesake to further extend the racial confusion to second-generation immigrants, for
their inner racial identification does not quite match their physical appearance. The paper argues
that self-identification and the political or cultural needs have become the primary factors to
define race, exceeding the biological differences.

Qianqian Li received her B.A. in Media Studies and her M.A. in North American Studies at the
Philipps-University of Marburg in Germany. Since October 2012 she has been working on her
doctoral thesis “Settling down in a Foreign Country: A Comparison between the U.S. and
German Immigration Policies and Their Consequences.” Her focus is on the political and cultural aspects of immigration policies.

**Imti Watitula Longkumer  Indian Institute of Technology Indore**

Breaking Borders: Towards an exploration of North East Indian Literature

The idea of constructing sweeping generalization on any given situation can alter and affect the whole system of discourse. North Eastern region of India has remained problematic in various fronts, literary as well as in social dialogue. The difficulty arises in various aspects, with the region being a small group of tribal people occupying a remote geographical area, is often grouped into a homogenous entity in spite of its multi-ethnic mosaic, and their writings universalized under the assumption of being too political and conflict ridden. In an otherwise situation, their oriental features often mark them as an outsider, ironically in his/her own homeland. While these misinterpretation remains, there is an impressive body of work in English offered by the region where the writers has something different to say. They explore a rich interplay of myths and legends given their strong ties with oral tradition, where they not only tell a story but reflect the unique histories, cultures and heritages of each multiple communities. Some of the literatures written in local dialect in the recent times have started attracting the attention of the outside world through increasing translations. This paper will explore North East literature as a re-invention of a new and unique literature in academia. It will look into select texts that represent distinct traits of the region, how memory is employed as an art form of writing and will study towards allowing the work to emerge through vast possibilities and lesser generalization.

**Imti Watitula Longkumer** is a Doctoral Research Scholar, Department of English (HSS) at Indian Institute of Technology Indore, currently working on North East Indian Women’s writing. Area of interest lies in Cultural Studies, Women’s Writings, Ethnographic fiction and Commonwealth Literature. The author has cleared UGC National Eligibility Test in English, June 2012 and has completed M.Phil. in English titled Re-Capturing the Roots: Memory, Culture and Politics A study on Temsula Ao collection of short stories These Hills Called Home: Stories from a War Zone.

**J. Edward Mallot  Arizona State University**

“I Used to be Human Once”: Bodies and Boundaries in Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People*

The 1984 Bhopal disaster left thousands dead, injured, and displaced, and ranks as one of the Indian subcontinent’s most shocking incidents in the post-Partition era. Indra Sinha’s Booker-shortlisted novel *Animal’s People* focuses on the still-ongoing aftermath of this tragedy. Sinha’s narrator—a permanently-disfigured young man who calls himself “Animal,” and who insists on maintaining a distinction between himself and the category of “the human”—presents readers with an account of his life after the Union Carbide incident. Through the voice of this unexpectedly funny and shockingly frank narrator, Sinha posits a series of questions related to bodies and boundaries, positioning his entire novel within the fault lines of contemporary bio
political discourse. What does it mean to consider oneself, or others, “human”? What set of criteria renders individuals and populations physically “able-bodied,” politically viable, and legally recognized? How do outside agencies, such as multinational corporations and international aid efforts, slip into and slide over notions of community and marginality?

J Edward Mallot is an Associate Professor of Postcolonial Studies at Arizona State University. His book *Memory, Nationalism, and Narrative in Contemporary South Asia* was published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2012. He has published articles on a wide range of South Asian writers, including Shauna Singh Baldwin, Roma Tearne, Mahesh Dattani, Kamila Shamsie, and Romesh Gunesekera.

Rajiv Mohabir

University of Hawaii, Manoa

The Boundaries of the Creole Nation: The Failure of Creolization as a Process to Locate South Asian Subjectivities in Caribbean Space

Through reading The Mighty Sparrow’s song lyrics, I intend to illustrate how identity categories are constructed under creolization as a process. Often lauded as an inclusive approach to locating individuals in a diverse body, creolization-as-process is an essentializing and absorbing practice where the state constructs, deconstructs and then reconstructs ideas of “race” and ethnic belonging into what is appropriate in Caribbean space that also erases the Indo-Caribbean. The South Asian must reject cultural associations in order to participate in Caribbean national space, and therefore become an “authentic” citizen. Caribbean nationalism, in fact, depends upon the lingering effects of the rule of colonial difference and the structures of the colonial constructed economy in order to enact the postcolonial dream of nation-ness. This practice relies on the continued production of racial and ethnic categories that constructs South Asians in the Caribbean as migrants and blacks as the new indigenous body with claims to land that presuppose other claims to belonging. This ambiguous definition of creolization-as-process excludes the East Indian subject in Creole national identity that works to also separate the East Indian from national inclusion on the smaller level of country. I posit that there needs to be a more inclusive way of imagining Caribbean space and belonging that allows for its polyethnic constituency and that does not seek to colonize nonconforming communities via the tropes of creolized modernity.

Rajiv Mohabir, a poet and translator, is the winner of Four Way Book’s 2014 Intro Prize for his manuscript entitled *The Taxidermist’s Cut*. A Kundiman, VONA, and American Academy of Indian Studies language fellow, Rajiv’s poetry and translations are published or forthcoming from journals such as *The Prairie Schooner, Drunken Boat, Great River Review, Crab Orchard Review*, and *Storyscape Journal* and others. Nominated for a Pushcart in 2010, he received his MFA in Poetry and Translation from Queens College. He is currently pursuing a PhD in English and Creative Writing at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa.

Smithi Mohan J S

University of Kerala
Boundaries as Kaleidoscopes of Intersection: Crossroads of Memory and Resistance in the film *Bombay*

Films are considered to be the most popular of cultural practices reflecting a plethora of social, economic and cultural phenomena in modern societies and are hence an inevitable part of our everyday life. Our life styles have increasingly been associated with films in one way or the other which in turn makes it a part of our popular culture. Narratives of memory and collective identity and the academic discourses that examine them and construct them have experienced enormous growth in recent years, and film - popular film in particular - has been supportive to its advance. By documenting “othering” film functions as counter-memory to the ‘official’ versions of history. By representing a very broad range of subject positions, the events and ideologies depicted are released from the confines of stereotype. But above all, this liberator technique of a film helps in constructing popular acceptance, resistance or rejection of an event. In this context, through an analysis of Mani Ratnam’s popular film *Bombay* set in the backdrop of the 1992 Mumbai riots, I would like to suggest how a popular film acts as a site of memory and resistance simultaneously. It is interesting how the politics of memory (in its diverse manifestations as mourning, nostalgia, counter-memory, and forgetting) is inextricably linked to the politics of films, thus becoming a determining force in the construction, reconstruction and deconstruction of identity oriented boundaries which in turn underscores borderlines or the fluidity of borders.

Smithi Mohan J S is working as Assistant Professor of English in Government College, Thrissuriputhura, Kerala. She is pursuing her doctoral studies on communal riots. Her areas of interest include post modernism, cultural studies and other sociological renderings.

Nicola Mooney

Punjabi Pastoral: The Poetics and Politics of a Rural Imaginary

The Punjabi village, or pind, is a site of profound and proliferating nostalgia: celebrated across a wide range of literary, musical, and visual representations, captured in material fragments of village life that circulate and are ritually consumed across the Punjabi diaspora, reconstructed and lamented in the newly imagined folklores of music videos, tourist villages, farmstays, and blogposts, even as its contours are still transmitted in the daily praxis of food, dress, and other (gendered) habits of the body, as well as in both discourse and narrative in the village and beyond. This paper sketches the various dimensions of the Punjabi pastoral, and considers its sources. Surveying the poetics and politics of this nostalgia in relation to the shifting boundaries created in relation to the social conditions of colonization, postcoloniality, development, regional modernity, urbanization, and transnationalism, with a particular focus on popular cultural representations of the rural imaginary, I argue that the romanticization of village life and landed identities among farmers who no longer farm is simultaneously a reiteration of tradition in modernity, a technique of diasporic re-emplacement, a blurring of borders, a refusal of marginality, a claim to uninterrupted sovereignty, and a recognition of the impossibility of return.

Nicola Mooney is Associate Professor at University of the Fraser Valley. Her ethnographic work concerns what it is to be modern and diasporic, with a particular focus on Jat Sikhs, transitions...
from rural to urban and transnational life, and their impacts on ethnicity, class, caste, gender, religion, memory, and identity. She also writes on popular, performance, public, visual, and poetic cultures.

Holly Morgan  
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster

Marginal Maternities: Surrogacy, Motherhood, and Definitions of Family

Adrienne Arieff’s *The Sacred Thread: A True Story of Becoming a Mother and Finding a Family Half a World Away* portrays one woman’s positive experiences with surrogacy in India. Arieff spends much of the gestational period in India with her surrogate, and reconstructs for her readers her experiences as an intended parent, highlighting the potential for all parties to engage in personal growth and intercultural learning. Kishwar Desai’s novel, * Origins of Love*, on the other hand, fictionalizes the legal and ethical minefield that the arena of assisted reproduction has become. From IVF to surrogacy, child abandonment, murder, and illegal stem cell therapies, Desai’s novel chronicles a wide range of medical practices and the ways that people can be exploited, extorted, and abused in the name of profit. Despite differences in both genre and content, central to both works is the question of whether surrogacy - particularly international surrogacy - is ethical. Drawing on the vast canon of scholarship on motherhood and mothering, this paper examines the linguistic characterization of the relationships between surrogates and the intended parents. Through a comparative close reading, I will explore the language of motherhood in each text, how the labor of child-bearing is framed in each work, and how the works contribute to conceptions of both surrogacy and maternity as a whole.

Holly Morgan is a PhD candidate and Marie Curie Early Stage Research Fellow at Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität in Münster, Germany. Her research interests include diaspora studies and gender studies, with a focus on Indian Women’s Writing.

Sobia Mubarak  
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

The M(O)ther/Monster in Mahasweta Devi’s Bayen

Mahaswata Devi is one of the most well-known writers in India, also a social activist who has always raised her voice against class and racial segregation and injustices. Devi’s play Bayen/ Witch addresses the issues concerning women’s subjectivity- denial of rights/agency to mothers in certain cultural situations. The protagonist, Chandidasi, a mother, is branded as a witch, therefore assuming the status of the Non- Mother, life-taker instead of a life-giver. Mahasweta Devi illustrates how in rural and remote areas of South Asia, women are doubly marginalized owing to superstitions as well as patriarchal forces that work as the collective unconscious, permeated in the very fabric of society. Chandidasi is Otherised and feared even by her own husband and son. She exists off-center, along the margins of the small village, shunned by everyone, bereft of her humanity. Chandidasi, thus becomes an abject figure, both feared and fancied; her identity shifts between human and the non-human, subject and the object, some -
Thing that is both loved and loathed simultaneously. I will draw on the works by theorists like Julia Kristeva, Nancy Chodorow, and others. The paper will examine the emotional dynamics of woman’s self when deprived of the status of motherhood which in most South Asian societies is kind of a mandatory condition for a woman to maintain her status as wife.

**Sobia Mubarak**, a Fulbright scholar from Pakistan, is pursuing her PhD in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies from University of Arkansas. Her area of interest is Postcolonial Drama, with special emphasis on South Asian Theatre. Her dissertation focuses on images of women in Indian & Pakistani alternative theatre.

**Shreyosi Mukherjee**  
National University of Singapore

Reimagining the Margin(s), Exploring the Self: Imtiaz Ali’s *Highway* (2014)

Imtiaz Ali’s film *Highway* (2014) is an interesting amalgamation of mainstream Bollywood actors like Alia Bhatt and Randeep Hooda and a non-mainstream thematic framework, i.e. the Stockholm syndrome. Through this film Ali explores the protagonist, Veera’s (played by Bhatt) journey from the societal centre to the margin. The paper attempts to shed some light as to how Ali uses the motif of the highway as a fluid, borderless state of being and the non-conformity that endows Veera with a new found passion for life. The paper also investigates how the film itself is carefully placed in the interstices of Bollywood and the so-called parallel cinema to deliberately obfuscate the existing demarcations of the centre and margins in Hindi cinema. The road to self-discovery as portrayed in the film constantly juxtaposes a stifling urbanity with a lawless, violent and often desolate rural wilderness. My paper strongly critiques Ali’s deeply flawed and romanticized notion of the social margin where violence becomes erotic. But the paper also acknowledges *Highway* as a cultural product that unfailingly celebrates the defiance, romance, freedom and possibilities of the margin(s).

**Shreyosi Mukherjee** is a fourth year doctoral student in the Theatre Studies programme at the National University of Singapore. She is also a research scholar at the *Asian Shakespeare Intercultural Archive (A|S|I|A)*. Her primary research interests include Intercultural Theatre, Shakespeare adaptions, Digital Humanities and Diaspora studies.

**Anne Murphy**  
University of British Columbia

Performing the *Komagata Maru*: Theatre and the Work of Memory

This paper will explore how the representation and remembrance of the *Komagata Maru* incident (1914) reflects the development of the Punjabi Diasporic community of British Columbia, Canada, and diversity in Canada overall. The incident, the centenary of which is being commemorated this year across greater Vancouver, is named for the ship that was the center of controversy in 1914 when it arrived in the port of Vancouver bearing 376 would-be immigrants to Canada from British India. All but a few of the passengers on the ship were disallowed from entering Canada under three orders-in-council passed by the Dominion Government that amended Canada’s Immigration Act, as a part of a broader move against Asian immigration in the period. In May 2014, UBC’s Departments of Theatre and Film and Asian Studies partnered
with Rangmanch Punjabi Theatre (Surrey) and Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology to produce a single production developed out of three existing plays about the incident: *The Komagata Maru Incident* by Sharon Pollock (1976; in English), *The Komagata Maru* by Ajmer Rode (published in 1984 but performed in 1979; in Punjabi) and *Samuīdārī sher nāl takkar* or *Conflict with the Sea Lion*, co-authored by Sukhwant Hundal and Sadhu Binning (1989; in Punjabi). The plays act as a lens through which we can see how memory produces the present, and how the past creates possibilities for creative engagement with the present and future. This paper will present aspects of these productions and analyze the ways the three plays diverge and converge in their engagement with the past and present, across linguistic and cultural boundaries, and within a changing Canadian imaginary.

**Anne Murphy** is Associate Professor in the Department of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia. She received her Ph.D. from Columbia University, and previously taught at The New School in NYC. Her monograph, *The Materiality of the Past: History and Representation in Sikh Tradition* (Oxford University Press, 2012), explores the construction of Sikh memory and historical consciousness around material representations and religious sites from the eighteenth century to the present. Current research concerns the formations of modern Punjabi literature, and particularly the articulation of the secular within it.

**Aniruddha Mukhopadhyay**  
*University of Florida*

The Tiger and the Chameleon: The Legacy of Ethnic Difference in K. S. Maniam’s *In a Far Country* and *Between Lives*

In my paper, I look at interactions between the Indian diasporic community, Malays and Chinese in Malaysia in K. S. Maniam’s *In a Far Country* (1993) and *Between Lives* (2003). In the context of political developments in Malaysia over the last two decades, including the discursive shift from prioritizing Malay culture and political progress to the idea of Bangsa Malaysia (an inclusive Malaysian nation devoid of ethnic distinctions), I explore Maniam’s attempts to articulate an integrative Malaysian identity through inter-ethnic socio-cultural interactions. Following Sheila Nair, I argue that in Maniam’s novels the possibility of a trans-ethnic “Malaysian identity” is circumscribed by the colonial difference of ethnic othering, because in exploring ethnic relations he begins with neatly defined ethnic identities. I then engage with Shanthini Pillai’s argument in *Colonial Visions, Postcolonial Revisions* that Malaysian Indians cannot move towards an integrationist Malaysian identity by ignoring their “coolie” heritage. But tracing that legacy also reproduces the teleology of colonial othering that shaped the postcolonial ethnic politics of the Malaysian nation. I argue that tracing that legacy in Maniam’s work must also deconstruct the politics of colonial othering to articulate other possibilities of interaction that recognize difference but not as definitive ethnic boundaries between the self and other/s.

**Aniruddha Mukhopadhyay** received his PhD in English from the University of Florida in 2013, and is currently a Postdoctoral Associate in the University Writing Program at UF. His research interests include the subaltern and native informant in postcolonial theory, globalization, transnational cinematic interactions, and Indian diasporic literature.
Burning Borders: Migration and Violence in South Asia

Border continues to be one of the major problems in International Relations and migrations among South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. Since the partition of India in 1947, the border of these “imagined communities” interferes in human relations in such way that it led to the violence and massacres that marks black days in history. The border issue also led to the communal clashes, border skirmishes/firings, wars, bombings, etc. in the Indian sub-continent. Therefore, the relationship between India – Pakistan becoming worsen day by day. People of Pakistan and Bangladesh both the countries cannot not easily get visa or traveled in India and vice versa. Poets and Filmmakers like Gulzar and Vishal Bharadwaj had to return to India from Karachi Literary Festival immediately due to security reasons. Many Bangladeshis migrate to India for employment opportunities like Nepalese and Bhutanese but they cannot live as free as Nepalese/Bhutanese/Sri Lankans in India. Their diasporic experiences always remain under the constant in vigilance, insecurity and fear. The massacres of Muslim in Assam riots of 2012 rose out of fear that Bangladeshis dominating/increasing in Assam.

The present paper tries to seek reason why the “borders” of these countries, especially Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, are burning and hostile for each other’s despite the similarities in cultures, languages, race, and geography. What is India’s relation with Muslims countries in South Asia and other countries Shri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan? Rethinking South Asian Diaspora in South Asian countries: how the experiences of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Afghanistanis varies in India from those of Nepalese, Bhutanese, and Sri Lankans? The broken roads for peace: What are the policies and struggles are made by these countries to maintain peace in this continent?

Sajaudeen Chapparban Nijamodeen is a Poet and PhD Senior Research Scholar in the Center for Comparative Literature, University of Hyderabad. India. He has presented his research papers in National and International conferences on divers themes: contemporary literary theories, Film, Diaspora, 9/11 studies Literatures like Indian, American, Arab, Afro-American, African, Post-Colonial, Muslim and Minority, Dalit and Comparative Literature and ELT. He is also awarded The Maulana Azad National Fellowship for research by UGC, Govt. of India.

“Yeah, that’s What Ed Said”: Das Racist and the Postcolonial Theory Generation

This paper contextualizes the music of the South Asian/Caribbean American hip-hop group, Das Racist (2008-2012), within the traditions of desi hip-hop and the institutionalization of postcolonial theory in the American academy. Das Racist’s music continues many of the thematic concerns of desi hip-hop identified by scholars such as Vijay Prashad and Nitasha Tamar Sharma, including critiques of multiculturalism, the myth of the model minority, and the commodification of resistance culture. However, distinctive to Das Racist’s work is an explicit
invocation of key concepts and figures from postcolonial literature and theory—such as Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, V.S. Naipaul and Amitav Ghosh—as resources for their cultural critiques. I close read the particular deployments of postcolonial theory in songs such as “Ek-Shaneesh” and “Hugo Chavez.” There, Das Racist lyrically describes scenes of reading postcolonial theory to a soundtrack of African American hip-hop, constructing brief narratives of intellectual development that combine the two spheres of the academy and popular culture. I then argue that Das Racist forms a musical counterpart to what Nicholas Dames has called “The Theory Generation,” by which he refers to a generation of American novelists who attended elite institutions during the heyday of French theory, and who employ theory as content (not form) in their realist—typically bildungsroman—narratives. In their similar deployment of Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, Das Racist might be seen as part of a postcolonial theory generation: elite university trained artists who foreground the institutionalized academic formulations of postcolonialist in their narratives of maturation. This paper thus addresses the border crossing of South Asians into the historically African American culture of hip-hop, as well as the crossing of postcolonial literature and theory into popular music.

**Liam O’Loughlin** is a Visiting Instructor in Postcolonial Studies at the University of Pittsburgh. His research examines conceptions of violence and cosmopolitanism in contemporary South Asian Anglophone narratives of disaster. His work has been published in the *Journal of Comparative American Studies, The Literary Encyclopedia* and is forthcoming in the edited volume *Negative Cosmopolitanism*.

**Christopher B Patterson**  
New York Institute of Technology, Nanjing Campus

Radical Politics and Model Diasporas: South Asians in Malayan Anglophone Literature

Much has been written about the “Chinese, Malay, Indian and other (European)” multiracial setting of modern Malaysia and Singapore, known as CMIO. As with most multiracial forms, radicalism and terror are assigned to particular groups. In Malaysia, Chinese political radicals were a main threat during The Emergency period, and in Singapore, “terrorist-monsters” are most often associated with Malay Muslim radicals living just across the border (Puar). In this construct, how do Indians, who make up about 7% of Malaysia and 10% of Singapore, figure in the CMIO system, where enemies of the state are constructed as non-Indian? How does this racial form move across borders and diaspora?

This essay investigates how Malayan writers, such as Lloyd Fernando, Suchen Lim, and Harvill Secker, represent Indians within groups of CMIO characters. As Indians have been less scrutinized by Malaysian and Singaporean Internal Security Acts, Indian characters are often depicted as either focused entirely on their homeland of India, or as vocal and fearless political dissidents. As these texts show, the Indians’ escape from state surveillance through a “model diaspora” also enables Indian writers to visibly critique both states for their draconian Internal Security laws, and for their treatment of dissidents across borders.
Christopher B. Patterson is an Assistant Professor at the New York Institute of Technology in Nanjing. His articles have appeared or are forthcoming in M.E.L.U.S. (Multi-ethnic Literatures of the United States), Working USA, Manusya, and Queer Sex Work. He is the host of the podcast New Books in Asian American Studies.

Binod Paudyal  binod.paudyal@utah.edu  University of Utah

The Place of Transcategorical Fictions in American Literary Studies

In a recent The New York Times interview, Jhumpa Lahiri questions the category of the “immigrant fiction,” arguing that since the United States is a nation of immigrants, “all American fictions could be classified as immigrant fiction.” What makes one to categorize Lahiri’s and other South Asian American writers’ works as immigrant literature is the fact that these writers are always considered immigrants because of their non-European national origins and their non-white skin. In this paper, I read Lahiri’s The Lowland as a “transcategorical fiction” and question the arbitrarily and contradictorily constructed American literary canon. I use the term “transcategorical fiction” to refer to the body of writing that is not limited to one area of study, but transgresses the literary boundaries and fits into multiple fields of study. The Lowland, for instance, can be read as a postcolonial fiction, a South Asian American fiction, a South Asian fiction, or an American fiction. The intricately interwoven narratives of the novel work as what Inderpal Grewal calls “connectivity,” which indicate the novel’s belonging to multiple literary camps. The Lowland explores the interconnectedness of the contemporary world, in which a local place is influenced by global phenomena. Movements outside India, like Maoism in China and the civil rights movements in the United States, directly influence the Naxalite movement of the late sixties and seventies in India. My reading of The Lowland as a transcategorical fiction not only helps us see the interconnectedness of the United States to the South Asia, but it also offers us a more inclusive American literary studies that is flexibly responsive to an age of what Aihwa Ong calls “flexible citizenship.” Treating Lahiri’s The Lowland and other South Asian American writings as transcategorical literature registers the fluidity and “inauthenticity” of American identity.

Binod Paudyal is a PhD candidate in English at the University of Utah. He is currently writing his dissertation, which examines contemporary South Asian American literary works, including post-9/11 literature, and explores to what degree they reflect or challenge the premises of Asian American literary tradition. Paudyal’s research and teaching interests include American ethnic literature, especially South Asian American literature, postcolonial studies, and transnationalism. Paudyal has delivered several papers and organized panels at different academic conferences. His paper titled “Reimagining Transnational Identity in Lahiri’s The Namesake” is under review for publication.
Tariq L. Rahman  University of Oregon

Being Modern in Bhakkar: A Gated Community in Rural Pakistan

Bhakkar is a small city at the westernmost end of Pakistan’s Punjab province. It is often described as “backward” by locals and urbanites alike due its perceived lack of infrastructure and largely agricultural economy. However, in 2006 the Gulshan-e-Madina housing society was built in Bhakkar, consisting of comparable forms of spatial (and, hence, social) organization to those existing at similar sites in national and regional metropolitan cities. As a result, living in Gulshan-e-Madina differs from living in other parts of Bhakkar in several important ways, which are cited as reasons for relocating (or not) there. While literature on gated communities often emphasizes their exclusionary aspects, my research reveals how individual relationships with modernity relate to their emergence in this locality. I argue that Gulshan-e-Madina materializes a modern identity in Bhakkar. Importantly, I claim that this is an identity created on the landscape of modernity, but a unique one nonetheless. Specifically, this paper explores the translocal connections of Gulshan-e-Madina’s five owners and how such experiences have made their aspirations to provide modern housing in Bhakkar both possible and attainable. Travel to regional cosmopolitan hubs (for work, education, tourism, visiting family, etc.) and exploring the Internet (where everything from images of furniture to entire house plans is accessible) have provided exposure to modern housing as well as the resources to bring it to Bhakkar, thus transcending Bhakkar’s geographic and conceptual boundaries. The desire for modern amenities alongside that to remain “home” creates a new path to modernity, but one that, nevertheless, is paved on the landscape of modernity itself. ‘Being modern in Bhakkar’ refers neither to a Universalist definition of modern nor an essentialist understanding of Bhakkar, but rather something in-between. By building a gated community in Bhakkar, Gulshan-e-Madina’s owners express the local and global aspects of their modern subjectivities.

Tariq L. Rahman is a Master’s candidate in the Department of International Studies at the University of Oregon. He is interested in globalization and Pakistan, and specifically what it means to be ‘modern’ in that country. His MA thesis focuses on a gated community in Bhakkar and how the intersections at which this city exists (geographic, cultural, economic, etc.) impact the meaning of the site for locals. Tariq has been a recipient of University of Oregon’s Promising Scholar Award and his department’s Slape Fellowship, and he most recently presented his research at Yale University’s 2014 Modern South Asia Workshop.

Ruby Rana  Marie Curie Initial Training Network, Diasporic Constructions of Home and Belonging Project, and The University of Mumbai

The Strength and Fragility of Boundaries in the Film Ocean of Pearls

Stuart Hall’s extensive work on racial, social and ethnic categories and the contextualized politics surrounding them, guides this paper’s focus on religious, racial and moral boundaries. Using Sarab Singh Neelam’s Ocean of Pearls (2008), the analysis of this film starts with the identification of the boundaries being emphasized; the silencing, judging and marginalizing of
specific symbols of Sikhism, brown skin, and community service or seva over business and corporate interests. Secondly the paper addresses how the film’s characters respond to the problematic dichotomies of power that arise in their lives. In analyzing power structures of borders and boundaries and the subsequent movements and negotiations between them, the works of Homi K. Bhabha are drawn upon; and the historical and sociological works of Kushwant Singh, Hugh Johnston and B. Singh Bolaria are used to contextualize Sikh identity politics. It is the intention of this paper to identify and discuss the qualities of strength and fragility experienced in relation to boundaries impacting Sikh diasporic identities in North America.

Ruby Rana is an Early Stage Researcher with the Marie Curie funded European Union project - Diasporic Constructions of Home and Belonging. Ruby’s doctoral research at the University of Mumbai focuses on contemporary literary and cinematic representations of Punjabi-Sikhs born and raised in Canada.

Amber Riaz
Douglas College

Embracing the borderlands: Diasporic identity as border-ed in Shauna Singh Baldwin’s English Lessons and Other Stories

Shauna Singh Baldwin’s 1996 collection of short stories English Lessons focuses primarily on female protagonists who try to negotiate multiple borders—both physical (national and/or geographical) and metaphorical (hyphenated identities, multiple social roles). My proposed paper will foreground these protagonists’ negotiations with/in these borderlands and will unpack the multiple nuances of hybrid and hyphenated identities—identities that are, in and of themselves, creative, literal and metaphorical borderlands. I will begin my paper by unpacking the multiple meanings embedded in my use of “borderlands” and “interstitial”—spaces that have been discussed in detail by scholars theorizing the concept of Diaspora and postcolonial subjectivity. Homi K. Bhabha, for example uses the term “interstitial hybridity” to describe a sense of belonging nowhere, but everywhere simultaneously. Stuart Hall also discusses a similar idea in his essay “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” where he focuses on the multiple layers of identification possible in the black Diaspora. David Palumbo-Liu and Saskia Sassen help me move these discussions from a discussion of spaces, to one about hyphenated, globalized identities, which are complicated by the women in Baldwin’s short story collection. I will question the apparently “easy” categorizations of culture and ethnicity into neat, identifiable, niches. What is the role played by religious and political affiliations in the processes of identity formation? Is a hybridized or hyphenated identity multiple and complex? Using Hall’s delineation of the three stages of diasporic identification, I will complicate the notions of diaspora, and cultural identification through a reading of specific short stories in order to expose the balancing act required of a postcolonial-diasporic subject who may wish to maintain close ties with more than two geographical or cultural locations. What is the shape of “interstitial” subjectivity if there are multiple forces interacting/intersecting within one subjectivity?
Amber Fatima Riaz completed her PhD program in English at the University of Western Ontario in 2012 and is currently teaching literature and writing at Douglas College, Vancouver, BC. She has presented conference papers on the representation of mothers in film, and published an essay on parent-activists in New York in the Demeter Press Anthology: The 21st Century Motherhood Movement. She has also published essays on the Partition of India, and on the representation of the “burqa” in Tehmina Durrani’s novel, Blasphemy.

Manjeet Ridon University of Nottingham

No Place like Home in Srinivas Krishna’s "Masala".

This paper analyses how, through an innovative use of ancient Indian mythology, Srinivas Krishna’s film, Masala (1992), examines issues of diasporic Indian community life within modern, multicultural Canada. Such issues include defining one’s sense of belonging to the home and the homeland. I explore these issues by using Marc Augé’s theory of the “non-place”, which is a space of displacement intended for temporary occupancy and not related to history or personal identity, such as airplanes or shopping malls. My paper argues that the film represents myth in a “non-place” in order to depict how diasporic Indian communities have experienced their relocation in Canada. This involves memory and history, evoked in the film by remembering two historically traumatic events affecting these communities, the Komagata Maru incident in 1914 and the Air India disaster of 1985. The displacement of myth is, thus, a way to create a critical distance from such tragedies and “the” place from where the film critiques the concept of citizenship within the ideology of Canadian multiculturalism and how it has impacted the formation of diasporic Indian identity in Canada.

Manjeet Ridon is a doctoral candidate in Department for American and Canadian Studies at University of Nottingham. Her PhD study is co-sponsored by Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and Foundation for Canadian Studies in the UK (FCS).

Roopika Risam Salem State University

Digital South Asia Roundtable

Digital humanities has gained traction of late, bringing computational technologies to bear on humanities scholarship and using the tools of humanistic inquiry to analyze digital media. The scholarly contributions emerging from digital humanities are particularly important because digital media is shaping identity and culture at a swift rate. But how can digital humanities enhance the work of South Asianists? This roundtable examines the boundaries and borders between South Asia Studies and the digital humanities, sharing the work of scholars who engage both. Participants Deepika Bahri, Rahul Gairola, Sonora Jha, and Roopika Risam will discuss how their scholarship addresses a range of questions implicit in the digital milieu, including power, identity, representation, agency, globalization, gender and sexuality, and subaltern labor. They will consider the seeming contradiction of the liberator promises of technology and the dark side of the digital. Moreover, they will illuminate a complex network of relations subtending digital technologies, from the currency of English in coding languages to exploitative
labor practices affecting subaltern subjects to South Asian migration shaped by Silicon Valley’s H1B visas. Further, participants will discuss the influence of digital practices on the circumstances of production of their own scholarship. This roundtable will include ample time for discussion about the relationship between South Asia Studies and digital humanities.

Participants:

**Deepika Bahri**, Associate Professor of English at Emory University, is director of Postcolonial Studies at Emory and author of *Native Intelligence*.

**Rahul Gairola**, Adjunct Assistant Professor of English at CUNY, has published at length in postcolonial, migration, diaspora, and transnational studies and chaired the first MLA panel on South Asia and digital humanities.

**Sonora Jha**, Associate Professor of Communications at Seattle University, and has written extensively in the academic and mainstream press about blogging, public affairs reporting, and media literacy.

**Roopika Risam**, Assistant Professor of English and Education at Salem State University, is co-founder of Postcolonial Digital Humanities. Her book *Postcolonial Digital Humanities* is under contract with Northwestern UP.

**Oliver Ross** 
University of Cambridge

Mother India and Her Others: Occidentalism in *Kabhi Khushie Kabhi Gham*

In *Orientalism*, Said argues, “No one is likely to imagine a field symmetrical to Orientalism called Occidentalism.” Said’s negation has discouraged nuanced studies of this phenomenon, which comprehends the exoticisation, objectification and repudiation of the West by the East (1). Buruma and Margalit’s “Occidentalism” is reductive, while Venn’s theory-based work neglects non-Western perspectives. The systematic Occidentalism which Said found absent in non-Western writing about the West pervades South Asian cultural industries like Bollywood. I analyses Occidentalism in Karan Johar’s 2001 film, *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham*(K3G), comparing it with contemporaneous works like *Kal Ho Naa Ho*, K3G maintains Occidentalist ambivalence, fetishising and disavowing consumerist London. Both enjoyed by the audience and arousing repugnance, K3G’s semi-clad white western female body’s instantiate this tension. Equally striking are the film’s fantasies of domination (Pankaj Mishra), e.g. the diegetic performance of “Jana Gana Mana” to a white British audience, who must pledge allegiance to India. These Occidentalism models of desire, disavowal and domination, unexceptional in Bollywood, are symmetrical to Orientalism. Underscoring this symmetry complicates unilateral theories of cultural hegemony, problematizing the notions of center and periphery still present in much popular thought and postcolonial scholarship. This self-consciously monolithic usage reflects popular perception and imagined global hierarchies.
Oliver Ross is a Teaching Associate in the Faculty of English and a Fellow of Churchill College at the University of Cambridge. His primary interest is gender and sexuality in South Asian literature and film, especially in comparative and cross-cultural contexts.

Bhumika R, J.N.U. New Delhi

Whose Home and How? Understanding the case of ‘Indian Muslim’ through Cultural Productions

Geographical spaces, gradually, become carriers of mythopoeia and create feelings of belonging and attachment, among the inhabitants. Reductive definitions of ‘home’, based upon identities (community, race, religion), exclude those who do not subscribe to its prescription. This can be deeply problematic. In the discourse of the Hindu-right wing, for instance, non-Hindu identity, specifically of the Indian – Muslim reads as an oxymoron. According to this discourse, a ‘Muslim’ can either inhabit the Indian national space, performing as a non-practicing, secular Muslim or adhere to the prescriptions of his community and become a ‘lesser Indian’. The conflictual space occupied by the ‘Indian Muslim’ is the focus of the present paper.

In order to explain the statement made above, two kinds of cultural texts will be chosen in this paper. The first set will include a selection of partition literary narratives by Bhisham Sahni and Ismat Chughtai, while the second set will consist of contemporary texts by Abhishek Majumder and Girish Kasaravalli. Since the stress is on understanding the complex situation of the ‘Indian Muslim’, there is a mixing of genres in this paper. Sahni’s novel, Tamas and Chughtai’s short story, “Roots”, Majumder’s play, Afterlife of Birds and Kasaravalli’s film, Gulabi Talkies will help in tracing changes, since partition to the present day. Further, this paper is also an attempt to critically engage with the process of manufacturing, narrow definitions of identity and ‘home’.

Bhumika R, is a doctoral student at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Worked as a Research Assistant for a project on oral histories under the principal investigators Professors Janaki Nair and Neeladri Bhattacharya, Centre for Historical Studies, J.N.U., New Delhi. She has presented papers at several national and international conferences and is currently translating Irom Sarmila’s poetry.
Alter-geography, Revisionary Historiography and Cultural Identity in the Novels of Khaled Husseini and Kamila Shamsie

Where official history is unilateral and ossified version of history that serves the respective agendas of intelligentsia, modern-day fiction writing is an act of breaking silences, of reinterpreting and reconstructing history and geography. This paper will probe the novels of two contemporary novelists Kamila Shamsie and Khaled Hosseini. Tracing the cycle of history in their novels, these novelists underscore the urgency of retrieving and rehabilitating marginalized perspectives in the representation of historical and geographical facts. Shamsie brings to life a vibrant, violent and utterly contemporary Pakistan. She voices the memories of those people who suffered the perpetual dictatorships and traumatic events of separation of Pakistan in 1971. Similarly, Hosseini’s attempt at excavating the silenced areas in the history of Afghanistan result in compelling stories that give voice to the agonies and hopes of a group of innocents caught up in a brutal war. The attacks of September 11, 2001, the subsequent wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq and the repercussions of these events beyond the borders of the United States are paramount to both his novels. By rewriting history, these writers recover the collective heritage of the nation, redefining the role of an author in a society where denial and erasure are primary tools of historiography. Both writers talk of ‘home’ with an underlying zest of diasporic nostalgia and underscore interconnectedness of individuals, no matter where or how they live. They preserve collective cultural memory through storytelling, and their revisionary historiography, alter-geographies and commemoration of cultural identity of their nations provide readers with a fresh perspective. Their novels serve as a counter narrative to the hitherto established Eurocentric perspective and narration, and charting contrapuntal cartographies enables them to reclaim their lost histories and geographies.

Naila Sahar, a Fulbright Scholar from Pakistan, is pursuing her PhD in Transnational English Literature from University at Buffalo, State University of New York. Before coming to USA, she was working as an Assistant Professor in Forman Christian College, Lahore, Pakistan.

Alpna Saini

Central University of Punjab, India

The Mis/Appropriation of Dalit as a Marginal Identity: A Study of Prakash Jha’s Aarakshan

Indian cinema has pondered on the Dalit question time and again. The question returns to the forefront with Prakash Jha’s Aarakshan. The title of the film claims to debate and interrogate the seething controversy over caste-based reservation in India. The first half deals with the issue of reservation system as the title promises and the second half is a take on the deteriorating in education system in view of the culture of coaching classes in India. Jha’s Dalit story foregrounds the suffering and exploitation endured by Dalits and looks at what it means to be treated as a lesser human being on account of one’s so-called lower caste in contemporary Indian society. By rejecting a part of the society (in the form of Dalits), the upper castes probably feel comfortable and secure in their self-identity. The film also shows how caste violence gets
transmuted into fresh rounds of violence against other innocent victims. Moreover, it looks at the disillusionment of those reformers who try to bridge the distance between castes, although Jha’s protagonist is an incorrigible optimist. Jha’s film generally overlooks the Dalit perspective on empowerment. The scope of the film is limited: seen only through the eyes of a non-Dalit who has been painted as a staunch idealist unable to rise above his limited, biased and myopic understanding of the question of reservations for Dalits. The film can be read, among other things, as a study in the construction of idealist subjectivity. Jha fails to take a realistic look into the intricacies of an idealistic persona and dismisses the possibility of any disillusionment. He is preoccupied with the theme of mob justice which also marks his other films like *Mrityudand* and *Gangajal*.

**Alpna Saini** is presently working as Assistant Professor in Centre for Comparative Literature, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda, Punjab, India. For her Doctoral research, she has worked on “The Construction of Contemporary Indian Subjectivity in the Selected Plays of Vijay Tendulkar, Girish Karnad and Mahesh Dattani”. She has published a book titled Subjectivity as a Locus of Conflicts in Girish Karnad: a Discussion of his Plays and several research papers, articles, edited works and translated poems in various journals and magazines. She has also co-edited a book *Negotiating Boundaries: A Study of Bushra Ejaz’s Writings*.

**Asma Sayed**

**Grant MacEwan University**

Mythical Homes and Violent Realities: Reading Gujarat in M. G. Vassanji’s Writings

In this paper, I intend to focus on the representation of Gujarat, a province in northwestern India, in Vassanji’s works, both fictional and non-fictional. Vassanji grew up in an Ismaili family in East Africa; he has direct ancestral connections to Gujarat and thus, as he grew up he spoke Gujarati and Kachchi (a dialect of Gujarati), read Gujarati/Kachchi ginans (religious hymns) and harbored a sense of nostalgia for his ancestral Gujarati homeland and its culture. Nonetheless, when he visited Gujarat for the first time in 1993, he experienced the anxiety that a diasporan usually does as he crosses national boundaries; he had a particularly difficult time coming to terms with violence in Gujarat, Mahatma Gandhi’s birthplace. For both Vassanji and many of his characters, Gujarat is a mythic home. The province has its own rich history and culture. Gujaratis, known for their mercantilism, industriousness and adventurousness, also constitute the second largest community in the Indian diaspora. Yet, Gujarat’s history is littered with varied incidents of communal/sectarian violence; particularly, the events of 2002 post-Godhra pogrom against the Muslim minority in the province left many Gujaratis—both Hindu and Muslim, in India and in diaspora—shattered and in disbelief. Vassanji’s works, particularly *The Assassin’s Song* and *A Place Within*, showcase the pain and trauma of seeing the Gurjarbhumi—the motherland of Gujarat—ravaged, leaving notions of an ideal ancestral mythical home shattered. For Vassanji and many from the Gujarati diaspora, Gujarat is a nostalgic place—it is a cultural space with memories of ginans (Ismaili religious hymns), delicious food, invigorating garba (the Gujarati circle dance), all woven into a complex history. But, when modern day realities confront one another, it is a place where boundaries are drawn across political/religious ideologies, and inhuman violence has been known to erupt. This paper will begin with a discussion of the representation of Gujarat/i identity and Vassanji’s reading of Gujarat in his memoir *A Place*.
Within and his novel The Assassin’s Song. To complicate and understand these varied tropes, I will read Vassanji’s representation of Gujarat against the theoretical frameworks of Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Benedict Anderson. Bhabha’s explication of hybridity, Hall’s notions of cultural identity, and Anderson’s theorizing of nationalism are particularly helpful in situating Vassanji’s Gujarat in spatial, temporal, psychological, cultural and historical terms, and studying the difference between the ancestral memory and the lived experience, the imagined community versus the real Gujarat.

Asma Sayed holds a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Alberta in Canada, and teaches English and Comparative Literature at Grant MacEwan University, Canada. Her interdisciplinary research focuses on Canadian literature in the context of global multiculturalism. She is the editor of M. G. Vassanji: Essays on His Works (2014) and Writing Diaspora: Transnational Memories, Identities and Cultures (2014), and co-editor of World on a Maple Leaf: A Treasury of Canadian Multicultural Folktales (2011). In 2013 she co-organized an international conference titled The Transnational Imaginaries of M. G. Vassanji at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, UK.

Henry Schwarz Georgetown University

Performance, Stereotype and Protest in Contemporary Indian Theatre

Budhan Theatre of Ahmedabad is a radical performance troupe with an express purpose to rehabilitate the image of so-called criminal tribes in India. Through a complex understanding of Indian street theater, western dramatic theory and rasa aesthetics it mixes the political and the emotive to produce a highly charged, improv-based theatre that employs aesthetic elements to heighten its political message. Using visual examples of their plays and films, this paper argues for the practical, political effectiveness of a socially committed art that also achieves aesthetic autonomy. Budhan’s major contribution strategically engages the stereotype of the criminal. Performances expose social definitions of crime as masks and police activity as masquerade. Homi Bhabha’s salient ruminations on the colonial stereotype become relevant here. For Bhabha, colonial identity is always ambivalent, split along the axes of the Lacanian gaze and the Derridean supplement. In Lacan, the ego is always a violent illusion of mastery, and the denigration of others a crucial narcissistic rage. For Derrida likewise, the illusion of linguistic transparency conceals the more primal movement of difference, in which meaning enacts a violence to the multiplicity of writing. Budhan in a sense enacts Bhabha’s critique in practice, without the theoretical detour; it unmask racket ideology as a practice of everyday life rather than a high Parisian seminar. Indebted to the Brechtian legacy in Indian Street Theater (IPTA, Janam, Badal Sircar) Budhan improvises estrangement as a condition of modern life, but most specially the untenable stigma of criminality faced by indigenous peoples. Budhan addresses the specificity of postcolonial criminality and also generalizes through improvisation liberating performances for oppressed people in various regions and conditions.

Texture as Substance: Reading Homi Bhabha Re-Membering Fanon

In Isaac Julien’s imagined life of Frantz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, Homi Bhabha is presented in a non-speaking role to lend "texture" to the cinematography as a colonial subject. Unlike the eloquent Stuart Hal who is interviewed extensively in the film, the mute Bhabha is a cipher, a visual trace of difference within the philosophical and cinematic discourse on
decolonization. In Bhabha’s strong reading of Fanon, this mute violence of the racial epidermal schema is a neurosis, a "constellation of delirium" that appropriately replicates the colonial condition even in postcolonial London. Hall speaks movingly of creating the progressive Black British political identity as an emigre from his commonwealth origin in Jamaica; Bhabha just as passionately denounces the "troubled conscience" of "ethnocentric little Englandism" he finds in the English Left, which makes empty gestures of solidarity toward the politics of race and sexuality. Fanon’s contribution, like Julien’s, is to understand the disturbing presence of the racial other, "the shadow of colonized man, that splits his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, repeats his actions at a distance, disturbs and divides the very time of his being" and "turns on the idea of Man as his alienated image, not Self and Other but the ‘Otherness’ of the self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity." This "tethered shadow" is sufficient to undermine colonial authority, re-membering a politics of difference and disavowal as the bodily skin of racial misrecognition. Bhabha visualizes this disturbance in Julien’s film, lending Fanon a further haunting voice without words.

**Henry Schwarz** has written two monographs on Indian culture, one on Bengali literature and one on the largely western Indian problematic of criminal tribes, and scholarly essays spanning topics in literary theory, comparative literature, and peace studies with reference to South Asia. He has also co-edited four volumes of essays on global cultural studies, and is currently General Editor of the *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Studies*.

**Jayshree Singh**  
*Bhupal Noble Post Graduate College, Udaipur, India*

*Seas and Rivers as Borders/Boundaries: Shaping Identities of the South Asian Indians*

Amitav Ghosh’s novels probe into the predicament of the South Asian Indians’ marginalized status. He raises in his novel *Hungry Tide* the following questions – what demarcates the frontiers of the South Asian Indians? Who determines their status as margins? If the people in Sundarbans (located off the easternmost coast of India in the Bay of Bengal) are the ‘elusive center’, then how are they so and what affects them to limit their crossing borders or what instigates them to go across boundaries? Similarly his novel *Sea of Poppies* investigates the experiences of South Asians with borders and boundaries in context of trans-historical phenomena happened prior to the First Opium War/ Anglo-Chinese War during 1839-42. It attempts to elaborate upon how do the banks of the holy river Ganges in Calcutta create borders, boundaries in pre-colonial times? How is it instrumental in shaping identities of the margins in different national and migratory contexts? How does Ghosh represent third world experience from the point of historical and political dimension vis-à-vis cultural texts and context in post-colonial times? How does the elusive center as margin itself get fraught with tensions, colored by preconceived notions, and endorsed or rejected by national, religious, or communal norms? His next novel *River of Smoke* exhaustively examines expeditions, encounters, exploitation and escapes of criminals/ indentured laborers off the coast of Canton and Indian migrants travelling through ships to Mauritius. Ghosh’s novels will be explored for analyses – how do his novels posit the complexities, conflicts, and/or struggles with regard to the center—social, political, economic, cultural, or mythical in the South Asian literature and culture?
Jayshree Singh completed her Ph.D. in American Drama from Mohanlal Sukhadia University, Udaipur. She has presented her research at different conferences.

Ruma Sinha                Syracuse University

Negotiating Caste and Gender across Borders: Migration, Indenture and Freedom in Gaiutra Bahadur’s *Coolie Woman*

Gaiutra Bahadur writes, “To leave was to cross the kala pani ‘the dark waters,’ of the Indian Ocean and therefore the loss of caste, according to the strictures of Hinduism. No good Indian girl in 1903 would have done that, much less a good Brahmin girl” (*Coolie Woman* 19). As a member of Hinduism’s highest caste Bahadur’s great-grandmother, Sujaria had the most to lose by crossing the Indian Ocean. Yet, she took the arduous journey, traveling alone while four months pregnant, to British Guyana as an indentured laborer. Indentured women (which included many high caste widows) migrated to sugar plantations to escape the precarious life of a widow in India. They were also much less in number as compared to men in Guyana, which meant that they had some choice in selecting their partners. Considering these aspects, I inquire if crossing the border translated into liberation for women like Sujaria. This paper examines the implications of freedom for the indentured women when embodiments of caste and religion remained impervious to border crossings. I explore the narratives of migration in *Coolie Woman* to delineate how the British authorities ‘made’ rather than recruited coolies as an indistinguishable, degraded mass of plantation laborers without caste or family, while the coolies themselves remained tied to the practices of their particular caste and traditional forms of gendered violence (cutting ear/nose of women) in Guyana. The anxiety over retaining caste identities can be seen even in the negotiations to restore their caste on their return to India. I explore how the inflexible codes of the caste system infiltrated the work and relationships of the indentured laborers so that anxieties over caste identities (symbols like the janeu or the sacred thread) and gendered violence have persisted across continents and generations.

Ruma Sinha is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in English from Syracuse University. Her research and teaching interests include postcolonial and anticolonial studies, critical race and gender studies. She is especially interested in the works of Frantz Fanon; diasporic literature; subaltern studies; and Indian Literature(s) in English with a particular focus on Dalit literature.

Alia Somani                UTSC, Centennial College

Diasporic Imaginaries, Narcissistic Nostalgia, and the Need for New Futures

In studies of diaspora, there has been a tendency to focus on the ways in which the diasporic writer’s memories of the “lost” homeland are shaped by feelings of nostalgia and longing. South Asian Canadian diasporic writer M.G. Vassanji, however, seems to avoid the kind of self-indulgent backward looking gaze that is associated with diasporic writers and their fictions. Instead of simplifying history and imagining his “homeland” as a space frozen in time,
Vassanji’s fictional works such as *Uhuru Street* and *The Book of Secrets* offer us a rich and textured account of everyday life in East Africa. In Vassanji’s representation of the past, therefore, the complexities of East African society and the conflicts of race, class and gender that take place are not glossed over and forgotten; they are actively remembered. In this paper, I want to suggest that the ways in which Vassanji imagines Tanzania resonates with my own experience. Having recently made a trip to East Africa, I realized that the nostalgic perspective with which I began the journey was shaken by the much lived realities and historical complexities that I encountered. Thus, in this paper, I want to move between Vassanji’s fiction and my own story of diasporic return in order to consider the ways in which Vassanji offers us a productive alternative to diasporic nostalgia, one that allows us to look towards a future of possibility, even as we return to the past.

Alia Somani completed her PhD in the Department of English at the University of Western Ontario. Her doctoral dissertation “Broken Passages and Broken Promises: Reconstructing the Komagata Maru and Air India Cases” explores literary and cultural responses to two historical events in Canada: the 1914 *Komagata Maru* incident and the 1985 Air India bombing. Her publications have appeared in Postcolonial Text, Topia, and South Asian Diaspora.

Swathi Sreerangarajan  
University of Pittsburgh

Queer Pleasures of the 90s Desi Party

This paper, derived from a dissertation chapter, focuses on a kind of popular youth culture that appears to create a space for distinguishing the diasporic experiences of the children of immigrants from their parents. Reportedly popular among second-generation South Asian immigrants, the ‘Desi party’ represents a distinctive diasporic youth culture, taking shape in the wake of the transnational phenomenon of bhangra-pop music. The Desi dance party broadly refers to a youth cultural style that featured DJs on turntables mixing bhangra music, Indian film music, dancehall, hip hop, reggae, etc. in a nightclub-appropriate fashion. In the 1990s, several South Asian American DJs suddenly mushroomed in the context of these audience-fueled parties open to cross-(South Asian)-cultural experimentation and musical stylings.

I would argue that these “desi parties” are to be distinguished from campus bhangra competitions and cultural events — not as a subculture but as a space fostering a kind of much-needed ease at least temporarily from the reproductive pressures of identity. The dance party, as opposed to more mainstream second-generation desi college events, reveals a weariness among young people about longstanding pressures upon youth — here, diasporic youth — to forge viable identities. They allow a rest from the task of code-switching between different communities and social worlds that demand their participation. Contrary to existing critical approaches, I speculate that the smashing success of the desi party in the 90s arose not from participants’ sense of agency and self-representation, but ironically from their ability to forego, at least in the duration of performance, such individuation of self that is central to identity politics.”
Swathi Sreerangarajan is a PhD candidate at the University of Pittsburgh, English department and currently holds a dissertation fellowship at South Dakota State University. Her dissertation, "American Desis and Generational Narratives," examines fantasies about immigrant childhood, especially the special assimilative and academic opportunities and abilities attributed to the children of affluent immigrants, and their interpretive significance within an expanding corpus of contemporary literature and popular culture featuring mostly-adult, second-generation South Asian immigrants.

Reema Sukhija    Indian Institute of Technology, Indore

Translation goes to Movies: Modeling Critical Discourse Analysis of Adaptation and Interpreting

Translation has transcended boundaries, be it in form of culture or language, or its intertextual context. It has its milieu in always portraying a text of one language to another language or its representation giving rise to a recreation of a text. Big screen adaptation or motion pictures are a potent source of images and representation of what translation might or might not involve. To understand the importance of translation to lingual and cultural contact and accessing the visibility of translation needs a close look at a medium where translation has long been a matter of visible thematic and representational concern. I intend to analyze how filmmakers handle transposition of multilingual and multicultural concerns in a globally distributed medium.

Cinema as a visual medium demonstrates the limits to represent the text in visual format through the greater visibility of translation. As the characters, script or dialogues move on to screen rather than simply pass through different locations, the study will also analyze how their perception gradually alters and how translation as a feature of engagement with the world becomes more and more prominent as both a necessity and a way of thinking about difference. Difficulties around translation of culture, identity, migration, conflict, emotion, the false utopias and vulnerabilities of global communication networks will be the focus of the study. Attempting to unveil the representation of translation in world cinema, the study will explore the aforementioned issue taking example of select text into film adaptation and use content analysis method to analyze the screen adaptation of the text.

Reema Sukhija is currently a Doctoral Research Scholar in the Department of English, School of Humanities and Social Science at IIT Indore. Her areas of research are Translation and Language Studies, Comparative Literature and Film Studies. She did her M.Phil. and was an Academic Associate at Indian Institute of Management Indore before joining IIT Indore.

Sanchari Sur    Wilfrid Laurier University

Trauma and (Story) telling: Dalit Names as Unhappy Objects in Omprakash Valmiki’s Joothan

Omprakash Valmiki’s autobiography, Joothan (1997), opens up the question of what it means to mobilize inner trauma through (story) telling. A prominent Dalit activist and writer, Valmiki outlines his struggles as a Dalit in an independent and post-colonial India. The Hindu caste
system reinforces his caste identity of a Dalit, and by extension, an “untouchable” within the national framework of India. This paper considers the feelings of shame and anger attached to Valmiki’s caste identity, and how he mobilizes his inner trauma through personal narrative in order to claim “a better story” (Dina Georgis). Using Sara Ahmed’s theory of affective objects and a short history of “caste” in the Indian context, I interrogate Dalit caste identities attached to their surnames as unhappy objects in Joothan. Sara Ahmed explains that feelings or affect have the ability to “stick” to objects, which in turn make them affective. Building on Eve Sedgwick’s transference of shame from one body to another, Ahmed states that feelings or “affects” are “already directed toward and shaped by contact with objects”. I argue that these affects accumulate over time and eventually, Dalit surname(s, collectively,) become an archive of unhappiness. This paper explores how Valmiki defies this narrative of Dalit last names as unhappy objects – particularly, his last name –, and reclaims his position as a Dalit in his autobiography. I situate Valmiki’s work within Georgis’s framework of “better story” and the politics of storytelling, to map the better story that Valmiki creates for himself through his personal narrative.

Sanchari Sur is a first year PhD candidate in English at Wilfrid Laurier University. A recipient of Ontario Graduate Scholarship (2013–14), her academic interests lie in formulating a methodological approach to diaspora studies as well as solving the problems of multiculturalism in Canada through the “affect” of Canadian South Asian diasporic texts. She blogs at http://sursanchari.wordpress.com.

Nandini Thiyagarajan McMaster University

Being Boundless: Reading Trauma, Animals, and Relations through South Asian Epistemologies

Madeleine Thien’s Dogs at the Perimeter and Vaddey Ratner’s In the Shadow of the Banyan envision life in the years before, during, and after the Cambodian Genocide. Both novels deal with the force of historical trauma, what it means to be the one who survives, and how people rebuild their lives in the aftermath of trauma. Uniquely, relationships with non-human animals are crucial to both authors’ articulations of the psychic lives of characters who lived through the genocide. These relationships with animals trouble boundaries between human and non-human life by questioning notions of human exceptionalism that consider healing only through human-human relationships. In this paper, I argue that the force of human-animal relationships in these novels only come into view when we look at them through Hindu and Buddhist epistemologies of animals. Eastern epistemologies of animals receive little critical attention because the field of animal studies is dominated by Western epistemology. To challenge this bias, my work is inspired by a determination to “reorient” critical attention toward Eastern religious and philosophical knowledge of animal life. I begin with Thien’s and Ratner’s novels, but I am specifically interested in working through the implications of establishing a South Asian mode or practice of reading animals. I apply this mode of reading animals to South East Asian novels in order to challenge a static definition of South Asianness through an investigation of animals and spirituality that traverses geographic, cultural, and religious boundaries. Ultimately, my paper
pursues two central questions: Why, within both the context of the novel, as well as our current historical moment, is a South Asian mode of reading available for uptake? What are the implications of positing a South Asian, and specifically Hindu, practice of reading animals given the current rise of Hindu nationalist parties, such as the BJP?

Nandini Thiyagarajan is a fourth-year PhD candidate in the department of English and Cultural Studies at McMaster University. Her current work investigates the role that intimacy between human and non-human animal’s plays in South and South East Asian postcolonial literature.

Nisha Tiwari, Bharati College, University of Delhi

Liminal ties of the “Third Sex” in Contemporary Indian Discourse: Hijras and LGBT in the Gendered Sexual Economy of India

Aslam Sheik, a bisexual, states, “…When I go out with these men, I ensure that my manhood isn’t challenged by insisting on the active role. You see, I am not a hijra” (Interview No. 11, *Whistling in the Dark*). This paper examines the fault lines in the recent category of the ‘third sex’ (April 2014) to identify all hitherto alienated sexualities in India. It looks at two path breaking works in the nascent discourse of LGBT & hijra literature(s) in India—a collection titled *Whistling in the Dark: Twenty Queer Interviews* (2009) and A. Revathy’s memoir titled *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* (2011)—to analyze the interactions of these marginalized sexualities with each other. It further examines the manner in which these alienated sexualities in the “modern” Indian landscape seek to define themselves through their sexual economies Vis à Vis their proximity to heterosexism. I argue that these “abstract” calibrations of alienated sexualities with reference to heterosexuality serve to reiterate the constructed normativity of the latter. In this context, I deploy the two aforementioned texts in order to delineate the constructions of the self and the other by these subjects as they grapple with the power gradations of the heteronormative democratic discourse. The paper then discerns the ramifications and consequences of browbeating these marginalized sexualities into a monolithic category of the “third” sex upon both, the nascent queer discourse and the democratic discourse in India.

Nisha Tiwari is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English, Bharati College at University of Delhi, India. She teaches courses on English Restoration, modernism, feminism, among others. Her research and teaching interests include the study of the body and theories of the body, in relation to its social and physical disciplining through gender roles and sexual violence.

Jaskiran Tiwana, Assistant Professor, GGDSD College, Chandigarh,

Borders, Boundaries and the Blur In-Between: A Reading of Saadat Hasan Manto’s “Toba Tek Singh”.

Through this paper, an attempt would be made to analyze Saadat Hasan Manto’s magnum opus “Toba Tek Singh” to understand the meaning (or rather the meaninglessness) of man-made borders and boundaries. As a brilliant critique of the idea of partition of a country, this short story is a powerful piece of fiction that satirizes the madness that was Partition. Highlighting the absurdity of this entire exercise, it lays bare the sheer idiocy of the idea of segregating people on communal lines through the unintelligible drivel of its protagonist, Bishan Singh. Manto exposes the apathy and arrogance of the political class where boundaries of the mind are simply simulated on the surface of the earth. While these lines remain constant at most times on the physical surface of the earth, they can sometimes blur and even merge within the human mind. These blurred spaces are the collective consciousness of entire communities who are constantly reminded of their separateness by the insinuations as well as the rhetoric of the ruling political class. An ordinary person like Bishan Singh does not understand it. And though this simulation of psychological boundaries takes place on actual surface via barbed wire, it becomes difficult to sustain these in the mind forever because only by forgiving does the human race move on. This paper would then attempt to analyze the whole idea of creating boundaries both within and without and the blurring of these boundaries that leads to the possibility of creating new histories.

Jaskiran Tiwana is an Assistant Professor at the Department of English, GGDSD College Chandigarh. Previously, she was a Junior Research Fellow at the Department of English and Cultural Studies, Panjab University, Chandigarh. Her areas of interest are postcolonial literature, third-world feminism and globalization studies. Her Ph.D. thesis critiques the manipulative tendencies of globalization processes in the autobiographical narratives of third-world women who resist the impact of this phenomenon in various spheres of their lives through their real life struggles.

Joya Uraizee Saint Louis University

Destabilizing the Border: Shifting Cultural Identities in Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist

How do national borders shape cultural and political identities? In what ways do cultural and religious differences influence political loyalties? In this paper, I will analyze Pakistani novelist Mohsin Hamid’s The Reluctant Fundamentalist (2007), a post 9/11 novel, which, as some critics have argued, could be interpreted using Mahmood Mamdani’s theories about Western tendencies to categorize “good” versus “bad” Muslims. I will examine how Hamid presents his Pakistani protagonist and narrator, Changez, as a national and cultural hybrid, equally at home in New York and Lahore; while at the same time only partially depicting his other main character, the unnamed American, whose motivations and loyalties remain unclear. As critics have suggested, the narrative technique Hamid uses, namely limiting our knowledge of characters and events to whatever Changez sees and does, not only culturally displaces the American (and the minor characters), but also causes us, the readers, to question our own loyalties. On the one hand, Changez charts in some detail, his own path from loyal capitalist to anti-American radical, but
even in doing so, paints a somewhat ambivalent picture of his own motivations. On the other hand, Changez keeps largely incomplete the motivations and loyalties of the American, yet he presents him unemotionally and somewhat neutrally. I will conclude by describing the extent to which the novel’s focus and narrative style erases political and cultural notions of alterity and division.

**Joya Uraizee** is Associate Professor of English at Saint Louis University in St. Louis, Missouri, where she teaches postcolonial literature and film at the graduate and undergraduate levels. She is the author of two books, *In the Jaws of the Leviathan: Genocide Fiction and Film* (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010), and *This is No Place for a Woman: Nadine Gordimer, Nayantara Sahgal, Buchi Emecheta and the Politics of Gender* (Africa World Press, 2000), as well as numerous articles on postcolonial literature and culture.

**Maya Vinai**  Birla Institute of Technology & Science (Hyderabad Campus)

Re-Imagining the Narratives of the Gulf Diaspora in Literature.

In South Asian Literature, the experiences and complexities of the lives of the Gulf migrants has been an undermined area. Most youth and men who seek to go to the Gulf and West Asia are semi-skilled workers. Although these migrants, who have crossed the seven seas for the coveted land of petro-dollars have reshaped their destinies: they are pushed towards crossroads of inclusion-exclusion politics determined by the society. And this binary created by the society causes great angst to the migrants who constantly get churned in this double bind of home and abroad. Words fail to thermalize this unique experience and the sense of loss they undergo. Kerala, essentially a Marxist state fed on the plethora of communist ideologies until the 21st C had a lurking fascination to the gulf and its diaspora. During the “Gulf Boom” in 1972 to 1983, there was a mass migration of a large number of people from Kerala to the Gulf Countries. 88% of the Kerala diaspora who transmigrated to the middle-east, went ahead to become the cultural icons, the most-sought after bridegrooms and the do-gooders who contributed generously to the upliftment of the society. My paper would look at the unique perplexities of the Gulf diaspora on their return back home. It would also harp upon the collective images, symbols which aids these migrants in vivid recollection of the good old days back home. How do they articulate their pain, pleasures or other experiences to their fellow migrants and how these collective memories form ties of solidarities between people from the same state? To look at the representations of the unique identity construction of the Malayalee diaspora, I have taken up the Sahitya Academy Award winning novel *Aadujeevitham* [The Goat Days] by novelist Benyamin.

**Maya Vinai** currently works as faculty in the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences in Bits-Pilani (Hyderabad Campus). She takes courses like Comparative Indian Literature, Popular Literature and Culture of South Asia, Critical Analysis of Cinema and Literature, and Shankara’s Thoughts.

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**Melanie R. Wattenbarger**  University of Mumbai, EU Marie Curie ITN CoHaB
Crossing the Threshold: Queer Identity and the Politics of Public and Private Spheres in Farzana Doctor’s Six Metres of Pavement

In Doctor’s novel, characters challenge Toronto’s South Asian community norms of heteronormativity, a distinct bifurcation of gender, and nuclear families. For those who transgress such norms, their private concerns of the home, family, and sexuality are pulled into the public sphere for community critique in the name of upholding a boundary of ‘propriety.’ Meanwhile, such public intervention on private affairs remains a faux pas when imposed on those who hold normative positions. This paper examines the character Fatima from the novel as she ‘comes out of the closet’ and the subsequent debate in the community her family belongs. This paper draws on theories of the viability of belonging for queer individuals such as Gopinath’s Impossible Desires and theories of public and private spheres such as Habermas’s The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere as well as interview material with Doctor concerning her own public and private spheres as an openly queer author. In the novel and the author’s life, the boundaries of ‘The Closet’ are socially constructed and may be used to critique queerness as well as be a site for social change and inclusion. It is at the ‘propriety boundary’ of alterity that change begins.

Melanie R. Wattenbarger is an Early Stage Researcher and doctoral fellow at the University of Mumbai as a part of the EU Marie Curie ITN funded project Diasporic Constructions of Home and Belonging (CoHaB). Her work deals with issues of identity and authenticity in contemporary Indian literature and film.

Jessica Young, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Contagions, Computer Viruses, and Infectious Agents: Transnational Memory in Hari Kunzru’s Transmission

“Everyone who is born holds dual citizenship, in the kingdom of the well and the kingdom of the sick. Although we all prefer to use only the good passport, sooner or later each of us is obliged […] to identify ourselves as citizens of that other place” (3). Opening Illness as Metaphor with this geographic image, Susan Sontag highlights that metaphors are used to symbolically draw borders between the healthy and the ill, which, when deployed within the context of colonialism, imperialism, and globalization, consign certain subjects to sickness and death. Against this figurative framing, Hari Kunzru’s Transmission demonstrates how South Asian migrant subjects relegated to “the kingdom of the ill” redeploy metaphors of illness as means of identity formation, turning contagion into a transnational mode of individual and collective memory transmission. Kunzru’s text undermines normative framings of disease, using metaphors of illness and contagion to transform infectious bodies into infectious agents capable of formulating and transmitting their own subjectivities to form new trans-cultural collectivities by storing, mutating, and “infecting” those they come into contact with. Illness, then, becomes a mode of
mnemonic resistance, bringing subjects together across physical and cultural borders to form new imaginative collectivities.

Jessica Young is a Ph.D. student and Graduate College Distinguished Fellow in the English Department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her dissertation focuses on the representation of memory sites in contemporary transnational South Asian literature and the transmission of trans-cultural memory. She is the co-editor with Michael Rothberg of Days and Memory, the blog of the Initiative in Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies.

Hui-Chu Yu National Pingtung University, Taiwan

The Boundary of Faith: Alexandra David-Neel’s Anti-Intellectual Pursuit in Tibet

In response to people’s curiosity about her profound engagement with the Tibet religion, David-Neel recounts her motivation to begin such an undertaking to explore a realm which seems to overwhelmed by mystic aura. To most people’s surprise, she actually started out for a more systematic research on the ritualistic elements in Lamaism. Originally, her pursuit was an intellectual exploration about Lamaism, without emotional attachment with the religion and the mysterious place. The problem is that, after her research in depth and immersion in that culture, she gradually failed to retain that kind of intellectual detachment. Instead, a certain kind of internal transformation started to take root inside her to change her original epistemology. A close scrutiny will be done in this present study to reveal David-Neel’s strategies to relocate herself in the hostland to make it her spiritual homeland. Crossing the border of Tibet signifies not only her physical transport into the forbidden zone but also direct confrontation between Western skepticism and Eastern mysticism. The voyage into the mystic land eventually turns out to be a new type of diaspora, which allows her to reconfigure her religious and cultural identities.

Hui-chu Yu, is an Associate Professor, Department of English, National Pingtung University, Taiwan. Major Fields of interest: Renaissance Literature, Shakespeare, Early Modern Englishwoman writers. Dr. Yu is currently working on a research project on diaspora and conversion literature.

Abdollah Zahiri Seneca College, Toronto

On the Edge and Beyond: The Sikhs in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran

This paper seeks to explore the Sikh diaspora within the Empire and without. It will specifically focus on the formation of the Sikh communities in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran where their marginal position is reinforced by the intersection of religion and nationalism. Hence, this religious-nationalistic hegemony is instrumental in shaping identities that are fraught with tensions, denying them social mobility, political representation, and inclusion. These barriers lead to the forced emigration of the Sikhs in these countries. For instance, after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, Sikhs’ emigration/reterritorialization to India proved to be a Middle Passage; the Indian experience was dystopia; they had to move on to Europe and North America. It only deepened their diasporic subjectivity- relegating them from being twice-
diasporic subjects to thrice diasporic subjects. Theoretically, through engaging with the Sikh diaspora beyond the spatial domain of postcolonial theory, this study aims to transgress the theoretical boundaries sanctioned by the center. By the same token, it endeavors a conceptual and geographical expansion of the theory. This centrifugal dynamic would enhance the scope of theoretical engagement through this fresh contextualization of the diasporic communities beyond the rigid geographical margin set by theory. This geographical expansion comes in tandem with a conceptual fluidity that may render the theory more inclusive - whether on the edge or beyond.

Abdollah Zahiri teaches at Seneca College (King Campus), Toronto, Canada. He has published articles on V.S. Naipaul, Iranian cinema, postcolonial theory and translation. He has also several translations.

Bonnie Zare

University of Wyoming

Soaring over a Literary Boundary and the Mind-Body Boundary: the Unique Stories of M. M. Vinodini

Much has been written about the danger of presenting subaltern people as possessing a uniform mentality and writing in a uniform tone. In the case of Telugu Dalit literature, as with many other language traditions, a border has been erected to wall off Dalit storytelling from the arena of honored and respected literature. A certain set of mainstream readers and publishers judges Dalit short stories to be mere sketches “without craft” and with “militant” or “biased” content that is dismissed as a lament or cry of bitterness. As we follow Stuart Hall’s directive to attend to subaltern acts as a “historical-cultural force, [that] has constantly interrupted, limited and disrupted everything else” (1996) we must reject the idea of the Dalit short story oeuvre as merely angry, a series of hatchet-blow or drumbeats that differ little from one another. Those who try to uphold this border do not acknowledge that varied experiences are being narrated including intergenerational and inter-caste tension and the ways that class, gender, education level, religion and locality impact daily life. Furthermore, the use of a direct chronological order and everyday language is deliberate, a choice that contests a privileged, self-claimed “completeness.” This contestation offers a form of testimony and also vitally challenges another boundary, that between mind and body. Whether readers are more familiar with this boundary through orthodox Brahminical philosophy or Cartesian dualism, Dalit writers such as M.M. Vinodini reveal the fallacy of strictly separating the material and spiritual realms. Vinodini’s stories “Block,” “I Want a Lover” and “The Parable of the Lost Daughter” powerfully assert that embodiment itself may be our most important teacher. Through them we can entertain the possibility of a transpersonal lived body, a body that can be experienced as dominantly unitary and companionate with other bodies in the world.

Bonnie Zare is Professor of Gender and Women’s Studies at the University of Wyoming. Her work focuses on discourses of identity, feminism and activism in contemporary Indian women’s literature; her articles have appeared in the Women’s Studies International Forum, the Journal of Commonwealth Literature, and South Asian Review among others. With Nalini Iyer, she has edited Other Tongues: Rethinking the Language Debates in India (Rodopi, 2009).
The term Marginality or Marginal is contested time and again, which opens up binary conflicts such as marginal versus mainstream, outsider versus insider, periphery versus center. Women often defined as a constructed figure of society is marginalized with the duties imposed and roles expected from her. Urvashi Butalia an Indian feminist states in one of her interview that “feminist movements everywhere in the world are born of the particular political and economic realities of the places where they exist…each movement have different issues and concerns” The women activists of Bundelkhand, a district of Uttar Pradesh in Northern India formed by Sampat Pal Devi, the Gulabi Gang, outline their own brand of feminism taking concern in some of the crucial issues of gender violence, caste oppression and corruption. This paper attempts to give a comparative analysis of the screen adaptation of Gulabi Gang and will critically enquire to understand the film directed by Anubhav Sinha and a documentary by Nishita Jain. It will address the question of how the two motion pictures qualify in portraying the real activist group on the grounds of so called marginalized women transcending boundaries.

*Moumin Quazi  
Tarleton State University

Graduate Student Professionalization Panel

This is a proposal for a plenary session, targeting graduate students, especially. Modeled after the 2014 Professionalization Panel in Chicago ("Demystifying the Job Market"), this panel will feature 5 speakers, including the following SALA members: Aniruddha Mukhopadhyay, Moderator, Nalini Iyer, J. Edward Mallot, Madhurima Chakraborty, and Moumin Quazi. Topics will include grant writing, interviewing, the job market, and special challenges, such as children and relationships. Aniruddha Mukhopadhyay, Moderator (University of Florida); Nalini Iyer (Seattle University); J. Edward Mallot, (Arizona State University); Madhurima Chakraborty (Columbia College Chicago); and Moumin Quazi (Tarleton State University).