



The Cultures of New India

University of Brighton

Grand Parade Campus

30th January 2015

Hosted by C21 Writings

Registration 9.00-9.30 Grand Parade Entrance

Parallel Session 1 9:30-11:00

A. Mediating Gender - M2 Boardroom

Padma Govindan (University of California) “‘I Want To Start Celebrating Women Without All The Taboos’’: Examining Practices of Dating and Social Intervention as Anxious Productions of Indian Modernity.’

Daisy Hasan (University of Westminster) ‘TBC’

Asiya Islam (University of Cambridge) ‘Just a small town girl? Reflections on emerging mediated identity of the “New Indian Woman”.’

B. The New Cinema - Room 202

Omar Ahmed (University of Manchester) ‘Diachronic representations of Subaltern identity in new ‘Hindie’ cinema.’

Caroline Herbert (Leeds Beckett) ‘Spectres of the “New” India: Cinematic hauntings in contemporary Mumbai.’

Sarah A Joshi (Birkbeck) ‘The New New Indian Cinema.’

C. Digital India - Room 204

Gagun Chhina (University of Manchester) ‘Video Gaming In India: Making Sense of a New Practice.’

Paul Sermon (University of Brighton) ‘3x4: Exploring metaspaces platforms for inclusive future cities.’

Chinar Shah and Aileen Blaney (Srishti Institute of Art, Design and Technology) ‘Photography in India in Light Years and Digital Times.’

D. India and Literary Value - Room B56

Maitrayee Basu (Middlesex University) ‘Sonia Faleiro: From Beautiful Beginnings to Complicated Stories.’

Jorge Diego Sánchez (Universidad Alfonso X El Sabio, Madrid) ‘GRANTA: New Ways of Writing and Seeing India? (1997-2015)’

Ragini Tharoor Srinivasan, (UC Berkeley) ‘India Calling: Return-Writing of the Emergence Genre.’

Parallel Session 2 11:10-12:40

E. Gender in Film and Television - M2 Boardroom

Aakashi Magazine (University of St Andrews) 'Between transgression and containment: gender in recent Hindi cinema.'

Shruti Narayanswamy (University of St. Andrews) 'Television's Response to Feminism in Contemporary Indian Popular Culture.'

Rebecca Peters (Florida State University) 'Filmic Representations of Draupadi: powerful or victimized?'

F. Bollywood and Indian Identity - Room 202

Midath Hayder (University of Sussex) 'Shifting Dialogues - Zindagi Na Milengi Dobarra (Zoya Akhtar 2011) and India's Transnational Relationship with Hollywood.'

Binil Kumar (St. Paul's College, Kalamassery) 'Representation of Religious Exploitation in Indian Religious Satirical films.'

Utsa Mukherjee (Royal Holloway), Anil Pradhan (Jadavpur University), and Ravinder Barn (Royal Holloway) 'I love my India: Diaspora, Representation, and Identity in Bollywood cinema.'

G. Gender and Popular Fiction - Room 204

Christian Lenz (TU Dortmund) 'India Poised and Partying: Negotiating Two India's in Twenty-first Century Popular Literature.'

Neele Meyer (LMU Munich) 'Female Investigators in Indian Crime Fiction in English: (Re)Negotiating Indianness in Globally Viable Formula Fiction.'

Florence Cabaret (University of Rouen) 'Kishwar Desai, or the emergence of 21st century "sari noir" in the Anglophone literary world.'

H. New Indian Public Cultures - Room B56

Rukmini Banerjee (Sappho for Equality) 'Understanding Subversions of Gender-Sexuality: a "New" Indian Perspective.'

Shorna Pal (University of St Andrews) 'Socialist Pedagogy to Capitalist Consumerism: The "Multiplex" Film.'

Pascal Sieger (LAIOS – EHESS, Paris) 'Bangalore and the "cultural pollution" aspects of a new Indian experimental art scene.'

LUNCH Grand Parade Cafeteria

KEYNOTE 1. 13:30-14:30 M2 Boardroom

Professor Daya Thusu (University of Westminster) 'TBC'

Parallel Session 3 14:40-15:40

I. New Indian Genres - M2 Boardroom

Veronica Barnsley (University of Sheffield) 'Youth in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*.'

Chinmay Sharma (SOAS) 'Ancient myths in a globalizing world: How mixing myths and speculative fiction broke the English publishing market in India.'

J. Retelling Indian History - Room 202

Rossella Ciocca (Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale") "'Hearts of Darkness'" in *Shining India*. Narrations of insurgency in the North-East.'

Louise FitzGerald (University of Brighton) "'India is what you bring to it': Recycling the Raj, Colonial Nostalgia and *The Exotic Marigold Hotel*.'

K. Fashioning Indian Women - Room 204

Lipi Begum (University of the Arts London) '*Besharmii* Bras: Fashioning Resistance in Delhi and Bombay'

Chris Verschooten (KU Leuven) "'Sexualization'" and conspicuous consumption on *Verve* magazine covers: A visual content analysis and semiotic interpretation of *Verve* covers 2004-2012.'

KEYNOTE 2. 15:50-16:50 M2 Boardroom

Dr Emma Dawson Varughese 'TBC'

Conference Abstracts

Mediating Gender

Padma Govindan, University of California

"I Want To Start Celebrating Women Without All The Taboos": Examining Practices of Dating and Social Intervention as Anxious Productions of Indian Modernity

In this paper, I propose an examination of dating as well as civil society engagement as braided practices of urban, middle class modernity in India. Specifically, I analyze a media and cultural event in Chennai, India: the ongoing project of professional Tamil actor Sunder Ramu to go on 365 dates in the calendar year of 2015. The structure of the project is as follows: Ramu asks women on dates, for which the women have to pay for his meal. He has described this as empowering for women and he documents each encounter on Facebook. Ramu then uses the money he "saves" to provide a meal for different women's NGOs in Chennai each month. This project has received significant media coverage in India and abroad, with Ramu referred to as "the playboy of Chennai" in some outlets, while described as embarking on a purely social and charitable endeavor in others. Ramu himself variously describes this initiative as both about dating women and also as a non-romantic experiment in gender empowerment across class lines.

Drawing from a textual analysis of Ramu's Facebook posts and the media coverage, as well as interviews with Ramu and five of the women he has dated, I contend that this project and its media coverage represent the coupling of two practices of cultivating "modern" Indian selfhood. Ramu's dating project, although posited as transformative for women both in terms of social interaction and charitable intervention, represents profound uneasiness about whether romance (and the attendant implications for women's non-marital sexual activity) is a necessity as an operation of "modern" subjecthood in India. The coupling of the two represents ongoing anxieties about how to be a "modern" Indian subject and how such a subject should understand and grapple with gendered and sexual inequality in India. Padma Govindan

If heterosexual romance is increasingly understood by urban, middle class Indians as an anxious but necessary practice for being a cosmopolitan modern subject, depoliticized interventions into gendered poverty is an adjacent requirement for becoming proudly Indian modern, remaining situated in an Indian social matrix while also able to engage sophisticated forms of sociality and consumption. Drawing from feminist and queer analyses of romance, postcolonial literatures, and critiques of the civil society sector in developing countries, I posit that Ramu's dating project encapsulates middle class anxieties about how one can become a distinctly Indian modern, a form of subjecthood that offers the promise of empowerment and self-actualization while sedimenting asymmetrical social relations across gender and class lines.

Daisy Hasan, University of Westminster

Title TBC

My paper will critically explore the Indian media's recent obsession with the unfolding story of Indrani Mukerjea, a high flying media entrepreneur accused of murdering her daughter, Sheena Bora. This is a story that has unfolded against a backdrop of 'India Shining' evoked, in this instance, by images depicting a prosperous Indrani Mukerjea as a woman transformed from a small town girl into a wealthy urban Indian business woman in neoliberal India. My paper will critically look at the media's response to the story in terms of the values that were foregrounded around the role of women and the family in contemporary Indian society. Using first hand interviews with the Mumbai bureau chiefs of two very popular English and Hindi language television channels, namely, Times Now and Aaj Tak, I will also look at the pressures on reporters to follow the story and present every minutiae related to it for maximum sensational and affective impact.

My attempt is to understand the media's engagement with a story that triggered a range of responses among the Indian public and which displayed a deep ambivalence about the nation's modernity and the status of women in India today. While the debate about the ethical dimensions of the coverage is a compelling one, my attempt is to move beyond the obvious criticisms levelled against a salacious and audience-

hungry media. I want to look at how the official as well as unsubstantiated narratives constructed around the incident reveal deeply unresolved anxieties in the collective Indian psyche around contemporary social relations, the closing gap between generations, the way in which the parent-child relationship is no longer a hierarchical one and the challenges to traditional roles assigned to women. My paper will undertake a microscopic investigation of this crime story and its representation. It will also draw on other equally compelling recent murder stories that have evoked public voyeurism, disgust and sanction in order to ask what self-image of India is recognized, rejected or reinforced through these stories.

Asiya Islam, University of Cambridge

Just a small town girl? Reflections on emerging mediatised identity of the 'New Indian Woman'

The December 2012 gang rape of a young student in Delhi, India was seen to be a 'turning point' in the response to sexual violence in the country. Although the issue of sexual violence in the country is not new, this case spurred on unprecedented large scale protests and led to changes in the antiquated colonial anti-rape laws. The gang rape and the protests were covered extensively by national and international media, making violence against women in India into a global issue.

This paper argues that a common thread running through both international and national media discourse following the 2012 gang rape was the emergence of the identity of the modern Indian woman. In the image of the 2012 gang rape victim, named 'Nirbhaya' (without fear) by the media, Indian women were transformed from mere victims of violence (Mohanty 1988; Parmar 2003) to women who are modern, educated, sexually liberated and mobile, trying to claim public spaces for themselves. In particular, it's interesting to note that although the migrant status of the men who attacked the December 2012 victim was discussed negatively (Roychowdhry 2013), her own family's journey from a small town in the neighbouring state of Uttar Pradesh to the metropolis of Delhi was seen as a story of aspiration and (partial) success.

The paper explores the identity of the 'aspirational small town woman in a big city' as an emerging gendered identity in New India with reference, in particular, to the controversial BBC documentary 'India's Daughter' (2015) which is based on the 2012 gang rape, alongside wider mainstream media coverage. The documentary, in building the character of 'Nirbhaya' through interviews with her family and friends, makes reference to her ability to speak English, her desire to reach higher in life and her parents' hard work. This analysis is used to generate reflections on the intersections of gender, class and social mobility and change in the context of neoliberalism in India (Gooptu 2009).

References

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Parmar, P. (2003) Hateful Contraries: Media Images of Asian Women. In Jones, A. (ed.) *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*. New York: Routledge.

Roychowdhry, P. (2013) "The Delhi Gang Rape": The Making of International Causes. *Feminist Studies*, 39(1), pp.282-292.

The New Cinema

Omar Ahmed, University of Manchester

Diachronic representations of Subaltern identity in new 'Hindie' cinema

Antonio Gramsci's work on hegemony first used the term 'subaltern' (meaning inferior) to delineate power relations and 'a convenient shorthand for a variety of subordinate classes' (Arnold, 2012: 33). The term subaltern, later adopted by postcolonial theory, accentuated the marginalization of people, rendered invisible during colonial times. India's continuing economic liberalization has exacerbated unresolved inequities such as poverty to which Indian cinema has reacted invariably, applauding globalization and the formation of the new Indian consumer citizen. Whereas mainstream Indian films endorse a 'neoliberal fantasy of wealth and opportunity' (Chowdhury, 2011: 30) imagining 'the ideal citizen' as 'male, upper caste and of metropolitan origin' (Chowdhury, 2011: 78), vatic ideological censures of New India have come from the nascent 'Hindie' scene, drawing attention to the invisible Others; the Dalits, the migrant workers, and women. India's new seemingly progressive, globalized identity has been questioned in outspoken, allegorical and controversial independent films. *Papilo Buddha* (2013), *Chauranga / Four Colours* (2014), *Peepli Live* (2010), *Dhobi Ghat* (2010) and *Liar's Dice* (2014) contest the rights of the subaltern through stories of casteism, migration, displacement, gender, urbanization, economic exploitation and land rights. And while the neoliberal global community of India has shrewdly drawn a veil over such inequalities, the cultural resistance of new Hindie cinema recalls the ideologically engaged social activism of the 1960s-1970s Parallel Cinema movement that made the subaltern visible, critiquing the systemic caste discrimination, oppression and exploitation of the Dalit population in rural and urban India. This paper will attempt to explore depictions of the subaltern, investigating the politics of subalternity in the context of a new wave of independent cinema. Two questions will be central to my approach. Firstly, to what extent has Indian indie cinema reinstated the subaltern agenda and reopened the discourse of subaltern historiography in a neoliberal context? Secondly, how true is that attempts made by Parallel Cinema in the past, externalising the

consciousness of the subaltern, in the form of women, Dalits, Naxalites, have regressed to such an extent that today's cinema has rendered them invisible?

References

Arnold, David (1984), 'Gramsci and Peasant Subalternity in India' in Chaturvedi, Vinayak (ed.) (2012), *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial*, 2nd ed. London and New York: Verso

Chowdhury, Kanishka (2011) *The New India: Citizenship, Subjectivity and Economic Liberalization*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan

Caroline Herbert, Leeds Beckett University

Spectres of the "New" India: Cinematic hauntings in contemporary Mumbai

This paper explores Kiran Rao's 2011 film, *Dhobi Ghat* (Mumbai Diaries) to consider how recent Bombay cinema has presented the 'New' India—its spaces, economies, and cultural productions—as haunted. More specifically, through my reading of *Dhobi Ghat* I consider the spectral subjects and urban hauntologies produced in Mumbai as it is regenerated in the contexts of economic liberalization and Hindu nationalism. *Dhobi Ghat* is framed by a broad concern with Mumbai's predatory real estate economies, the uneven distribution of urban space, and the transformations of labour circuits in the context of globalization. This concern is woven into an interest in the city as a mediated space of longing and desire, and the role different visual art forms play in bringing into view Mumbai's spectral subjects, marginalised communities, and forms of labour. My paper explores how, through its play with painting, photography, video, and film, *Dhobi Ghat* establishes an inter-media haunting, where different visual modes interrupt each other and combine bear witness the city's disappearing subjects, in this case Muslim and labouring bodies. My examination of the urban hauntologies of 'New' India therefore takes in both form and content, to trace the spectral subjects of Mumbai's changing economies and the cinematic hauntings that are produced in the spaces of 'New' India.

Sarah A Joshi, Birbeck College - University of London

The New New Indian Cinema

Bollywood, parallel cinema, new wave, middle cinema, avant-garde, arthouse, Bollywood Intellectual...Dhobi Ghat and Peepli Live are some of the recent films to perplex audiences and critics alike with regards to their genre classification. Aamir Khan, prominent Indian actor, director and producer, has said that his film Dhobi Ghat is neither mainstream nor arthouse, but 'in the middle'. Filmmakers such as Anurag Kashyap, Kiran Rao, Imtiaz Ali, Dibakar Banerjee, to name a few, are representative of a new director/filmmaker movement of new New Wave Indian cinema. They represent a different kind of confidence in Indian filmmaking, unapologetic for being outside the mainstream or 'popular', nor defensive or deferential in their choice of subject matter and social commentary. Their films are converging with the commercial industry in substantial ways: screen space, audience reach, box office returns and international acclaim. It has long been argued that Hollywood genre classification does not work for Indian cinema, and it is not my intention to attempt to do so. To what extent thought, is the assigning of a genre a way of predetermining a film's target audience, both locally and internationally, and their generic expectations? Is there a genre within the Indian terms of critique (social, new wave, parallel, etc) which can encapsulate films such as Dhobi Ghat, Delhi Belly and Peepli Live, and if not, does inventing a new term of classification redefine audience sensibilities in any substantial or tangible way? What are the social and cultural implications of film genres in India today, both internally and for how films are presented to the rest of the world? My paper will explore these questions and examine the terms in which particular films were publicized, classified and critiqued within, and consider the Indian cinema industry's position and attitudes towards this new New Indian cinema.

Digital India

Gagun Chhina, University of Manchester

Video Gaming In India: Making Sense of a New Practice

Video games are the most pervasive digital cultural products of contemporary society, both modelling and shaping culture (Consalvo, 2006; Bogost, 2007; Higgins, 2008; Nakamura, 2009). Despite their global popularity, there has been little significant research conducted on video games outside of the west (Cao & Downing, 2008; Crawford, 2012: 53), resulting in gaming being viewed through the same monoculture western lens. Hence, more cross-national and cross-cultural research is necessary (Crawford, 2012: 53).

In my research, I seek to address the western centric focus of academic scholarship through my analysis the subjective game play experience of the Indian video game player. Essentially, my research finds that Indian video gamers wish to adopt video game play as their own culturally embedded practice. This is accomplished through either the process of changing the content of video games or the process by which the games are consumed. I discuss how Indians situate the field of video games within their cultural context (i.e. as a family venue) and the ways which it is markedly different than western gaming venues. A field of gaming cannot exist unless actors accept the practice of video gaming. First, I examine the absence of science fiction and its importance in understanding how video gamers as consumers frame and consequently reject the theme in video gaming. Second, I discuss the cultural acceptance of military themed video games. The Indian cultural resistance to the theme within the context of the popularity of gaming further demonstrates glocalisation and resistance to the global homogeneity of the international games industry. I argue that military themed games are a culturally accepted frame which leads to the acceptance and adoption of the practice. However, the military video games are global products only localised in the way they are consumed and not in their content. Lastly, I explore modded Indian video games which are western video games made to specifically fit into an Indian context.

Paul Sermon, University of Brighton

Claire McAndrew, The Bartlett - University College London

3x4: Exploring metaspace platforms for inclusive future cities

Dr Claire McAndrew, The Bartlett University College London

In megacities such as Delhi and Mumbai - and within one of the fastest growing cities within the world, Ahmedabad - more than 50% of the population live in informal urban settlements. 3x4 metres is the plot size seen to be provided in some resettlement colonies, a government initiative which relocates people within informal inner-city settlements to vacant land on the periphery. In a collaboration between Professor Paul Sermon at the University of Brighton, Dr Claire McAndrew at The Bartlett, UCL, Swati Janu a Delhi-based Architect and photographer Vivek Muthuramalingam from Bangalore, 3x4 looks at informal settlements differently where informality is not viewed as a problem, but a promising new model of urbanism for the global south. 3x4 uses an immersive telematic networked environment to provide a playful, sensorial exploration of new hybrids of digital space. Merging two 3x4 metre room installations in Delhi and London through mixed-reality, this transnational dialogue intends to set an aspiration for developing metaspace platforms in megacities of the global south. It builds upon practice-based research conducted as UnBox LABS 2014 Fellows in Ahmedabad, India; which used an immersive installation to explore the qualities and values built through self-organised communities that are lost in the resettlement process.

Chinar Shah and Aileen Blaney, Srishti Institute of Art, Design, & Technology

Photography in India in Light Years and Digital Times': India and Literary Value

'Indian modernity' has been seen, represented, exploited, mediated and oftentimes negotiated through images. Today we are faced with a new phenomenon – the real time representation of everyday lives through social media's mobilization of photography. Increasingly, our every waking moments and experiences of modernity are being lived through a camera. Therefore it is worth asking what ideologies and fantasies of

modernity are being served by images that are today in circulation in India. How do we understand the politics of the seen and the unseen in the context of Indian modernity even when photography is being sold as a language of transparency in today's world?

India's rapid urban and rural transformation in recent years is synchronous with pronounced changes in photographic practice, with the medium invoking a new visual language to talk about the problems of the 'new India'. In this realm, the challenging of stereotypical representations of India by a set of emerging photographers is without precedence. This paper will bring attention to new terrains of photography that critically engage with the visualities of modernity, demonstrating a discernible shift in the visual rhetoric of India. In a forthcoming publication titled *Photography in India in Light Years and Digital Times*, of which we are co-editors, we grapple with these issues and build a long awaited critical discourse around photography in India.

Key concepts in connection with the history of photography and contemporary concerns in India will be discussed through the writing of people such as Sabeena Gadihoke, Christopher Pinney, Joan Fontcuberta and Sunil Gupta, all of whom are contributors to our forthcoming publication. In a presentation showing the photographic works of the likes of Ajit Bhadoriya, Tashi Lepcha, and Avani Tanya (all of whose work we are including in the book), we will explore themes such as middle class aspirations and their intersections with new urban landscapes, queer issues and Indian masculinity and ongoing contest over land and displacement from the point of view of tribal communities in India.

India and Literary Value

Maitrayee Basu, Middlesex University

Sonia Faleiro: From Beautiful Beginnings to Complicated Stories

Sonia Faleiro is best known internationally as the author of *Beautiful Thing*, an award winning book-length work of narrative non-fiction about Mumbai's dance bars, as well as in more recent years as one of the founding members of the international longform journalism collective, Deca. She has also, in a career spanning over 10 years, worked as a staff writer and a freelance journalist. Being a postcolonial writer, currently living in the West, who writes exclusively about the Indian marginalised, and commits herself to writing "complicated stories" to represent their experiences, she has accumulated a significant amount of symbolic power in the global cultural field. This paper attempts to situate her as an author who straddles the literary and the journalistic fields in her work, as well as an actor whose influence transcends both these fields as she speaks out about experiences of being marginalised in India to a global audience. I use the concept of meta-capital (following Garman, 2007) in conjunction with that of affective middlebrow readership (Driscoll, 2014) to trace the trajectory of this writer assembling the authority to speak about the Indian marginalised in global public spaces. My analysis, thereby, also explores the effect Faleiro's self-positioning in her various roles has in shaping the dominant ideologies in the field of literary journalism in India, which is engaged in a struggle to position itself in opposition to the mainstream journalism.

References

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- Garman, A. 2007. "Antjie Krog and the accumulation of 'media meta-capital'". *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*. 19: 2, pp. 1-23.

Jorge Diego Sánchez, Universidad Alfonso X El Sabio, Madrid

GRANTA: New Ways of Writing and Seeing India? (1997-2015)

GRANTA's 1997 first volume on Indian writing in English language wanted to celebrate 50 years of Partition under the title *India! The Golden Jubilee*. It opened with an introduction by Ian Jack documenting his visit to India during times of Emergency in late 1976 (7) and it closed with an excerpt by Arundhati Roy from, at that point, her upcoming novel *The God of Small Things*. In between there were stories that aimed at unfolding the exclamation mark of the title and the references to the Golden Jubilee of its own independence. In this sense, the volume opened space to pioneering writers that recognised gender difference such as Urvashi Butalia as well as caste and class discrimination as in Viramma's "Pariah". Also, the 57 GRANTA Issue celebrated Indian mainstream authors such as Anita Desai, Vikram Seth or Amit Chaudhuri (even Canadian/Sri Lankan Michael Ondaatje was included in this part!) and it showed the work of photographers such as Sanjeev Saith (who celebrated the role of famous and anonymous freedom writers in the section "Freedom") or Brazilian Sebastião Salgado (who documented the article of Suketu Mehta on Mumbai).

Twenty Five years later (2015), the 130 GRANTA ISSUE is entitled *India. Another Way of Seeing* and again started with an Introduction by Ian Jack. In this case, Ian Jack retails how India had been a subject of others seeing it and then talking about it. It is so that he wants the 130 volume to gather fiction and non-fiction in order to let history and stories about India be told by Indians all over the world so that these narratives reach the whole world. It is here where this paper wants to examine and compare how the notion of the Indian artist is created in both volumes and which key points such as gender difference and caste discrimination are analysed in depth, stereotyped or merely ignored in both publications. By so doing, the article concludes studying the evolution (or not) of the representations about the many Indias that India contains by GRANTA's own promise for new writing.

Ragini Tharoor Srinivasan, UC Berkeley

India Calling: Return-Writing of the Emergence Genre

The past decade has seen a flood of nonfiction books about the arrival of a “New India” on the world stage. Manu Goswami has called this narrative movement the “neoliberal genre of emergence”; it is comprised, on the one hand, of texts like Edward Luce’s *In Spite of the Gods: The Strange Rise of Modern India* (2006), which locates India’s emergence in the liberalizing economic reforms of 1991, and, on the other hand, critical accounts like Siddhartha Deb’s *The Beautiful and the Damned: A Portrait of the New India* (2012). If one were to club together the books on India’s global arrival, critiques of New India, and works on the modern Indian city, a striking commonality emerges: a number of the authors in this genre are, or once were, diasporic Indians, and their respective returns to India serve as occasion for their nonfiction works.

This paper situates the “return-writing” subset of the emergence genre at the nexus of three earlier genres of Indian Anglophone nonfiction: “idea of India” books, “home to India” narratives, and the Naipaulian travelogue. Anand Giridharadas’s *India Calling: An Intimate Portrait of a Nation’s Remaking* (2011), Rana Dasgupta’s *Capital: The Eruption of Delhi* (2014), and Amit Chaudhuri’s *Calcutta: Two Years in the City* (2013) are recent examples. Each book is marked by its diaspora-returned author’s attempts to cognitively map, inhabit, and moor himself in urban New India. Each is frustrated by the overdetermined nature of diasporic return: aging parents come to symbolize a transformed India; a flyover where once was a cricket pitch seems to say everything about the nation’s present relationship to its history and the world. Are these return-writers able to capture New India’s metropolitan realities and uneven development? Or, is the returnee’s criticality hindered by his participation in the narration of New India’s rise?

Gender in Film and Television

Aakash Magazine, University of St. Andrew's

Between transgression and containment: gender in recent Hindi cinema

There has been a significant change in the public discourse on gender in India following the 2012 protest against rape and sexual violence. Questions of consent, freedom and choice have started to become legitimate questions in the mainstream debate. This paper examines the trajectory of this change in recent Hindi cinema by looking at the construct of the contemporary Hindi film heroine and the film world she inhabits. It argues that this is not a singular moment of celebration, but one that needs a reflective lens which examines its contradictions, anxieties and limitations along with its subversive moments.

The paper does this mainly by examining two different recent developments. On the one hand, we see the emergence of the sexually confident, quirky woman character as a trope. On the other, if we shift our gaze to quieter but defining moments, we find a more meaningful engagement with the quest to create a new language of female representation. These latter moments could even be from films where the narrative resolution is conservative. The paper frames its argument in terms of a tension between these transgressive moments, and the taming of these by the emergence of an easily marketable trope. It also seeks to trace these subversive moments together to understand the boundaries and possibilities of Hindi cinema's language when it comes to gender.

The paper will briefly look at pre 2012 films to trace the immediate history of recent films- for instance the acknowledgement of female desire in *Dev D* (2009) or the possibility of female solitariness in *Luck by Chance* (2009). Its main focus, though, will be on the tensions within the post 2012 films like *Gangs of Wasseypur*, *Bobby Jasoos*, *Revolver Rani*, *NH10*, *Queen*, *Piku* and *Tanu weds Manu Returns*.

By examining these contradictions, the paper hopes to present a nuanced look at gender in contemporary Hindi films. It is not in search of a fixed idea of what a "progressive" Hindi film heroine

representation should be like. Rather, it aims to understand how the ideas in these films emerge through a dialogue with contemporary Indian society where feminism has become more accessible, and with it have emerged the challenges of subversive ideas becoming market friendly.

Shruti Narayanswamy, University of St. Andrew's

Television's Response to Feminism in the Contemporary Indian Popular Culture

This paper investigates the response of primetime Indian television to the resurgence of feminist discourse in Indian popular culture, by looking at three recent shows featuring prominent feminist plotlines. Television remains hitherto unexplored in discussions on how the Indian media landscape is navigating an environment where feminism is both current and marketable. Post the cable television boom in India, primetime soap operas became representative of popular Indian television. Even with femaleled casts, narratives and spectatorship, these soap operas have been accused of regressive and patriarchal portrayals of women. Recent work such as Shoma Munshi's 'Prime Time Soap Operas on Indian Television' (2010) suggests that these shows deserve a more nuanced analysis.

This paper will undertake a textual analysis of 3 shows; 'Gangaa' (&TV, 2015), 'Main Kuch Bhi Kar Sakti Hoon' ("I can do anything", Doordarshan, 2015) and 'Everest' (STAR Plus, 2014/15) to explore how their feminist plotlines operate within the traditional soap opera narrative largely set in a middle class, savarna framework. This paper will interrogate the proposition that these shows are representative of a recent trend of Indian television 'tuning into' the newfound popularity and marketability of feminism in popular culture, and examine how this fits into the growing feminist discourse in Indian film, journalism and social media. Spectatorship will also be addressed briefly, by analysing audience trends relative to the conventional Indian soap opera. Towards this, the social media presence of these shows will also be unpacked to understand if these shows are transcending the

medium and engaging with new audiences, specifically through crafting a feminist and liberal identity.

By looking at these recent shows with overt feminist themes within the soap opera genre, this study hopes to further an understanding of television's role in making feminist discourse accessible to large contemporary audiences in India particularly in light of the current social climate.

Rebecca Peters, Florida State University

Filmic Representations of Draupadi: powerful or victimised?

As is often the case in nationalist discourse, in much of modern Indian history women serve as a symbol for the nation and national integrity. This can be very clearly seen in the many filmic representations of Draupadi, the strong yet humiliated wife of the five Pandavas in the epic Mahabharata. She is often represented to audiences as either a powerful and honorable woman, or a victimized (and honorable) wife. Films which depict the character of Draupadi almost never provide her with any agency or active resistance to the evils that befall her. Instead, she is generally presented as an "ideal victim." As the ideal victim, she is blameless, honest, pure, and traditionally Hindu. She needs the protection of men and serves as a reminder of their duty to all women. She often becomes a symbol of the nation, encouraging the men to stand up against those who molest their women and the nation. This was especially prevalent during colonial times before independence. However, despite the apparent improvement in female representation in contemporary cinema, the modern Draupadi still seems to maintain this reading as the question of Hindu nationalism and the role of the state in religion becomes more of a political point. I will discuss how cinema, especially the mythological, has been used as a tool of nationalism in the past. Then, I will do a close reading of several films that use the Mahabharata as their source material. I will compare the representations of Draupadi to demonstrate that she primarily maintains her voice only when serving as a greater symbol for India and Indian morality. Ultimately, this representation removes any feminist stance to the character and perpetuates a paternalistic and patriarchal viewpoint on women.

Bollywood and Indian Identity

Midath Hayder, University of Sussex

Shifting Dialogues - Zindagi Na Milengi Dobarra (Zoya Akhtar 2011) and India's Transnational Relationship with Hollywood

This paper will explore the relationship India has with the West, particularly through popular Hindi films, and their representations of modern Indians, living at home or abroad. The discussion will circulate around the feel good hit movie *Zindagi Na Milengi Dobarra* (Zoya Akhtar 2011). Though the film takes place mostly in Spain, the transnational locations depict a new found comfortability for wealthy and middle class Indians; by doing so these films brand India, less as an exotic holiday destination, but more as a producer of a young urban cosmopolitan generation. This newfound confidence demonstrates India's rapid modernity, and the benefits of it for a generation. The film supports the nation states image of the modern Indian, as someone who is a true world player.

The intersection of mixed race couples here also propagate ideas of modernisation through the complexities of relationships in the film. These are reflected in the three main characters Kabir-Natasha (Indian-anglo Indian, Imran-Nuria (Indian – Spanish) and Arjun- Laila (NRI). Furthermore, the casting of Mixed race Katrina Kaif, as well as white Kalki Koechlin (of French descent) complicates the typically Bollywood romance of the all Indian hero, finding love with the all Indian heroine. Those relationships are proposed not as taboo, but more a symptomatic properties of modernising. By co-opting the Hollywood genre of the Road movie, the film "Indianises" it for its own purpose, which is to present a more liberal and forward thinking India. This paper will explore these issues, hoping to understand the modern world in which Bollywood has constructed for its new audiences, be they Indian or other.

Binil Kumar, St. Paul's College, Kalamassery

Representation of Religious Exploitation in Indian Religious Satirical films

India is a nation known for its 'Unity in Diversity'. The world outside sees India as a land of sages and spirituality with multiple religion, caste and culture. Though India has always tried to present itself before the international society as a modern, powerful, peace loving nation which upholds the prime principle of Indian Vedanta i.e. universal brotherhood, Indian history's deep-rooted stigma of religious and caste discrimination has contemporary relevance. Every Indian is bonded to a particular religion or caste. Even the government formation is decided by the religious/caste interests. Thus, religion is inextricably linked to power. Therefore, though the constitution provides right to freedom for speech and expression, it is blasphemy to raise one's voice against oppressive religious practices in India. Hollywood has been criticizing Indian way of living from outside, but to criticize it from within is a challenging task. Salman Rushdie holds the view that religion must be subjected to satire but to put it in actual practice is a very difficult thing. Recently two Indian films satirizing religion have been received with great interest by Bollywood: Umesh Shukla's *OMG- Oh My God* (2012) and Rajkumar Hirani's *PK* (2014). Prominent actors were cast in both films and the films became box office hits. Though these films criticize world religions, they mainly focus on how these religions have become corrupted in Indian soil. Even if religious groups have come out in protest against these films, they were exhibited to full house audience. If film is a mirror that reflects society, both these films were able to prove that the majority of the Indian population is dissatisfied with the aggressive religious interventions in the lives of people. This paper attempts to probe how these Indian films were able to bring before the consciousness of the Indian population, a healthy analysis of religion and its powerful influence.

Utsa Mukherjee, Royal Holloway
Anil Pradhan, Jadavpur University
Ravinder Barn, Royal Holloway

I love my India: Diaspora, Representation, and Identity in Bollywood cinema

This paper seeks to explore the ways in which the British Indian diaspora in the UK has come to be represented in Bollywood films. By drawing on key films, the paper aims to interrogate what such representations mean to the larger discourse of diaspora identities (Berghahn, 2010). The reaffirmation of the Indian diasporic identity as being rooted to its 'Indian-ness' despite its dislocation unto the English space and society is evident in several Bollywood movies. Karan Johar's *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (2001) portrays the Indian diaspora settled in Britain as located within a refuge to assert their inherent views towards 'split-belonging'. The characters in these movies partake in open and elated celebration of their Indian identity and play out its stereotypes; through songs, dances, rituals and dresses; in order to remind them and others around them about the near inextricable underpinnings of 'being' an Indian, notwithstanding the place or time. *Namaste London* (2007), on the other hand offers interesting contrasts to that model. Both these movies portray second generation children or youth and offer insight into their ways of engaging with the parental 'homeland'. Particular selections of such Bollywood films would, therefore, form the point of entry into a larger understanding of questions pertaining to the location of the diaspora in popular Indian imagination and how it conflates with modes of cultural representations. It brings to the fore the nuances of how the imagined community is harnessed onto different spaces to negotiate complex configurations that inform, mark and validate patterns of cultural consumption for the diaspora (Bandyopadhyay, 2008).

Gender and Popular Fiction

Christian Lenz, TU Dortmund

India Poised and Partying: Negotiating Two India's in Twenty-first Century Popular Literature

“There are two Indias in this country. One India is straining at the leash, eager to spring forth [...]. The other India is the leash.” This is the opening of the poem “India Poised”, which was part of the 2007 campaign to celebrate the 60th anniversary of India’s independence.

The same year, Advaita Kala’s debut novel *Almost Single* was published and became a bestseller. It deals with the lives of three female singles who have to negotiate their lives and romances in 21st century Delhi. The book is special in so far as it presents a multitude of possible ways to achieve happiness, whilst never discrediting either India from the above-mentioned poem. I will show that, within a cultural-geographical context, the novel’s readers are (gently) encouraged to consider and re-evaluate their ideas about (arranged) marriages, gender and sexualities. The various spaces and places presented in the novel display a love for a very modern India whilst at the same never disregarding the characters’ roots and the senses of place they stem from.

I claim that the desire for traditional ideas such as ‘family’ remain very strong, but that neo-liberal – or Western – practices have influenced the characters’ self-perception and how they deal with both their identities and the spaces in which to display them. Specifically – as the novel simply offers too many opportunities – I will investigate the practices of going out to clubs and creating party spaces. Here, the two Indias are juxtaposed and their concepts and signifying practices negotiated. Considering theories from the field of cultural geography as well as the night-time economy, it will become apparent that *Almost Single* presents a 21st-century approach to shaping its readers’ perception of how not to strain at the leash but to invite the other India join the younger generation on their way.

Neele Meyer, LMU Munich

Female Investigators in Indian Crime Fiction in English: (Re)Negotiating Indianness in Globally Viable Formula Fiction

While crime fiction has long been considered an unsuitable genre in Indian writing in English, a variety of crime fiction series have been published in recent years and bear witness to the growth of commercial fiction along the line of globally viable genre fiction for a local readership in India. More often than not, these works are written by female writers and/or depict female investigators who appear to have adapted the originally European/US-American male genre for their own agenda. Crime fiction series by writers like Kalpana Swaminathan, Kishwar Desai or Madhumita Bhattacharrya give a voice to strong, modern and independent female professionals who do not only investigate crime cases but also indulge in the consumerist lifestyle and rather explicitly talk about their sexuality.

My paper will take a closer look at these female sleuths and their mode of operation to analyze whether these figures retain certain notions of Indianness and whether they can be seen as mere copies of their Western counterparts. What kind of challenge do they face in the course of their investigations, due to for example misogynic or corrupt structures they encounter? How do these figures deal with gendered spatial practices that commonly confine women in the private realm and need to be transgressed in the course of an investigation? Eventually, this paper will look into the significance of the increasingly frequent appearance of the female detective in Indian novels (as well as in India cinema): May the female sleuth be a particular suitable figure to look into and speak to the vast transformations processes that India – and of particular concern here, the changing role and (self)image of middle-class women – have experienced in the last two decades?

Florence Cabaret, University of Rouen

Kishwar Desai, or the emergence of 21st century "sari noir" in the Anglophone literary world

This paper purports to address the recent rise of female crime novelists in India, focusing more particularly on the works of Kishwar Desai whose first novel, *Witness the Night*, was published in 2007 and her latest one, *The Sea of Innocence*, in 2014, after *Origins of Love* in 2013. Locating her stories both in the spectrum of contemporary detective novels across the mainly Anglophone world, I wish to examine the specificities at work in her three novels, taking into consideration her choice of a female marginal sleuth and of crimes that specifically target women in 21st century India, from female foeticide to youth prostitution and surrogate pregnancy. Beyond titles that may sound a little bland for the genre, Kishwar Desai centres her novels on a gendered investigator having to deal with her status as an Indian woman unofficially contributing to male-dominated police investigations but also with cases that are themselves at the heart of contemporary gender discrimination in an India that is plagued by corruption. In keeping with the tradition of the lonely hard-boiled detective confronting the most gruesome societal and political issues of her country, Kishwar Desai offers a both coded and personal appropriation of female authorship connected to the genre as well as of females as subjects resisting or falling prey to the daily violence of a postcolonial-turned-liberal Indian society. Far from the occasional metaphysical detective stories of writers such as Michael Ondaatje, Amitav Ghosh or Vikram Chandra, her procedural-like novels may appear to be much more formulaic and yet they also manage to stage a social worker turned sleuth, who wonders at her own agency as she manages to unveil the truth on some particular cases but hardly restores law and order. Oscillating between topical and sensational documentaries about India and the on-going portrayal of a rather unconventional Indian single woman, Kishwar Desai's novels will thus lead me 1) to question her place as an Anglophone Indian novelist in a growingly popular transnational genre, 2) to study the ways she represents male and female agency in investigations taking place in India but sometimes integrating British protagonists, and 3) to examine the three variations she offers in her three novels of a narration that

privileges the subjectivity of the viewpoint, intermingling personal remarks and hesitations in a meandering and loose narrative which evolves in a fairly fragmentary and episodic mode.

New Indian Public Cultures

Rukmini Banerjee, Sappho for Equality

Understanding Subversions of Gender-Sexuality: a "New" Indian Perspective

This paper is an attempt to represent the ruptures within the sex-gender-sexuality continuum in "New India" and to illustrate certain lived experiences that are mostly beyond the "official"/"straight" representations. In the last decade the Indian government has decriminalised and re-criminalised homosexuality in July 2009 and December 2013 respectively, and passed a 'vaguely' positive law on "third gender" identification (without sexual expression) in April 2014, and this duality of the legal system and Indian modernity in general shows us the impossibility of living beyond binaries of gender and sexuality. In a "new" India perhaps it is important to admit that heterosexism is prevalent, and the portrayal of some "marginal" lives are creating microsubversions within a violent system that ignores these very existences.

A street-theatre performance in Kolkata (along with a series of theatre workshops) was one of the methods used in the project Liveable Lives: Rethinking Social Exclusions, a collaboration between Sappho for Equality, Kolkata and University of Brighton, to exhibit diverse lives that narrate realities beyond the "mainstream"—of persons who are "unable" to conform to gender-sexuality stereotypes proclaimed by the state. As a part of this transnational research project I will use this performance as a way to explain the idea of 'liveability' for young LGBTQ people of Kolkata beyond an "official" state-sponsored version, redefining what makes life liveable and unliveable i.e. what is required to maintain a 'life worth living'.

Young LGBTQ identified persons claiming public spaces of Kolkata, negotiating social rejection and still choosing to portray details of liveabilities and unliveabilities are in a way interrupting the larger state-recognised discourses. This paper will discuss the process adopted by the participants not only to occupy the public imagination but also to build coherent strategies of defense in the larger struggle for sexuality rights.

Shorna Pal, University of St Andrews

Socialist Pedagogy to Capitalist Consumerism: The "Multiplex" Film

A radical shift in audience demographics in Indian cinemas today, is steering both form and narrative of contemporary Indian films towards a transnational product which bears traits of both the incoming traffic of globalisation as well as the outgoing signals of an indigenous self. The middle class comprising a quarter of India's population, and with a high mean disposable income, are the biggest spenders in its consumer market. Multiplexes positioned as a desirable new commodity, have created demand within this class leading to escalated ticket prices, which has in turn alienated economically deprived classes. While comprising a small fraction of India's cinema theatres, multiplexes bring in a third of the total revenue, leading to many contemporary producers designing narratives catering to 'multiplex' audiences. The primarily middle class audience, with a self pride instilled through India's strong position within the global economy, cultivates a taste for cinema which reflects its collective statement to better Indian society. This leaning for social pedagogy along with its expectations of a film which will fit seamlessly into global paradigms of consumerism, is steering mainstream films into a quasi-Parallel cinematic form. Here the story telling is from a globalised middle class perspective, and the film form follows international conventions, however the plot is centred around a critical social issue in India, stylised with exotic ethnicity. This commercially packaged Indian 'art' cinema appeals to both its domestic multiplex audience as well as finding audiences abroad at film festivals, art house circuits and via the internet. However, these films in adapting global form and narrative structure and in being screened more and more at multiplexes are increasingly failing to connect with the majority Indian audience in terms of logistics, pricing and content.

Pascal Sieger, LAIOS – EHESS, Paris

Bangalore and the “cultural pollution” aspects of a new Indian experimental art scene

My PhD dissertation *Ethnography of Contemporary Artists’ Resistance Networks in India* led me to make the cartography of experimental art creation in Bangalore. My research is focusing on the structures of the artistic production, examining creative contemporary spaces as ‘plateaus’ crossed by different types of flows (people, money, ideas) and it made me meet the main stakeholder of contemporary culture in Bangalore.

My contribution will address the specific cosmopolitan culture of Bangalore, which developed after the IT boom in the late 1990. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the city attracts daily people in search of a job (from educated middle class young people from all over the country to poor workers from the countryside) but also artists looking for a new playground, cheap spaces and new dynamics. Recently these artists became the main target of the official cultural politics who want to « de-westernize » the Indian culture. Indeed, as most of them wish to find a place on a global contemporary market rather than on the local scene, they refer to a global Art History, speak and write in English and perform in cosmopolitan spaces connected with foreign cultures. They’ve managed to meet an audience within the city and export their productions thanks to the network they’ve created and they definitely represent a new Indian culture.

I’ll start this contribution contextualizing my research and giving some historical elements about Bangalore, which can explain the reasons why artists chose to settle in Bangalore in the beginning of the 21st century and managed to create a vibrant experimental hub. I’ll lean on some excerpts of interviews I had with artists, audience and cultural structure administrators.

The second part will focus on contemporary art spaces in Bangalore: theaters (Ranga Shankar, Jagriti), residencies (One Shanthi Road, Sangam House), festivals (Experimenta, Attakalari Biennale) funding institutions (IFA), and art education (Shrithi) and the way they are all interconnected and create a community. In this mapping process, the presence of foreign cultural institutions (Max Mueller Bhavan, Alliance Française and British Council) and their importance in the promotion of Indian contemporary art will be underlined.

My last part will look at the politics of the spaces I studied. In a country which started recently a battle against « cultural pollution » (i. e. western influences), is it still possible to promote contemporary, experimental theater, cinema or literature, a fortiori in English? I'll show some examples of the current production in Bangalore and emphasize their « global » character and the need to build a strong network and community to resist to moral, religious and political pressure as well as the way the artists and the promoters deal with the new cultural official policy.

This contribution is not only about the changes of culture in a country “transformed by a new prosperity”, it addresses the tensions between a progressive, liberal and globalized new experimental culture anchored in a city which is proud of its high-tech image and the “purist” point of view of the government for which culture means before all “Indian cultural heritage”.

New Indian Genres

Veronica Barnsley, University of Sheffield

Youth in Indra Sinha's Animal's People

Animal's People is a novel that jettisons the already fraught form of the postcolonial bildungsroman in order to narrate a post-disaster coming of age story in which the protagonist has been denied personhood and is forced to live as an animal. As recent scholarship on colonial and postcolonial literatures attests, notions of human rights rest upon a

mode of humanness in which self-development precedes self-actualization and which capitulates to a weakly humanist political and cultural vision that refuses to recognise the abject conditions, such as those in Bhopal following the gas leak, produced by global capitalism. (Slaughter 2007) This paper examines youth as a key feature of this global demand for development (economic and social) that is critiqued in Sinha's novel.

Youth, related to but not identical with childhood, is in itself contested in contemporary texts interested, like Sinha's, in the alterations brought about by industrialisation and uneven economic growth. Particularly in rapidly developing economies (including India as the I in the BRICS group) youth is associated with vigour, opportunity and the energy for change. On the flip side, however, large youthful populations can promote fears of violence, lost opportunity and a rush for resources that threatens to destabilise the balance, so clear in this novel about the 1984 Bhopal gas leak, between international corporations and national interests.

This paper analyses youth in *Animal's People*, looking at how the novel reforms a recognisable story of developmental struggle using narrative techniques that invite us to consider Bhopal's ongoing disaster in relation to development, questioning distinctions between the natural and the unnatural, the human animal and the nonhuman animal and animating the promise of youth not as an aspiration but as open to question.

Chinmay Sharma, SOAS

Ancient myths in a globalising world: how mixing myths and speculative fiction broke the English publishing market in India

Mythological novels in English that use textual strategies of speculative fiction, like those of Amish and Ashok Banker, have achieved sales figures unheard of in the Indian publishing market. Dawson Varughese (2013) maps the blending of Western fantasy and Indian myths, noting the creation of a fantasy sub-genre intimately linked with Hindu myths and belief systems. The paper maps and elaborates on this phenomenon, focusing on books that use the Mahabharata as the source

story—Ashok Banker’s MBA series (2011-ongoing), and Krishna Udayasankar’s Aryavarta Chronicles (2012-14)—to explore genre innovation and marketing techniques of an emerging culture in New India.

Using Gerard Genette’s classifications of palimpsests, the paper situates these texts relationally to popular mythological narratives in print and performance as well as the speculative fiction tradition in India by mapping intertextual networks of influence between them. Utilizing Bourdieu’s formulation of the field of cultural production, the paper will also situate the texts as cultural objects in relation to the field of English publishing in India. The paper suggests that the popularity of the mythological fiction is a product of aesthetic strategies – creating intertextual links with already popular mythic and speculative fiction products like calendar art and superhero movies—and economic strategies—utilizing social media, publicity events at chain bookstores, printing paperbacks etc—that have created a literature written by and for young, urban, cosmopolitan professionals. The result, I argue, is a mythic narrative that manufactures a cosmopolitan imagined community that strongly identifies with (a flattened conception of) a nation through selective use of mythology and a ‘global’ culture through shared consumption of cultural codes and products.

Retelling Indian History

Rossella Ciocca, Università degli Studi di Napoli “L'Orientale”

“Hearts of Darkness” in Shining India. Narrations of insurgency in the North-East

Basically a coinage of convenience, the term ‘Northeast’, figures in contemporary consciousness either as an area of secluded natural sanctuaries or as a treacherous land of insurgency and guerrilla warfare. A number of recent mainstream novels have chosen to variously address the recent past of West Bengal and the neighboring multi-ethnic mosaic of the so called Seven Sisters, trying to recover memories of the critical 60’s and 70’s, and partly 80’s, when the springing up of ethno-

nationalist and communalist and politically extremist movements provoked an answer of growing militarization by the Indian State. The retrieval, in form of fiction, of personal testimonies of those terrible years, full of horrors and sufferings, shed light upon a dramatic past and reshape through literature an alternative historical archive, also able to disturb the Indian contemporary image of neo-liberal, globalized super power. When, in the aftermath of Independence and Partition, the new independent state tried to convert eccentric not-yet-national borderlands into state-controlled areas, Delhi's failure to control the Northeastern regions, transformed that area into an increasingly disenfranchised conflictual zone. The even more complex issues underlying the Naxalite movement originated in West Bengal, such as poverty and inequality and caste violence and the snatching away of tribal lands, instead of eliciting a political satisfactory answer by the central state, likewise provoked a strategy of purely military intervention which ended in fostering even more resistance among the local populations supported at the time by urban elites. All this constitute the background of a series of recent novels which share the consideration of a biased and prejudiced present as originated in those dramatic years. These narratives of trauma and disenchantment with state policies and discourses of 'progress' and 'development' deeply question the India Shining rhetoric and unveil an underpinning discourse of internal colonialism still going on. My paper will refer to the following novels: Neel Mukherjee's, *The Lives of Others* (2014); Jumpa Lahiri's, *The Lowland* (2013); Siddhartha Deb's, *Surface* (2005); and possibly also Italo Spinelli's movie *Gangor* (2010) from Mahasweta Devi's novella *Choli ke Pichhe* (1996).

Louise FitzGerald, University of Brighton

"India is what you bring to it": Recycling the Raj, Colonial Nostalgia and The Exotic Marigold Hotel

India has long been a hotspot in the UK's cultural imagination, indeed some of the UK's most cherished and acclaimed screen texts like David Lean's 1947 *A Passage To India*; ITV's television drama *The Jewel in The Crown* (1984), Richard Attenborough's film *Ghandi* (1982) and the

problematic but very popular BBC sitcom *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* suggests that the British have a relationship with the real and an imaginary India that far exceeds the history of colonial rule. In more recent years British popular culture has returned to India and to Indian culture for inspiration, producing a gamut of programmes and films including Channel 4's lavishly produced *Indian Summer* (2015), *Monsoon Wedding* (Nair:2002), *Bride and Prejudice* (Chadha: 2004), Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) and the remarkably and surprisingly successful films *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel* and *The Second Best Marigold Hotel* (Madden: 2011, 2015). And, as I write this abstract, the BBC has just announced its *India Season*, a programme of musicals, films and documentaries billed as a celebration of the cultural diversity of India. With so many official presentations on India within the British popular cultural context, this paper seeks to explore how British screen culture and especially the *Marigold Hotel* franchise negotiates the tensions between Old and New India. I want to suggest that rather than showcasing the burgeoning economic, political and cultural power of New India *The Marigold Hotel* serves as an extremely romantic rendering of colonial nostalgia and as such takes its place in a market that Paul Gilroy has claimed is filled with 'a certain kind of nostalgic folie de grandeur' that works to mask the pathology of postcolonial melancholia.

Fashioning Indian Women

Lipi Begum, University of the Arts London

Besharmii Bras: Fashioning Resistance in Delhi and Bombay

Various scholars (Banaji 2006; Dwyer 2001; Wilkinson-Weber 2014) have analysed the meanings of western outer-clothes worn by women in India, however these studies seldom discuss the semi-hidden bra. Whereas the panty through the 'Pink Chaddis' campaign has been used as a symbolic tool of female power and resistance in India, the power meanings of the bra remain ambiguous. Bras have not been discussed as symbolic markers of female empowerment like chaddis, nor can be

assumed objects of male oppression as in the history of western feminism.

In this paper I explore the bra and its proximity to young (18–24 year olds) urban Indian women's bodies; the ambiguity of its hidden yet publicly viewed nature which discloses tensions of the sexualised female body and changing ideals of Indian femininities that outer western garments cannot always reveal (Fields 2007; Sukumar 2007). I discuss how the bra lends insight into Indian women's bodies as paradoxical spaces of public and private power as India begins to rapidly urbanise. A power-play between that of an increase in the moral policing of urban Indian women's sartorial identities and the emerging bi-cultural youth identities (Ghadially 2007) resisting these moral codes of dressing.

Taken from primary researchii undertaken for a wider interpretivist study between 2010–2014. I discuss how the bra in India centres on the discourse of shame and the anxieties of western modernity recycled from the Indian independence movement. Through a Foucauldian (1988) analysis of power, I reveal how these patriarchal codes of shame are being challenged by the complex power meanings young urban Indian women attach to their bras.

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i i Without shame. Borrowed from the Besharmi morchas (anti-rape/women's rights protests) which will be used to contextualise the non-western feminist power meanings of the bra.

ii Qualitative interviews, focus groups, online and offline semi-structured surveys, participant observation

Chris Verschooten. KU Leuven '

"Sexualization" and conspicuous consumption on Verve magazine covers: A visual content analysis and semiotic interpretation of Verve covers 2004-2012.

This paper examines the representation of women on Verve covers over an eight year period. Verve is an Indian women's magazine launched in 1995, targeting young women from the urban upper middle class, and modeled on Western magazines, such as Vogue and W. The visual content analysis encompasses eighty-nine covers of Verve, published between 2004 and 2012. Eighteen variables were inductively selected for the analysis, with each variable consisting of a series of values. These were then subjected to quantification.

The results of this study show that, in a relatively short span of time, the portrayal of women on the cover of Verve has changed. The Verve woman has become a fashion icon. Her outfit has become more Western, her hairstyle more sophisticated, her skin tone lighter, and her age has decreased. Between 2004 and 2012, Verve gradually revealed larger parts of the female body, and put more emphasis on fashion. The Verve woman thus became more 'sexualized' and a model for conspicuous consumption. The covers also reflected, through their emphasis on conspicuous consumption, a neo-liberal worldview.