

I INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

PRECARITY, POPULISM AND
POST-TRUTH POLITICS

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BOOKLET OF ABSTRACTS





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PLENARY LECTURES

Elleke Boehmer, Oxford University, UK

Reading Protest: Postcolonial Poetics Today

The paper will explore reading as itself a resistance practice, in a field, the postcolonial, that has in the past often assumed that the interrogation of colonial, postcolonial or indeed post-truth conditions arises from what is represented *in* the text, rather than from the reader's engagement *with* the text. I will consider those forms that may stimulate and guide such resistant reading, including what I call the poetics of juxtaposition and confrontation, but also effects of persistence, continuation, and endurance, effects that are reinforced and enhanced through the operation of various diachronic techniques. I will demonstrate these ideas through readings of poetry by Serote and Putuma and short stories by divers hands.

Tabish Khair, Aarhus University, Denmark

Fictions, Facts and Post-Truth

The talk will look at 'post-truth' as a consequence of traditional concepts of fixed truths and the contemporary failure to distinguish between relativism and contextualisation. It will then discuss the impact of digitalisation on culture and politics, leading to a precarious scenario where people can talk of a 'post-truth' age. Finally, it will argue that an engagement with literature, along with a contentious definition of it, is essential to any bid to find a way out.

PARALLEL SESSIONS

Sara Al Harfan and Farah Hamdy, American University of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates

Sweden: The Rise and the Influence of the Sweden Democrats

Though right-wing populism has recently been on the rise in Western Europe, Sweden is often considered an outlier of this trend. Historically, its political environment failed to foster right-wing successes on the national level. However, Sweden has ceased to be the exception to the rule. The increased influence of the Sweden Democrats (SD) has reversed this trend. Initially, theories have mostly relied on what is referred to as demand side explanations to explain the success of radical right-wing parties. However, these explanations have produced contradicting results. Much of the recent literature has instead relied on supply side explanations. David Art (2011), for example, examines the rise of the radical right through an agency based approach. However, this approach alone is also insufficient. This paper builds on Art's argument to explain the rise of the radical right in Sweden by including demand side explanations. The argument we make is threefold: (1) that while the SD's historical legacy hindered its rise, its organizational development effectively distanced the party from its past and pushed it towards electoral success; (2) that because of recent sociocultural and socioeconomic changes to Swedish society, the SD's politicization of immigration has become increasingly salient among voters. This change coupled with the already existing Swedish civic patriotism has created a space for the SD to exist in; and (3) that although the political environment's reaction to the SD has been predominately negative, the party's influence and leverage in the current parliament has been steadily growing.

Claude Barbre, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, USA

The Precarity of Relational Ontology: Traumatic Whataboutery in Discerning Authority, Authoritarianism, and Autonomy in an Age of Populism and Post-Truth Politics
(VIRTUAL MODALITY)

Judith Butler remarked that "precarity designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support more than others, and becomes differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (2015). She underscores that identity politics has "failed to provide an understanding of what it means, politically, to live together across differences often in circumstances of unchosen proximity" (2015). Thus, she combines the theoretical frameworks of performativity and precarity to consider how the right to appear provides a basis for a new coalitional framework. As Mari Ruti points out, Butler prompts us to become increasingly aware of "the biopolitical and necropolitical power structures that distribute precariousness unevenly, so that some individuals and populations are much more precarious than others." Despite Butler's aims at a more just world, Ruti wonders if Butler "replaces the metaphysical model of subjectivity as autonomous and self-generating with a psychoanalytic model of relational ontology," underscoring that her departure from the humanist subject in turn neutralizes her capacity to speak to the complexities of acute traumatization. Autonomy becomes ethically questionable in Butler's argument, and drawing from Levinas's notion that we are irrevocably responsible for the other regardless of how this other behaves, deconstructs self-responsibility. How do we then understand the nature of authority and autonomy in the face of traumatic

identifications and cultural transmissions? In this presentation, considering Butler's writing on precarity and relational ontology, and Ruti's exploration of traumatization and autonomy, we will add to the conversation a discussion of traumatic whataboutery—a term used to define how trauma can trump the political in conflicted societies, especially in terms of how symptoms of trauma can orchestrate the undercurrents of policy goals and politics—in particular, as we will argue, in contemporary examples of populism and post-truth mystifications. If trauma whataboutery is premised on the denial of the truths of the other as a way to highlight the innocence and moral integrity of one's own experience, then how does this dynamic inform the incapacity of an ethno-national group, as a direct result of its own historical trauma, to empathize with the suffering of another group? In short, we will see how traumatic whataboutery, as well as identifications with the oppressor, tend to colonize the political space, as evidenced by the rise of nationalistic and populist defenses against historical trauma that also distort distinctions between authority, autonomy, and authoritarianism in a post-truth zeitgeist.

Nancy Batty, Red Deer College, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada

“Courteously as to the person, ferociously as to the thought”: Rushdie’s Brief on American Civil Discourse in Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights

The story that Rushdie tells in the awkwardly titled *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* begins almost a thousand years ago on the Iberian Peninsula: “In the year 1195, the great philosopher Ibn Rushd, once the Qadi, or judge, of Seville and most recently the personal physician to the Caliph Abu Yusuf Yaqub in his hometown of Cordoba, was formally discredited and disgraced on account of his liberal ideas” (5). Told from the perspective of a highly rational civilization existing approximately one thousand years from our own time, it recounts the events of a period known as the “Strangenesses,” a remarkable period of godly—or ungodly?—war on earth that resurrects the intellectual feud between philosophers Ibn Rushd and Ghazali of Tus. The period of the Strangenesses lasts, of course, exactly 1001 nights, and, though it erupts in Spain when the remains of the two philosophers are disturbed by a powerful jinni, it plays itself out primarily in early 21st Century New York City.

Because the historical debate that is resurrected in this novel pits science against faith, logic against unreason, and fear against love, it is easy to draw a parallel between Rushdie's own experiences following the publication of *The Satanic Verses* and the cataclysmic events of the Strangenesses. The historic Ibn Rushd, once a “favorite of the Caliph,” was, after all, “formally discredited and disgraced on account of his liberal ideas,” his “writing ... banned and his books burned” (5). But I want to claim here that, in this novel, Rushdie also extends his critique of American rage and unreason, a fierce, if at times equivocal, brief that the author undertook shortly after his migration from London to New York City. The second (or third, if we count *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*) of Rushdie's New York trilogy (or tetralogy, if we also count *The Golden House*), *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* clearly has its finger on the pulse of what book reviewer Paul Taunton describes as “the hysteria [that] was already in place” before Donald Trump's victory in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

In this novel, published in 2015, Rushdie registers the precarity of a society so distracted, so fearful, and so accelerated that it cannot see the “approaching doom” wrought by unreason (136). Yet the novel's title, awkward as it is, gives us hope that this interregnum cannot last: “Unreason defeats itself...by reason of its unreasonableness. Reason may catnap for a time, but the irrational is more often comatose. In the end it will be the irrational that is forever caged in dreams, while reason gains the day” (139-40).

Manuel Bermúdez Vázquez, University of Córdoba, Spain

The New Barbarians and the Lack of Critical Thinking: The Risks behind the Post-Truth Concept

A new concept has arisen in the last years and it is not “post-truth”. We are talking about the “new barbarians”. It is not difficult to define them. A new barbarian is someone between 15 and 50 years old, someone who does not read newspapers, who does not listen to the radio but to hear fragments of songs, someone who does not care about culture or politics, to sum up, a new barbarian is someone who not only is an ignorant, but also someone who also flaunts his ignorance. The real problem behind this question is that the new barbarian is not an executioner, is a victim. A victim unarmed in front of the demagogic and populist speech that is becoming more frequent in our societies every day. The only solution we find in this context to face such a threat for democracy is a recovery of critical thinking, the most powerful tool we have to strengthen our values and our societies. As Albus Dumbledore said: “Words are the most powerful magic”.

Souradip Bhattacharyya, National University of Singapore, Republic of Singapore

“Don’t we have the right towards healthy life?”: The Precarity of Sanitation Politics Affecting the Everyday Life of the Migrant Workers of Serampore

“We too deserve to live in a clean environment and under good sanitary conditions and not suffer from dengue, malaria, or dysentery. We may have migrated to Serampore as workers, but we have equal rights towards living like the Bengalis” said Toofani Shaw, a Bihari resident of India Jute Mill quarter no. 18, in an interview at Serampore on 6th November, 2016. What Toofani was referring to was a precarity historically induced by the resident upper-caste Bengali communities and local governing bodies at Serampore in the everyday modes and conditions of living of the working class migrants. From 1856 (as part of colonial India) to the present day, Serampore as a significant contributor to India’s thriving jute economy, has functioned as everyday living space for migrant workers and their families. In the study of India’s labour history Serampore holds a significant place in contrast to other industrial towns because it has given rise to heterogeneous neighbourhoods where the working class migrants from various states of India have historically coexisted with local middle class Bengalis. However, such coexistence has been fraught with partiality on the part of the local government in favour of the living conditions of the Bengalis, and also on the part of the Bengalis to materially and symbolically exclude the migrants from a healthy spatial environment. For instance, on one hand the local governing bodies materially design the neighbourhood spaces in ways that push the working class residents of mill quarters towards diseased spaces produced out of lack of proper drainage systems and precariously unsanitary conditions of living. On the other hand, the Bengalis have also strived to exclude the working class migrants from clean spaces within the same neighbourhood by using the area near the working class quarters for dumping garbage. Thus, through the process of driving the garbage or ‘waste’ out of the private space of the Bengali household and a limited area surrounding it, it is driven into the lived spaces of the migrants. The migrant is therefore metaphorically constructed as similar form of ‘waste’ that is affecting the cultural heritage of Serampore and should therefore be excluded from neighbourhood social spaces. Such practices of populism that bind the local governing body of Serampore with its Bengali residents in their implementation of exclusionary strategies have risen out of a sense of nostalgia about a past when the migrants would remain docile under Bengali cultural

domination in contrast to present situations when through education they take initiatives to voice their demands. The aim of this paper is to portray and analyse—through an ethno-historical study of the sanitary conditions of such heterogeneous neighbourhoods of Serampore—the practices through which precarity is induced in the everyday life of the migrant workers of Serampore and also how exclusionary strategies play an operative role in constructing neighbourhood boundaries and ‘other-ing’ the migrants from neighbourhood sociality.

Lara Buxbaum, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

“The other side of the door”: Untruths, Effacement and Migration in The Thunder that Roars

Imran Garda’s 2014 novel, *The Thunder that Roars*, was a joint winner of the Olive Schreiner award for Prose. The narrative present is 2011 to 2012 and the plot is centrally concerned with the global events of these years. It is set in the aftermath of the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi, the death of Gaddafi and the subsequent political instability in Libya. The humanitarian crisis in Syria, the new global migration routes and journalistic integrity are key concerns of the novel. It explores how refugee narratives are fictionalized, represented and consumed or obscured in the international media landscape.

Garda’s protagonist, Yusuf Carrim is a Muslim South African journalist living in Brooklyn, emboldened by hubris, charm and social media savvy. He is an arch dissembler and his articles on Syria rely on hearsay and unreliable sources; his prime goal is to increase the number of his twitter followers. He returns to Johannesburg to assist in the search for Samuel Ndebele, a Zimbabwean who worked as his family’s gardener. Seduced by promises of lucrative employment, Sam has disappeared into Libya. Thus begins what is at once a trans-continental quest narrative and a revelation of the precarity of the lives of primarily Zimbabwean migrants subject to xenophobia, exploitation and poverty. Yusuf’s search ultimately leads to his detention in an immigrant centre in Lampedusa. Upon his release, Yusuf is improbably celebrated as an activist journalist, “directing the arrow of truth, shot by Bouazizi” (Garda 2014:198), while Sam’s story is subsumed into others—made absent and unknowable—so that the ordinary lives of the privileged continue unperturbed.

This paper presents a reading of the novel focusing on the disparate fates, and public faces, of Yusuf and Sam. *The Thunder that Roars* is invested in testing “the limits of a publicly acknowledged field of appearance” (Butler 2004: xviii) while illustrating the contrasting routes of circulation of images of Yusuf and Sam. The several narrative strands and perspectives provoke an assessment of multiple “truths” and ensure that at least the novel is hospitable to marginalized characters, in a way that the xenophobic South African body politic has failed to be.

Elena Cantueso Urbano, University of Málaga, Spain

Marginalised Individual Voices Contesting Precarity through Literature; Survivors of Ireland’s Magdalene Asylums in O’Beirne’s A Childhood Hell inside the Magdalen Laundries (2005) and June Goulding’s The Light in the Window (1998)

Crowding Ireland since the late eighteenth century until the 1990s, reformatory institutions hosted thousands of marginal members of society on the grounds of national security; first alluding to the danger posed by the contagion of venereal diseases and later to the need for preserving a respectable image of the country. A strict disciplinary system based on sexual repression characterised Catholic Ireland which confined those whose morality was

questionable in order to be spiritually reformed. In reality, the assignment of vulnerability to this group by humanitarian governmental groups caused their precarisation (Butler et al. 5). Almost two centuries have passed until the cruel methods used to that reformatory end have been discovered. Throughout all these years, the voices of those survivors have been silenced but they have progressively been heard. As Butler claims, social and political beings are produced, recognised and represented by power but those excluded from the social system fail to be represented and to be considered human (*Precarious Life* 147). Thanks to different organisations, the government of Ireland has taken measures to compensate the victims of conservative Ireland. Yet, in 2017 the Justice for Magdalenes organization is still claiming justice and compensation for those who have fallen out of the scope of the government's compensation scheme. Little by little, new voices are emerging puzzling out the enigmas of a distorted past. In this task, literature, in the form of autobiographies, has enabled some victims of abuse to make their story public. Two of these examples are June Gouilding's *The Light in the Window* and Kathy O'Beirne's *Kathy's Story. A Childhood Hell inside the Magdalen Laundries*. In the first novel we find the testimony of a direct witness who experienced the cruel regime thousands of fallen women endured. In the second novel we hear Kathy's voice, a Magdalene survivor who, in her forties, comes to terms with her past seeking justice and compensation.

My intention in this paper is to delve into a life of incarceration and abuse from the perspective of the sufferer to see how these testimonies have contested the official truth offered by the Irish government and the Catholic Church challenging the power discourse which silenced them. Finally, I will explore these women's motivation to write these books as a proof of the censoring attitude of the state and the Church concerning Magdalene asylums.

Sara Casco Solís, University of Salamanca, Spain

Dehumanizing "the Other": The Effects of Power on Non-Status Migrants in Lawrence Hill's The Illegal

Are asylum seekers and refugees treated as human beings when crossing the border? Since these people do not possess the legal status that allows them to live permanently in a country, they are considered "non-status migrants" (Nyers 126). For this reason, the above question is almost ignored nowadays, despite the fact that history has been defined by the continuous flow of people from one country and continent to another. However, a desire to secure the integrity of a nation has resulted in the construction of indivisible lines of demarcation which attempt to define and guarantee a fixed and stable identity, creating thus a sense of exclusion and fear of "the Other."

This paper will focus on Lawrence Hill's *The Illegal* (2015) as a contemporary narrative which presents a stateless adolescent deprived of his human rights after crossing the border and who is striving to survive in a country where he feels out of place. It is then my aim to highlight the role of literature in tackling issues of utmost currency, conveying the situation of stateless people who are deprived of their human rights after crossing the border.

With this aim in mind, I will analyze how language is used by institutions of power to categorize individuals as a way of exerting control over them. In focusing on the analysis of these dominant discourses, it will be possible to unravel the feelings of alienation and exclusion produced in non-status migrants, who, as a consequence, are forced to survive under precarious conditions that lead them to recreate their idea of "home" in the spaces of supermodernity, that is, *non-places*. To carry out this examination, I will rely on the theories of critics such as Michel Foucault and Marc Augé.

Claire Chambers, University of York, UK

***The State We're In: Precarity, Populism, and Resistance in Global Higher Education*
(VIRTUAL MODALITY)**

This paper opens with discussion of movements originating in South African higher education, such as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall; the US-originated Black Lives Matter; and agitation against Narendra Modi's Hindutva BJP government's vicious and autocratic stance towards artists, intellectuals, dissenters, and minorities in India.

This time of tension and uncertainty for universities seems an appropriate moment to reflect on global higher education. In the paper I argue that higher education needs to decolonize, rather than just diversify. Learning from critical race theory and critical race feminism, racism needs to be recognized as pervading every aspect of society. We are all implicated in it and should be critically self-reflexive, looking to challenge systematic inequality, rather than individualistically seeking to prove that our teaching and research is somehow 'colour-blind'.

I will argue that postcolonial perspectives should form a central part of degree courses, instead of being taught as a separate literary silo. Mutual, rather than unidirectional, transformation should come out of postcolonial, world, or global literatures. Postcolonial and mainstream literature shouldn't just cosily coexist alongside each other, sharing common themes. Put simply, a sense of change and development to the core of English literature, and not just its 'margins', is paramount. Gender is also an area of inequality in higher education I discuss, particularly in relation to the sexual harassment of young female students by older male academics.

Moving next to the state of higher education in Turkey and Pakistan, Turkey's particular precarity followed the failed coup attempt against President Tayyip Erdoğan in July 2016 and subsequent emergency rule. The country's state of exception has had a drastic impact on academia, with lecturers' overseas travel suspended, forced resignations, and ongoing purges. In Pakistani scholarship, there is little freedom of expression or thought. Many universities in Pakistan control what is worn by students through stringent dress codes; controversial talks find themselves summarily cancelled; outspoken intellectuals are attacked by online trolls and smeared in fallacious articles, and protest movements do not even get off the ground.

I conclude by averring that there is a pressing need to divest universities of racism, casteism, classism, sexism, and other oppressive forces. Education is part of the problem, but it can also spearhead the solution. As Kenyan author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o argues, we need to decolonize our minds.

Dima Barakat Chami, University of Leeds, UK

***Cosmopolitan Refugees?: Interstitial Human/Rights and Biopolitical Resistance in Chris Abani's*
*Graceland***

This paper explores the intersections of human rights discourse and cosmopolitanism as they contribute to our working frameworks and conceptualisations of human/being. Biopolitical readings of migrant postcolonial African narratives map shadow 'cosmopolitan' movements which elucidate the contentions and discrepancies inherent in human rights' exclusionary practice of scripting citizenship. Because the human rights regime is complicit with the political and socio-economic institutions of Western modernity, its universal rhetoric has been a catalyst for hegemonic imaginations of the cosmopolitan figure—easily identified but also often contested—due to the closely related forces of globalisation, migration and

nationalism. There is a legal split between the Human understood by human rights rhetoric—the human of the Enlightenment who is born with inherent and inalienable rights—and the legal human, that is the political person who may claim these rights as the enfranchised citizen of a nation-state. In light of the failure of nation-states, I question whether those who exist in the interstices of the global order can in fact be cosmopolitans, albeit reluctant or ‘illegal’ cosmopolitans. With a focus on the historical demolition of the Makoko slum in Lagos and its fictional representations through an analysis of Chris Abani’s *Graceland* (2004), I argue for the subversive postcolonial novel’s ability to elucidates this contention perfectly as a narrative form which casts the nation state and its subjects in direct opposition. Abani posits his characters in the gap between the legal person who may claim rights, and the human subject in whom they are inherent and inalienable. This irreducible interstice becomes a necessary site of exclusion where the inequalities which categorise the legal and political human rights regime may be accounted for. I argue that the mere existence of this interstice challenges the authority which is pivotal to the nation-state, and moves beyond its limits by inaugurating alternative notions of human/rights.

Bianca Cherechés, University of Zaragoza, Spain

A Portrait of Untouchability

The issues of subalternity, marginality, poverty, and economic and social inequality are deeply connected with the concept of caste discrimination in contemporary India, a characteristic of a bygone era which is persistent in the Indian society. Thus, this paper attempts to analyse these contentious issues using as a basis Mulk Raj Anand’s novel *Untouchable* focusing on how Anand’s novel tackles the hurdles of the Hindu caste system and the social oppression endorsed by Hindu history and imposed on the Dalit community, also known as ‘untouchables’. The object of discussion will be some of the most outstanding issues displayed throughout the novel, such as the problem of inter/intra caste inequality, the cyclical and generational oppression, the burden of untouchability, the influence of the Western culture and the idea of escapism from a critical perspective. Moreover, the notion of pollution, defilement and contamination, together with the manner in which untouchables identify themselves in society, will also be tackled. Some trauma theories, along with the ideas put forward by some contemporary Dalit writers and critics, will be used in order to delve into all of these issues and find out to what extent the situation depicted by Anand still persists in nowadays’ India.

Baishali Choudhuri, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

“Pinjra Tod”: A Precarity of Gender Discrimination through Heterotopic Time/Spaces of University Residential Setups

This paper is an attempt to understand the movement of immigrant girl students called the “Pinjra Tod” [Cage Break] in the residential blocks of University campuses which took off on the 10th of August, 2015 from Jamia Milia Islamia through an anonymous letter to the Vice Chancellor. This movement thereafter spread across universities as a kind of embodied occupy time/space movement through online campaigns as they all address curfew timings, restricted access to spaces and general gender based discrimination. All the girls in question are the non-resident Indian and/or international students who live in the hostels and have restricted access to university and public spaces as they are strictly watched over by the university administration and their representatives such as warden, watchman or other kinds

of gatekeepers. Precarity therefore would be informed by their restricted access within campus and in public spaces beyond prescribed timings. The time/spaces which are broken are the university hostels, libraries and general time/spaces for girls inside the campus gates, and the occupied ones are the prohibited outside time/spaces across the gates. The gates draw the borders in terms of a limited and prescribed time and space watched over by wardens, cameras and also societal norms. It would thereafter explore how hostels, university spaces and the outside public spaces for girls juxtapose both a heterotopia of crisis and a heterotopia of deviation with its ultimate aim to create a heterotopia of ritual by making them increasingly foreboding and impenetrable. The gates become the in-between time/space of transition which are pushed, pulled and attempted to be climbed over as a physical and symbolic material border by the girls who are enclosed within. The word “Pinjra Tod” [Cage Break] as an idea and a practice challenges this border while calling out for freedom from imprisonment and vigilance. In a metaphoric sense, this cage break also reminiscences general conflicts of belonging and gendered identity as they dream of an idealised ‘inside/outside’ rid of apparatuses of control of their bodies and minds. The paper will use media, social media and forums of public and academic debate as primary texts for the purpose.

Roger Davis, Red Deer College, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada

Capitalism, Cannibalism, and Mental Health

Both academic and popular discourses often create a metaphorical relationship between cannibalism and consumerism, likening the savage appetite of the cannibal to the unrestrained purchasing power of the consumer. This paper will argue that a more appropriate metaphor for consumer culture is autophagy, or self-eating, rather than cannibalism.

Reading both consumer culture and cannibalism as examples of disordered appetite, this paper will examine additional disorders, specifically those of mental health including addiction, eating disorders, and depression, to position the patient of mental illness as an internal object of consumption of capitalist culture.

Drawing upon the work of Bruce K. Alexander, Maud Ellmann, Mark Fisher, Gabor Mate, Gene Heyman, and Crystal Bartolovich, this paper will examine the different interpretations, arguments, and metaphors associated with mental health, cannibalism, and consumer culture. Distinguishing between the competing contributing factors of the biopsychosocial understanding of mental health, the paper will parse, for example, arguments about the etiology of addiction from rational choice (Heyman) to psychological trauma (Mate) to sociological pressures (Alexander).

By analyzing the patient as a part of a larger capitalist system, the paper will argue that the patient is an integral part of the system for purposes of exploitation rather than treatment or prevention. For example, Bartolovich argues that Marxism refrains from deploying the metaphor of cannibalism in its analysis of capital precisely because the worker must not be entirely used up by capitalism: it must continue to produce. Therefore, autophagy as a process of regeneration, recycling, and renewal is a more appropriate, although still unsettling, metaphor for capitalist culture’s approach to addressing mental illness. In other words, capitalism itself is a disordered appetite that thrives upon the pathologies of its own internal constituents.

Lidia De Michelis and Roberto Pedretti, Università degli Studi of Milan, Italy

“Jez We Can”: Jeremy Corbyn and the Return of the Radical Imagination

According to recent academic research (see, among others, the London School of Economics, Birkbeck—University of London Media Reform Association report authored by Cammaers *et al.*), English media showed a strong tendency to misrepresent Jeremy Corbyn’s message. Misrepresentation and hostility coalesced to represent Corbyn’s message as “extremist”, “far-left”, “hard-core”. Irrespective of such negative campaign, Corbyn’s popularity grew among grassroots, sympathizers and youngsters. The first part of the paper aims to investigate the cultural and political dynamics and core strategy underlying Corbyn’s unexpected success and popularity. In particular, the paper will highlight the ways in which Corbyn’s success may be understood as responding to the need of new form of political participation and new counter-narratives contrasting the dominant neo-liberal paradigm.

In the second part of the paper, the focus will switch from political and media theory and radical and grassroots discourses and imaginaries to consider the current re-emergence, in literary works as well as in popular cultural expressions and art-forms, of a coterminous return to the radical imagination and the (tentative) opening up of narrative scenarios of hope which may also be approached as forms of resistant practice. Attention will be paid to recent works such as, among others, Anthony Cartwright’s *The Cut* (2017), a “diamond-sharp novella” (Cook 2017) explicitly commissioned by Peirene Press in order to address the condition of Brexit Britain, the play *My Country; a work in progress: in the words of people across the UK* by Carol Ann Duffy and Rufus Norris (2017), also exploring the divide mirrored by the vote for Brexit, and Simon L. Baxter’s *Jeremy and Corbyn: A Post-Truth Novel* (2017).

Jorge Diego Sánchez, University of Salamanca, Spain

From Emperor to Beggar: What Makes Precarity in Mallikarjan B. Mulimami’s Dams across the Flow?

Mallikarjan B. Mulimami’s *Dams across the Flow* describes how the character of Sharanu grows up in an Indian Village and how he relates to nature, religion and castes by building two dams that aim at assuring the separation of three different natural, religious and social realms. The novel, written “experimenting with a new kind of novel” (Rao 5) displays the different ways in which Sharanu, during and after constructing these structures, fails to social, religious and material limits to become a precarious “beggar” (Mulimami 32) that depends upon others to relate to a natural realm that had previously made him an “emperor” (Mulimami 21) of himself.

The following paper aims at explaining how Mulimami portrays the concept of precarity, both spiritually and materially connected, in the ways the character of Sharanu relates, hinges on and is used by social and religious dogmas that turn him from emperor to beggar. Here, it is my purpose to use Affect Theory (Mankekar; Ahmed) to unveil how Mulimami describes the fear felt by Sharanu as main source of the precarity that menaces not only his spirit but the future of his community. After, I will study how Mulimami’s metaphorical book describes that precarity can be overcome once the human being realises about the limiting social and religious structures that, in an Indian rural environment such as Sharanu’s village, make one beg too much and subvert too little.

Alberto Fernández-Carbajal, University of Roehampton, London, UK

Popular Reinterpretations of the Qur'an as a Post-Truth Emancipatory Theology: An Examination of Queer Exegesis in the Fiction of Rabih Alameddine, Randa Jarrar and Saleem Haddad

In our global age, Salafi and Wahabbi understandings of the Qur'an have become almost synonymous with mainstream Islam. In my paper, I will reference the latest surge in queerfriendly interpretations of the Qur'an, such as those of Scott Kugle (2010), Samar Habib (2007; 2010) and Amanullah De Soudy (2013) through their irreverent implementation in the long and short fiction of Lebanese-American novelist and artist Rabih Alameddine, Palestinian-American writer Randa Jarrar, and Kuwaiti-Canadian-British writer Saleem Haddad, all of whom question the heterosexist interpretation of the holy scripture.

My paper will suggest that one of the more optimistic aspects of the concept of 'post-truth' is the relativisation of the religious text and its popular reinterpretation, which has led to a queer emancipatory theology contesting the authority of conservative and invariably heteronormative Islamic commentators. My paper will explore exegetical irreverence in Alameddine's novel *KOOLAIDS: The Art of War* (1998), Randa Jarrar's short story collection *Him, Me, Muhammad Ali* (2016), and Saleem Haddad's novel *Guapa* (2016). I will show how Alameddine's quasi-prophetic narrator Muhammad, a Muslim man dying during the AIDS crisis, defies mainstream interpretation of the story of Lot and the alleged condemnation of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their homosexuality. I will also illustrate the way Randa Jarrar's story 'Building Girls', collected in *Him, Me, Muhammad Ali*, playfully questions the Qur'an condemnation of lesbianism. Finally, I will suggest *Guapa* also defies the homophobic interpretation of Lot's story within the subversive spaces of a Middle-Eastern gay club.

These three texts will allow me to make a case for the queer reappropriation of the text of the Qur'an in subversive queer spaces and through unorthodox same-sex relationships. Whereas the concepts of post-truth and populism have been often used to mourn the resurgence of dictatorial discursive practices and right-wing ideologies, I will suggest that popular and post-truth concepts can be enlisted by queer artists and critics in order to create emancipatory theologies that can free queer subjects from the discursive shackles of heteropatriarchy.

Ana María Fraile-Marcos, University of Salamanca, Spain

Indigenous Cosmovisions vs. Populism, Post-Truth Politics and the Corporative Quest for Energy in Thomas King's The Back of the Turtle

The precarity of Indigenous nations in North America has always gone hand in hand with populist discourses on the part of the settler polities that displaced, racialized, dehumanized and marginalized them. The Western narratives of modern progress and Christian 'true' religion greatly contributed to justify genocidal policies of eugenics and assimilation of 'The Indian' that also aimed to suppress the Indigenous cosmovisions that did not accord with the project of Modernity, colonization and exploitation of the 'new' land. Since their 'encounter' with Europeans, Native peoples in the Americas have actively resisted their physical and cultural annihilation, claiming their human and land rights and contesting and struggling against the irresponsible extractivist thrust of modern capitalism that threatens not just their own survival, but all forms of life and the planet.

This paper analyses Thomas King's latest novel, *The Back of the Turtle* (2014), which won the 2014 Governor General's Award for English-language Fiction, from the perspective of two contraposed forms of resilience: the resilience of post-truth politics versus that of Indigenous cosmovisions in the era of hegemonic neoliberal ideology. I argue that King's work of fiction

contributes to alert the general public about the populist and post-truth strategies that manage to coopt the unprecedented technological and scientific advances and put them to the service of the greed of unfettered late capitalism under the pretense that governments and corporative entities act to protect their citizens/customers, disregarding the damage caused to natural, human and non-human ecologies and kinships. One of the relevant questions the novel raises is, can Indigenous epistemologies counteract post-truth politics and offer an alternative view of socio-economic relations that is respectful of all and results in an environmental ethics of care?

Paloma Fresno-Calleja, University of the Balearic Islands, Spain

Precarious Diets: Literary Responses to Gastrocolonial Politics in the Pacific

While still experiencing the consequences of the colonial exploitation of land and resources and the alteration of indigenous food practices as a result of the “gastronomic civilising mission” (Durmelat 2015), from the second half of the twentieth century most Pacific nations have been affected by new forms of gastrocolonialism (Santos Perez, 2013) as a result of the militarization, nuclearisation and environmental degradation of the region. The abandonment of traditional agricultural activities and the adoption of foreign culinary practices, mostly through the consumption of imported and low quality processed foods, has had a drastic effect on most Pacific nations, tragically impacting on people’s health and often putting food security at serious risk. Several Pacific countries regularly feature among the worlds “fattest countries”, due to the extremely high percentages of obesity and its related diseases, mostly diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular problems, affecting Pacific peoples both in their home countries and in diaspora.

The corporate food regime (Plahe, Hawkes and Ponnampertuma 2013) which now dominates food production, exchange and consumption across the Pacific has, in its close adherence to neoliberal principles, favoured foreign imports over local food production. The reverence of fast food and western products, often given as gifts or sent home as remittances by those living in diaspora, reveal anxieties over cultural identity, but also complex affective, social and economic dependencies which are difficult to reject and which contribute to reinforce unhealthy and precarious dietary habits.

My paper addresses a number of quotidian culinary practices as evidence of such ongoing forms of gastrocolonialism and concentrates more specifically on Santos Perez’s third collection of poetry (*from unincorporated territory [guma]*, 2014) as well as on a number of essays published in 2013 under the generic title of “The Decolonial Diet”. Although dealing with the complex and insidious effects of gastrocolonialism in his native Guam (as well as on Hawaii, where he lives), Santos Perez’s work can be read transpacifically as part of a sustained and collective critical intervention into gastrocolonial structures and their effects carried out by other indigenous Pacific writers in their works and food activism.

María Elena Gómez Parra and Cristina A. Huertas Abril, University of Córdoba, Spain

LinguApp: Building a Bridge to the Language Gap

Learning and teaching a second language is nowadays a priority as well as one of the most relevant educational objectives for most international institutions. “Linguistic and cultural diversity is one of the European Union’s major assets,” states Vassiliou, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth. Moreover, the predominance of English in this paradigm is undisputed, as it is the lingua franca for international business, cultural and

academic exchange, and the dissemination of science. The effective and efficient learning of a second language constitutes a foundation of inestimable value to help peoples to live together in peace: “Throughout the last decade, European multilingualism policy has been guided by the objective set by the Barcelona Council of March 2002, which called for the improvement of mastery of basic skills, in particular, by teaching at least two foreign languages from a very early age”, which aligns with the objectives of Horizon 2020. Furthermore, the Preface to the Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe (2012), “The improvement of quality and efficiency of language learning has become one of the key objectives of the Strategic Framework for Education and Training (‘ET 2020’). The framework underlines the necessity to enable citizens to communicate in two languages in addition to their mother tongue, as well as the need to promote language teaching and provide migrants with opportunities to learn the language of the host country”. Therefore, to assure the universal access to second language learning is a priority for most international institutions, but such access is biased by economic and social differences (in terms of possibilities and resources). This phenomenon has been named by Johnson and Zentella (2017) as the ‘language gap’, which “... has spawned multiple scholarly trajectories that aim to point out linguistic inferiorities in characteristics like communicative quality, language processing, and overall health” (p. 1). The main objective of our study is to introduce the foundations of a research project, LinguApp, funded by the Centro de Estudios Andaluces (PRY208/17), whose main goal is to contribute to avoid the language gap. LinguApp, designed and thought as a universal and free app, will contribute to offer the autonomous learner the necessary orientation and counselling for the successful learning of English or Spanish as a second language, contributing thus to minimize the impact of the language gap.

Shilpi Gupta, Master (Gemma-Women and Gender Studies, Erasmus Mundus Scholar, 2016-18) from University of Granada, Spain and University of Bologna, Italy

Negotiation of Un/Belonging within the Conflictive Zone of “Home” and “Homeland” in the Texts of Taslima Nasreen

Border beyond its geographical logic, became a topic of discussion in the post-colonial and transnational studies in the late 20th century which challenged the established notion of nation- state. The metaphorical rhetoric of Border as “Third Space” of Homi K. Bhabha (1990, 1994) and Anzaldúa’s (1987) “Nueva Conciencia Mestiza” allow transnational feminists to enter into the new discourse to rethink not only space like ‘Homeland’ but also smaller spaces like ‘Home’ to understand the presence of silent Borders in the transnational women’ identity. With this understanding, this paper will look into the negotiation of un/belonging of a transnational single woman among ‘homes’—of Others (father, husband and boyfriend) and questioning preconceived constructed identity, role, body and sexuality of a woman. The study focuses on smaller space like home but enter into the discussion of her longing and belonging to the bigger space as ‘(Home)land’ (Susan Strehle 2008). Understanding the difference among cultures, races, ethnicities, colors, religions and regions, etc. among women, this research will base its study on a particular case through a novel *French Lover* (2000). The novel written by Taslima Nasreen, a Muslim Bangladeshi diaspora feminist writer, opens a discussion over homeland as well as home through the protagonist, an Indian middle class married (arranged) to an Indian-French man and migrates to live a married life on Other’s land.

Kata Gyuris, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

Urban Precarity in Contemporary African Diaspora Fiction

The paper engages with the way precarious lives and precarity are represented in contemporary Anglophone and Francophone African diaspora fiction. Through a selection of works (particularly fiction by women writers), I will look at how migration from Africa to Western cities affects one's identity; and the strange, precarious hybridity that comes along with the transnational move.

Judith Butler's concepts of vulnerability, the precariousness of life, and precarity emphasize both the inherent, ontological vulnerability of life, and its economically-socially constructed precarity, especially with regard to African immigrant women's self-representation and self-perception. Butler's approach is ethical, political and social at the same time, allowing for a more fundamental reading of diasporic identities in their relationship to the outside world. In the presentation, I will mostly focus on writings by the Nigerian Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and the Senegalese Fatou Diome, primarily concentrating on how diasporic female communities are created in cities in the United States and France. Adichie's and Diome's works engage with the idea of the precarious liminality that is especially characteristic of urban migratory trends: consequently, both authors designate important Western metropolises as their protagonists' new homes, and they actively engage with the idea of the politically, socially and ontologically vulnerable identities that are formed in migration. The paper will look at how both novels negotiate female identity in the face of predominantly patriarchal cultures where the woman of colour is always forced on the margins of society, and will also scrutinize the myriad ways in which immigrant women of colour are rendered vulnerable. I will argue that the identities of these fictional women might be construed through the undefinedness of their precarious existence, and that for them, it is only possible to gain agency by inscribing themselves into the uniquely abysmal space between their two cultures.

Syed Haider, University of London, UK

A Hauntological Approach to the Presence of Precarity in the Present World

In his review for *The Telegraph* of David Lowry's film *A Ghost Story* (2017), Robbie Collin begins by noting the close relationship that the term 'spectator' has to 'spectre'. This paper uses Lowry's film as a way to reflect upon a world haunted by what Mark Fisher has termed, futures that failed to happen (2014). In so doing, I argue that while the rise of populism today is certainly a reaction to the deeper precarity that pervades contemporary social, economic and political realities, precarity has been reified into a spectre that haunts the present. This is because, as modernity becomes 'liquid' and capitalism more digital, certainty and stability are replaced by a nebulous network of agents and institutions, and conglomerates that outrank nations and nation states. In this context some have already become ghosts like Lowry's nameless protagonist (think of the migrant crisis, victims of the Grenfell tower or those devastated by recent storms), while others stand as spectators in the global mediascape. What haunts the latter is the realisation that when our wealth or well-being has been tied so irrevocably to a capitalism that cannibalises precarity, we teeter on the edge of becoming ghosts ourselves.

Dolores Herrero, University of Zaragoza, Spain

Refugee Narratives in the Post-Truth Era: The Case of Australia

2016 was the year that definitely marked the triumph of the so-called ‘Post-Truth’ era, this being understood as a new phase of political, economic and ideological debate, in which democratic tenets and institutions are being questioned and threatened by a frightful wave of populism. Rationality is being replaced by emotion, diversity by exclusionary nationalisms, and liberty by an insidious rise of autocracy. The practice of politics is no longer regarded as healthy ideological debate, but rather as a zero-sum game, science is perceived with suspicion and disdain and, at the heart of this global trend, is the questioning of the value of truth: honesty and accuracy are no longer considered to be the cornerstone of a civilised society. This is, no doubt, the response to a world of constant uncontrollable changes and structural challenges that have hardly been acknowledged, let alone understood: globalisation and its discontents; unprecedented population mobility, mainly as a result of famine, climate warming, and war conflicts of all kinds; the digital revolution; ever-increasing shady forms of radicalism and terrorism; the hair-raising possibilities of biotechnology advances, etc. In this atmosphere of anxiety and fear, the unrelenting flow of refugees is often seen as a menace to the rule of law and human rights that are concomitant with the western lifestyle. Although 9/11 undoubtedly marked a turning-point, it was since the terrorist attacks recently perpetrated in several European countries that refugees have been falsely accused of having terrorist plans and affiliations. Refugees are no longer regarded as victims, but rather as danger, even potential terrorists, which has led many governments, including the Australian, to detain them indefinitely in detention centres where they are separated from their families and confined in inhuman conditions. Population mobility is not going to decrease, in spite of populist claims to the contrary. What is required is a discourse rooted in confidence rather than tribal fear, one that brings to the fore the humanity of the refugee and the need and benefits of well-managed immigration, one that makes it clear that admission to a country entails responsibilities to integrate as well as rights to be treated unequivocally, not only as a human being, but also as a fully fledged citizen. The aim of this talk will be to show how recently published narratives in Australia on and by refugees, such as *A Country Too Far*, *They Cannot Take the Sky* and *Seabirds Crying in the Harbour Dark*, strive to accomplish this difficult task, very often in the face of increasingly harsh border laws.

Miranda Imperial, HSPS, Queens’ College, University of Cambridge, UK

***Tracing Post-Truth in Recent Cambodian History: A Practice of Life without a Past*
(VIRTUAL MODALITY)**

We seem to have entered a new era in the domain of politics and political communication, a time in which the appeal to truth, accountability and responsibility for actions which have crucial repercussions in people’s, human groups’ and nations’ destinies are no longer ever empirically certain and grounded on a verifiable reality. The time for post-truth and its appeal to emotion, spontaneous responses and impulsive behaviour, is dangerously brought to us in political campaigns, press releases and social media. In any event, this post-truth stage produced by global media, can be traced back to a long trajectory in the history of the twentieth century.

My paper is an attempt to analytically approach the current state of affairs regarding the Cambodian genocide and what appears to be its everlasting aftermath, which produces a traumatic culture of transgenerational haunting (Abraham and Torok, 1994). By recourse to De Certeau’s notion of “tactics”—as determined by “the absence of power” and performed by the disenfranchised (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 1984)—, I will revise and assess to what

extent present day Cambodians can go on sharing a political culture—the young together with the survivors and perpetrators of the country’s dark times—that has never acknowledged any distinction between perpetrators and victims, and has not offered either redress or reconciliation to its people.

It is barely possible to speak of Cambodia as having a “post-factual” political culture, since its government was never interested in getting any facts straight. Forty years after the Cambodian genocide perpetrated by the Khmer rouge, Cambodians are still trying to deal with their history, where memory and the “raw data” of the past are always already politicised.

As it is well known, for a long time, no legal actions were undertaken against the Khmer Rouge for their genocidal actions during the Democratic Kampuchea period. An investigation by the UN resulted in a General Assembly resolution condemning the Khmer Rouge genocide, and a UN-appointed Group of Experts recommended, in 1999, the establishment of an international tribunal outside Cambodia, where it would be shielded from Cambodian politic stresses. The Cambodian government refused this recommendation, favouring instead a mixed tribunal within Cambodia, with international and Cambodian intervention. This court, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), started operations near Phnom Penh in 2006. Its progress has been difficult, and its activity has been limited to just four cases, Cases 001 through 004. Cases 001 and 002 are finished or close to completion¹. Cases 003 and 004 are still under investigation, and are the object of much debate within ECCC and outside². It is clear that the judicial treatment of the Cambodian genocide has been slow, complicated and limited, and because of all these shortcomings, less useful in providing reparations, even moral ones, to the victims.

In my analysis, I will assess both the internal and external (international powers supporting the Khmer Rouge against Vietnam) factors which have contributed to the current situation in Cambodia and produced a history fraught with lacunae, inconsistencies, omissions and unverified facts.

¹ Case 001 resulted in the conviction of Duch, director of the former Tuol Seng (S-21) prison to life imprisonment for crimes against humanity. Case 002, initially involving the foremost remaining Khmer Rouge leaders, Nuon Chea, Khieu Samphan, Ieng Sary and Ieng Thirith, has been restricted to the first two after the death of Ieng Sary and his wife Ieng Thirith was ruled unfit to stand trial. Its first part, Case 002/01 has been finalized, with both defendants being convicted to life imprisonment for crimes against humanity resulting from the forced evacuation of Phnom Penh. Case 002/02, involving charges of genocide committed against the Cham and Vietnamese minorities is on-going.

² These cases involve lower rank Khmer Rouge cadres who ran labour camps or oversaw massacres. There have been allegations of political interference on the part of the Cambodian government to close them (UN 2013).

Paul Jackson, University of Northampton, UK

Discourse of the ‘Lone Wolf’: Precarity and Extremism in the Transnational Mythology of Extreme Right Terror

The language underpinning terrorism and political violence from the extreme right relates to, but is also distinct from, a wider set of populist radical right discourses that play with a politics of precarity in complex ways. Butler’s theme of precarity draws out questions regarding the political formation of threats to social stability and ontological security, often in marginalised communities. Yet the perception of responding to threats to life, and a way of existence being eroded, are also concerns that lie at the core of extreme right ideologies that justify terror. This includes the ‘Lone Wolf’ mythology, fostered by American activists including Tom Metzger and Alex Curtis, that idealises individuals to carry out acts of

terrorism in the name of a wider cause of defending the white race. This paper will interrogate elements of this discourse, as it has been generated, shared and reproduced by extreme right figures across national borders, from the USA and within Europe. Figures radicalised, in part, by variants of this discourse include: Timothy McVeigh, Michael Wade Page, David Copeland, Thomas Mair and Pavlo Lapshyn—all terrorists from the extreme right who succeeded in carrying out deadly attacks. Many more have been drawn to the worldview, yet have either not engaged in violence or have been stopped before they carried out attacks. While much of the current literature focuses on the more pragmatic elements of detecting and stymying such figures, less attention has been given to scrutinising the extremist media they both consume and produce. Through the lens of such cases, this paper will explore such media – both disseminated online and through magazines and other print material. It will interrogate the nature of ‘Lone Wolf’ mythology, and especially explore its function in providing a language of empowerment through the endorsement of violent activism, efforts also designed to overcome a state of perceived precarity. It will also conclude by reflecting on the potential appeal of this ‘extreme’ right through its evocations of a state of precarity to justify action, as well as how it differs from a much more widespread ‘populist’ right while retaining some ‘family relationships’ with this more successful form of radical politics.

**Bootheina Majoul, High Institute of Applied Languages and Computer Sciences of Béja,
University of Jandouba, Tunisia**

***Rushdie’s Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights: On (In)Coherence and
Terror in the Era of Truthiness***

Salman Rushdie’s novels are funny books about serious times. His last story *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* is that of Jinnis out of the bottle circulating in New York. The invasion of the Jinnis and Ifrits lead to chaos and “A tide of terror spread across the city and beyond” (128) in such a point that “The president had no weapons that could deal with the attacker. He had become a president of empty words” (129), while “ordinary civilians lived in a state of innocence, veiling their eyes against truth” because “the world unveiled would scare them, destroy their moral certainties, lead to losses of nerve or retreats into religion or drink” (130). *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* cogitates about an age of colossal fragmentation of reality. It opposes the magic of Jinnis to the Reality of terror of our times. It is indeed a surreal novel, one more dystopian fiction on the absurdity of our times. Rushdie asserts: “Yet in considering that strange era, the era of the two years, eight months and twenty-eight nights which is the subject of the present account, we are forced to concede that the world had become absurd, and that the laws which had long been accepted as the governing principles of reality had collapsed, leaving our ancestors perplexed and unable to fathom what the new laws might be” (*Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights*, 55). This paper analyses Rushdie’s political fiction *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty Eight Nights* in which he imagines a War of the Worlds between the visible universe of the humans and the invisible realm of the Jinnis, that incarnates what Žižek calls “the gap between humanity and its own inhuman excess” (5). The study focuses on the philosophical debate between the philosopher Ibn Rushd and the Sufi scholar Al Ghazali, and examines how the novelist uses the battle of the books: Al Ghazali’s *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* and Ibn Rushd’s *The Incoherence of the Incoherence* to rethink and deconstruct history, mythology, theology, philosophy and political truthiness. The paper also aims to show how Rushdie’s satire blurs the boundaries between the magic and the real, and provides his readers with an allegory about humanity’s struggle between coherence and incoherence in an age of terror and political truthiness, a post-truth era.

Nupur Manasi, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Managing Post-Mass Media Precarity in the Post-Truth Times

“Many things happen outside the frame of the camera or other digital media devices, and the media can just as easily implement censorship as oppose it”, says Butler in her exemplary work, *Notes Towards a Performative theory of Assembly*. The role of censorship in mass media and cultural representations of many of the local events that are ‘edited out’ of the recording plays vital part in shaping precariousness of the ‘people’ who constitute the ‘others’ for the ‘other people’ in the system that is controlled by the latter. It is essential to understand that as partners of mass media in the news industry, social media is not outside the circuit formed by the government, corporate advertisement agencies and the media. This paper proposes to synthesize how popular governments are increasingly connecting to the ‘people’ through mass media and social media to propagate their ideologies and garner acceptance in the post-truth era such as the BJP led right-wing government in India that is juggling the national sentiments through popularization of fixed definitions of nationalism and *Hindutva* and so far has been immensely successful in channeling huge support from the majority Hindu population. How mass media censors the main issues of concern from the public while social media creates another reality which evades the real-life divisions based on religion, caste or region? Is media affected by the precariousness of the society that it hides while popularizing a leader? How is social media different from the mass media for populist regimes? Lastly, can the poverty and precarity in the post-truth populist state be challenged through traditional media? This paper aims to examine the kaleidoscopic concepts of populism in the post-truth era through the lenses of the heterogeneous new media.

Elisabetta Marino, University of Rome “Tor Vergata”, Italy

Manipulating the Truth: The Role of Social Media in Tabish Khair’s How to Fight Islamic Terrorism from the Missionary Position (2012) and Just Another Jihadi Jane (2016)

As Tabish Khair wrote in his 2010 article entitled “Non-Fiction”, valuable books are those “that make you think *anew*”, that escape deeply-ingrained, often biased perceptions, that undermine traditional sets of beliefs. In his *Reading Literature Today* (a seminal volume he wrote with his friend and colleague Sébastien Doubinsky, published in 2011), he expanded on this concept by stating that “literature is not a sedative or a balm, it is not a God or a moral code; it is not even a refuge, an oasis of sense. But literature [...] is where we are confronted with the possibilities, problems and limits of language, which are finally also the problems of reality (and representation)” (10). Accordingly, Khair envisions a reader who is not a passive consumer of linear and highly legible texts, reassuringly based on dichotomies and fixed categorizations: indeed, his reader is actively engaged in an act of digging, in order to uncover hidden (albeit truthful) possibilities, i.e. what lies beneath the surface of phenomena, artfully controlled and even fabricated by social and mass media.

This paper sets out to explore the way Tabish Khair—together with his readers—tackles the mechanisms and the implications of post-truth (and how he tries to deflate their power, using the weapons of irony and role switching) by focusing on his two latest novels, namely *How to Fight Islamic Terrorism from the Missionary Position* (2012) and *Just Another Jihadi Jane* (2016), where the problems of immigration, marginality, fundamentalisms, and terrorism, as well as their representations, play a central part.

Leonor María Martínez Serrano, University of Córdoba, Spain

The Blinding Radiance of Truth and Humanism in Robert Bringhurst's Poetry

Pondering her own book *The Fragility of Goodness. Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (2001) in a public interview, American professor, literary critic and sociologist Martha C. Nussbaum claims that Euripides' Hecuba (Hecuba was Priam's wife and Queen of Troy, which was destroyed by the Greeks) is a story that says much "about what it is to be a human being in the middle of a world of unreliable things and people". In an age of alarming populism, different forms of state-induced precariousness and post-truth politics, amid the dissonance of competing discourses, it is of the essence to turn to poetry and see what fundamental lessons it might teach us about permanent values that still define humankind and constitute the core of a universal ethics. A form of truth that is simply radiant, unchangeable and inescapable in spite of the threats of mediocrity, barbarism and intellectual myopia: this is what poetry relentlessly seeks to capture by means of the music of indelible words. Whereas post-truth politics fosters a sense of radical epistemological uncertainty that renders information unreliable and objective facts superfluous or simply invisible, poetry (like philosophy or science as forms of knowing the world) might still prove a haven of truth that proclaims not only the sacredness of all life (both human and nonhuman) and the need to preserve it at all costs, but also the possibility of apprehending the contradictions inherent in our contemporary world to change reality for the better—or, put succinctly, to make justice and equity a reality, to make Earth a livable place. In the context of Ecocriticism, this is called 'biocentrism': it is bios (life in all its potential manifestations) and not just human life that should be at the very centre of the agenda of global politics. This paper looks at the poetry and thinking of Robert Bringhurst, a 21st-century Canadian humanist who denounces the depletion of natural resources and environmental degradation brought about by the ferocious practices of postcapitalism and neoliberalism in highly industrialized societies. When reading his intellectually demanding poems and essays, the reader cannot help noticing how an ontology of humility seems to flourish all of a sudden: if environmental apocalypse is to be prevented, then humans need to urgently rethink their place in the cosmos and to recover an awareness of the deep link pervading a continuum of life ranging from stones through trees to passing clouds.

Antara Mukherjee, Delhi Forum, Delhi, India; and Indrani Mukherjee, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India

Appropriating Higher Education as Precarity by the Privileged Castes in India

Higher education as precarity in this country have been appropriated by the socio-economically privileged classes as they also organize themselves to argue and justify their rights to access it more than any other groups, thus engineering fine or often brazen exclusionary processes. The trends have been somewhat analogous to the slogan, "White lives matter" and perhaps would read here as "Upper caste lives also matter". At the same time, the government of the day uses this narrative to strike at the best central universities in terms of funds, accessibility to research programmes through affirmative action and their autonomous and democratic set up.

This paper attempts to look at how privilege has been rendered invisible by the upper caste bourgeoisie by calling out for their supposed losses because of affirmative action. They refuse to accept that their achievements have been at the cost of many situations which have worked in favour of them. Their claim to access higher education rides on a belief system of their inherent knowledge potential given their belonging to upper caste as well as on an ethos of a meritocracy based on marks scored in exams which only test knowledges as prescribed and

as given. The right wing students group achieve this by a cunning remix and manipulation of the very script of precarity playing on the boundary between privilege and lack of it. Higher education as liberating and empowering remains cleverly hidden as there is a ridiculous dismissal of caste, ethnicity and gender as any criteria which merit attention deserving any special access to higher education.

How do they achieve this? Through organised vigilantism by the right wing students groups so that any dissent is criminalised and debate stifled. They (upper castes) call out aloud with full cynicism any question of freedom of expression which might question the privileges of the upper castes, social discrimination and issues of conflicts and belonging in the narrative of the nation. They argue instead that any higher studies should be only about submitting to fixed templates of the prescribed deadlines, supervisor/teacher's unquestioning authority and the learners' obedience. Precarity assumes new contours and colours through the replay of the mythic sacrificial paradigm of Eklavya's thumb as power continue to be reinstated.

Delphine Munos, Goethe University, Germany

Addressivity and Structural Violence in Benjamin's Goat Days (2012)

Although there are currently some fifteen million migrant workers in the Gulf region, labor in the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states remains an underdeveloped area of scholarship. In his seminal 1992 article "Petrofiction: The Oil Encounter and the Novel", Amitav Ghosh already noted that "very few people anywhere write about the Oil Encounter [...] the history of oil is a matter of embarrassment verging on the unspeakable, the pornographic" (139). By and large, Ghosh's remark about the "muteness" of the oil encounter still holds true today. This is the case even as human rights reports and Gulf newspapers are rife with atrocious migration narratives featuring violent stories of deportation, confinement, work-related injuries as well as physical and sexual abuse. Clearly, the 'Gulf model' of migration management is itself part and parcel of the violence levied against transnational laborers in this region, as such a system privileges short-term contracts, prevents family reunification and drastically limits migrants' socio-economic rights. Still, this structural violence cannot be disentangled from the context of its emergence, which is closely linked to "the extension and expansion of a global market and neoliberal ideology to the Gulf states" (Gardner 2010: 4). In short, there is a multidimensional aspect to such structural violence which requires us to adopt, in turn, a multidirectional perspective.

My paper looks at Benjamin's *Goat Days* (2012), one of the rare books to fictionalize the life of an Indian laborer in Saudi Arabia, and discusses how the Bahrain-based Indian writer nudges its readers into multidirectional perspective-taking. Originally written in Malayalam, *Goat Days* was translated into English in 2012. What interests me is that Benjamin's novel offers insights into the slavery-like conditions of Indian laborers in the Gulf without falling back on Islamophobia or East/West binaries. My main focus relates to issues of addressivity in the English version of *Goat Days*—specifically how 'you' and 'we' forms of address here participate in offering a multidirectional perspective on labor in the Gulf.

Susana Nicolás Román, University of Almería, Spain

Reading Precarity and Post-Truth Consequences in Edward Bond's Chair

The term 'post-truth', Oxford Dictionaries's 2016 word of the year, has experienced an enormous spike in politicians' dialectics according to *The Guardian* (15.11.2016). Modeling public opinion by appealing to emotions seems to have imposed a new way to control

citizens' interpretations of reality. In this contemporary political scenario, a close reading to *Chair* (2006) provides insights about the dangers of a post-truth society in which fear and violence could easily become normal in democratic systems. The combined nature of repression, economic and emotional precarity impulse an environment in which our ability to form rational judgment is significantly weakened and manipulated. The power of social media and the control of information have always been denounced by Edward Bond as the mains instruments to turn our world into an Orwellian 1984.

Dystopia is a cornerstone theme in Edward Bond's plays. Set in 2077, *Chair* explores an apocalyptic military world through cryptic and silent characters. Simple elements like a chair may bring catastrophe to a repressive society in which all compassion is a crime and with no possibility to stay outside the prescribed norms. The totalitarian system depicted by Bond's dystopia can be easily identified in the post 9/11 scenario. Symbolizing human's alienation from the basis of a technological world which deemphasizes "humanity", trauma appears as a powerful resource to distort reality for the less painful effect. While fictional characters such as Alice or Billy experience trauma on stage, Bond stops at the causes to reflect upon the systematic violence of our institutions. By figuring cathexis as a radical new form of emotional exploration, the playwright intends to elaborate a profound analysis about the decay of our states. In this futuristic scenario, Bond addresses drama as a contemporary forum for political debate to undertake the meaning of humanism.

Minna Niemi, Uit-The Arctic University of Norway, Norway

Resisting Dictatorial Power in Cold War Somalia: Nuruddin Farah's Sweet and Sour Milk and Hannah Arendt's Political Philosophy

Nuruddin Farah's *Sweet and Sour Milk* (1979) invokes a long history of global inequalities in Africa. The novel is set in the 1970s, when the colonial powers have stepped aside, giving space to Cold War political power games. It represents a thinly veiled version of Siyad Barre's dictatorial Somali government, which was heavily influenced and monitored by the Soviet Union. In Farah's novel, the protagonist Loyaan is forced to oppose the regime after the murder of his politically dissident brother.

My analysis begins with the novel's use of a quotation from Machiavelli's *The Prince*: "There is nothing more difficult to take in hand...than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things". This suggests that opposing Barre's regime in order to inaugurate new rules of government is in fact highly difficult. Farah's reference to Machiavelli can also be read as implying a need to perform in the world, to create a new order when the old order fails. Restoring or renewing the public realm, when it is in danger, is a political act. I thus read the quotation in connection to Hannah Arendt's notion of natality, as a political act capable of initiating new relations in the public realm, an idea she adapts from Machiavelli. The novel's political action is begun by the dying brother, and later continued by the surviving brother, who maintains the fight against the dictatorial regime. The stated emphasis is on the continued political resistance, even if it is doomed to fail.

Arendt's analysis of resistance to nondemocratic political structures opens up a different way of looking at opposition to dictatorial regimes in postcolonial Africa, as it emphasizes the act of resistance itself even if it fails to bring about desired outcomes, and thus provides hope.

Maurice o'Connor, University of Cádiz, Spain

Violating the Precarious Body: Anuradha Roy's Sleeping on Jupiter

This paper explores the precariousness of young women when inserted within the “protective” domain of the Hindu ashram. The vehicle for our analysis shall be centred upon a critical reading of Anuradha Roy's *Sleeping on Jupiter*, with specific attention given to the female body. As Roy assures in the acknowledgements to her novel, “There are countless horrific cases of child abuse and sexual violence in India. I have drawn on the legal and investigative history of many such incidents”, and in this light, we shall evidence how the surveillant gaze of the guru, with both its veiled and real threats of violence, can reduce the female subject to a catatonic state of inaction. Here, we shall examine the specific precarious nature of orphaned children and how they can be at the mercy of certain individuals who operate within public institutions. As a means of physical and psychic survival, body and mind shuts down in the face of such violence, and we shall evidence both the suppressed and repressed nature of these survival mechanisms. In the context of the novel, we shall explore recovery from trauma.

Parallels shall be drawn between the female body and the imaginary national body, and how the violation of this female body has larger repercussions within Indian society. We shall look at the silencing of these widespread violations through the discourses of trauma theory, both from the perspective of the victim and also the society at large that, in many cases, is reluctant to engage with the darker side of guruism. We shall link the controversial figure of the guru with the patriarchal figure and, in extension, link this concept to the India state that is currently appropriating a specific interpretation of Hinduism for its own propagandistic ends. Furthermore, we shall also critique the discourses of a bogus spiritualism linked to Hinduism and of how these discourses have been appropriated by neo-liberal capitalism. In this respect, the investment of emotional energy in the guru, and the subsequent surrendering of one's own will to a higher and more enlightened being, while arguably acceptable within the specific religious context of Hinduism, can, on the contrary, be likened to the paternalistic attitude of leaders such as Narendra Modi who demand of the masses subservience in return for protection.

Riaan Oppelt, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Post-Truth, Populism and Precarity: How Public Performativity and Pageantry Perpetuate a State of Peril in South Africa

Pageantry and performativity have, since 1994, been part of democratic South Africa's multiparty political system. Identity politics drive national discourse at most public levels and, in the Digital Age, online commentator culture has made large contributions to the rhetoric of race and identity in South Africa.

South Africa, in 2017, still bears witness to regular events of civil protest around economic inequality, many of these being peaceful but with the threat of civil and state violence always pronounced. However, this violence is no longer just in the physical realm: through South Africa's own appropriation of what we call post-truth and fake news, digital domains are actively doing their part in the compromising of the many South Africans living below the poverty line, people with no access to digital realms where their welfare is often debated but they, themselves, abstracted. Simply put, the more all South African political parties, most of them usually operating under various clouds of suspicion, public mistrust and visible levels of intra-party segregation, perform and perpetuate identity politics, the further they imperil those already precariously placed in poverty and destitution. The proliferation of post-truth in the service of populism exacerbates this.

Although post-truth has taken on larger dimensions under the Trump administration (with no fewer than five books, all published in 2017, contributing to the reading list for this paper) and in Brexit negotiations, the South African variant is a known quantity in local media. The figure of under-fire South African president Jacob Zuma has been studied as a symbol of the twin strengths of populism and post truth. Zuma stands as the leader of a majority government accused of fear-mongering and emphasizing, rather than negotiating, divisiveness among South Africans of different races and cultures. To South Africans, Zuma is no less noteworthy a figure than Trump, and his administration is the subject of much debate and, significantly, cultural study.

This paper aims to explore the larger functioning of post truth and populism on two levels affecting South Africa's socio-political context: (a) the afore-mentioned party politics and their impact on precariously-placed South Africans and (b) the prominence of post-truth in social media behaviour linked to protest culture in South Africa. Numerous texts have been dedicated to these studies in the South African context alone and, alongside recent works on global post-truth, this paper will also draw on a recent study on the impact of fake news, largely social media-based, on South African protest culture. Here, perhaps the most prominent examples involve university student protests for academic decolonization, which this paper also focuses on.

Fabián Orán Llarena, University of La Laguna, Canary Islands, Spain

***The Evicted Crowd: Populist Narratives in American Film after the Crisis of Neoliberalism*
(VIRTUAL MODALITY)**

This paper studies populist modes of discourse in the wake of the so-called 'Crisis of Neoliberalism' and the period known as the 'Great Recession' (2007-2009) through two American films: *99 Homes* (2014) and *Hell or High Water* (2016). Neoliberalism has become shorthand for the loosening of regulatory frameworks and the weakening of the nation-state as the fundamental actor in policymaking. It has likewise come to designate a new rationality for the self—one that significantly departs from the collective structures and imaginaries of postwar Keynesian capitalism and conceptualizes the market as the best-suited arbiter for human cohabitation. Despite the critical engagement across disciplines with neoliberalism and the political, social, and economic turmoil of the late 2000s, there is an unusual shortage of cultural studies inquiries into how American films have responded to the narratives of neoliberalism after the financial and subprime mortgage crises of the 2007-2009 period. This paper intends to address that gap by performing a comparative analysis of two films that portray the Great Recession from different ideological standpoints which are, nonetheless, equally articulated through populist languages and vocabularies. Thus, my structuring argument is that the primary sources chosen represent the discontents wrought by the Great Recession deploying discursive elements typical of populism. I argue that *99 Homes* is an anti-neoliberal populist film as it narrativizes the foreclosure crisis by presenting it as the direct result of the common-sense narratives of neoliberalism, thereby undoing the legitimacies and political meanings of the neoliberal project. On the other hand, *Hell or High Water* places the discursive foundations of populism in the tail-end of the Obama Age. The film can therefore be gauged as a prescient portrait of the unfulfilled political demands and socioeconomic inequalities that paved the way for the rise of Donald Trump. As an overarching principle in terms of critical theory, this paper adheres to a form of Gramscian Marxism that understands culture as a terrain of constant struggle—where meanings are contingent and open to be renegotiated and contested by competing discourses. I draw on the concept of populism as authored by Ernesto Laclau. In analyzing the primary sources, I will utilize Laclau's notion of populism as the discursive construction of "the people" —a political exercise that requires the existence of a constitutively antagonistic entity. This logic ingrained in populism helps

gain additional insight into the two films' discourses and the different ways they signify the notions of "people" in their stories. In addition, Judith Butler's concept of vulnerability is also brought in. Neoliberalism, with its focus on resilience and individualism, can be conceived of as the negation of the vulnerable, precarious condition of life as described by Butler.

Mercedes Osuna Rodríguez, University of Córdoba, Spain

Interculture and 21st Century Women's Empowerment

The impact of the economic crisis is highlighting an old problem on gender. Neoliberalism is making women's social rights vanish: they are becoming housewives again, working at the same time as being mothers, paygap, etc. All in all, women are losing already acquired rights. How can this loss of identity be faced? Is feminism a global phenomenon? After a panoramic view of the different movements, we propose a model of intercultural feminism based on the empowerment as a tool to achieve effective equality for women in a globalised world.

The systematic crisis impact is reviving an old dilemma about gender. It is emerging a basis question. Is the feminism a local or a universal phenomenon? The neoliberalism is producing a disestablishment of social human rights which is specially affecting to women's sector: getting back home, living together motherhood and employment, gender pay gap and, in general, loss of acquired human rights. How can we affront this loss of women's own identity? After a panoramic vision of feminism, we propose an intercultural model base on the empowerment as a means to reach effective women's equality in a global world.

Justin Parks, University of Tromsø, Norway

Nation, Race, and Hundred Percent Americanism: The Limits of Populism in John Dos Passos's "The Body of an American"

This presentation examines the populism of the 1920s, a period that witnessed an aggressive attempt to racialize national belonging through the institutionalization of nativist rhetoric. Taking its cue from a short prose piece by John Dos Passos titled "The Body of an American" from his novel *1919* (1932), it argues that racialized bodies have figured prominently in notions of US national belonging that have their roots in the post-World War I period and are enjoying a resurgence.

During World War I, efforts to stir up nationalist sentiment and eliminate opposition to the war drew on a rhetoric of "hundred percent Americanism" that, rather than subsiding with the war's end, continued to influence debates over the role of race and ethnicity in US-American national belonging. The nativism of the period was codified in forms including popular pseudoscientific tracts and national legislation: the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act of 1924, for instance, classified immigrant groups according to eugenicist notions of their proximity to whiteness, establishing lasting categories of racial difference. Dos Passos reflects on the predicament of "hundred percent Americanism," in which racialized notions of national belonging meet their limit in the effort to racially identify the remains of an anonymous soldier to serve as the Unknown Soldier, an embodiment of national sacrifice. This presentation will use an interdisciplinary method that combines historical research with literary analysis.

Dos Passos's ironic revelation concerning the problem of race—that it is literally only skin-deep—evokes a history of efforts to distinguish and classify the bodies of national subjects. Nativist populism has once again moved from the fringes into the mainstream through the

rhetoric of the Alt Right and the immigration policy of Attorney General Jeff Sessions, who has referred explicitly to the Johnson Reed Act in making the case for immigration legislation targeting specific ethnic groups.

Ana Beatriz Pérez Zapata, University of the Balearic Islands, Spain

“Metamorphosis 2”: Intertext and Satire against the Discourse of Populism

In the current refugee crises, there are some who do not want to acknowledge the vulnerability of those who risk their lives escaping from death. Refugees have come to be perceived as a threat to the security and lifestyle of Western countries. Celebrity and pundit Katie Hopkins has emerged as one of those populist voices in England that deny the existence of a refugee crisis and deem it necessary to protect English borders against the invasion of others. Writing for tabloids such as *The Sun* and *The Daily Mail* and as a broadcaster in LBC radio, she has denigrated refugees and urged leaders and citizens to use whatever means necessary to stop migrants from coming to the United Kingdom and deport those who have already arrived. For Hopkins, as for many others on the populist end, those precarious subjects do not belong in the West and are a problem we should be rid of. There have been many immediate responses to Hopkin’s views on migration across different media, even those for which she has worked. This paper analyses a literary response to Hopkin’s populism. Amanda Craig’s short story “Metamorphosis 2” in *A Country of Refuge* (Popescu, 2016), is a satire of Hopkin’s life and views. With intertextual references to Frantz Kafka’s *Metamorphosis* (1915) and *The Trial* (1925), the protagonist of the story, Katie F, transforms overnight into a cockroach. Although her new appearance poses no threat at the beginning, Katie F is soon thrown out of the house by her Kosovan cleaner and finds herself on the streets. Hoping to find warmer weather, she embarks on a journey to the South, across the Mediterranean and finally arrives in Syria. On her way, she witnesses the difficult migratory journey of refugees but she does not change her mind about the precariousness of these subjects. Thus, I will demonstrate how literature in general and satire in particular work to lay bare the truth behind populist beliefs and reverse the damage of those narratives of exclusion and expulsion that have come to the fore in a post-truth era.

María Dolores Raigón Hidalgo, University of Córdoba, Spain

Precarity and Violence in Nadine Gordimer’s Short Story “Harald, Claudia and Their Son Duncan” and Ayesha Harruna Attah’s Novel Saturday’s Shadows

In the African continent precarity as “a politically induced condition” has been an issue for long. Questions of ethics in relation to the Other when this relation is through any kind of violence is also a topic to deal with.

This paper analyses the concepts of precarity and violence in two literary works, the short story “Harald, Claudia and Their Son Duncan” written by the South African Nobel prize winner Nadine Gordimer and the Ghanaian Ayesha Harruna Attah’s novel *Saturday’s Shadows*. It also focuses on Agamben’s concepts *homo sacer* and *nuda vita* in relation to violence.

This paper discusses one of the topics proposed for the conference, precarity, and it relates it to both vulnerability and violence. The literary works mentioned above will exemplify these topics.

The analysis of both works shows the way literature deals with precarity and violence and the way it conditions the private lives of those subjects, vulnerable social beings.

“Something terrible happened” which makes Claudia realise “.....it is only when we understand that what happens there also happens here, and that “here” is already an elsewhere, and necessarily so, that we stand a chance of grasping the difficult and shifting global connections in ways that let us know the transport and the constraint of what we might still call ethics” (Judith Butler in “Precarious Life, Vulnerability, and the Ethics of Cohabitation” p. 150).

Dieter Riemenschneider, Goethe Universität Frankfurt (ret.), Germany

Southern Precariousness—‘Here there is no haqeeqat. Arre, even we aren’t real. We don’t really exist’

Precarity and precariat, two buzz words in recent socio-political and socio-economic studies (Butler, 2009; Standing, 2011), refer respectively to the precarious state of individual subjects and the social group they form, and have been addressed by scholars of post-colonial studies as one of the central, and in many cases *the* central concern of writers from developing countries. For example, Mulk Raj Anand’s novels *Untouchable* and *Coolie* published nearly a century ago document literary representations of precarity; or precarious living conditions of the socially lowest segments of Indian society that results from debilitating Hindu caste-prejudices, albeit without calling their totally marginalized status precariat.

Scholars in the West like Gay Standing have been taken to task for their Eurocentric approach to defining what he calls a social class in the making in Great Britain and other Western countries under the impact of globalization and neo-liberalism (Scully, 2016) for not having taken account of – or for not having seriously included into his theoretical deliberations—the fact of and research on the large informal workforce, for example in India, of about 80% of the total labour force (other sources, e.g. I.O.L., 2007, cite 97%, and indiadying.blogspot.de/2017/07, 75%), which, in any case, is not the recent phenomenon called precarity but dates back into the past of Indian society.

Apart from scholarly studies on precarious living conditions of people in India, South Africa or Pakistan (Agarwala, 2013; Burawoy, 2009; Levien, 2012), creative writers have also and repeatedly focused their narratives on this aspect, and here I would like to analyse a few novels published in recent years and ask after their narrative practices and intellectual concerns; which in effect means, to invite readers world-wide to reflect upon and hopefully replace what Judith Butler has called a “politically-induced differential allocation of precariousness” (13) by “transversal grief” (13): which in turn, I’d like to argue, should be translated into political action in the sense Standing (2011) feels he has noted by Progressives, the most active of his three precariat groups.

Antonio Rolo Duarte, University of Manchester, UK

Memory, Migration, and Modernization: Unpacking Portugal’s “austerity without the anger”, 2010-2014

From a populism studies perspective, Portugal’s 2010-14 austerity period can be said to have delivered somewhat insipid results. The parties which dominated the national political scene in the 2000s were still the same after the 2015 general election, none of them went rogue, and no major new populist uprising took shape. This result is antithetical to the one observed in other Southern European states hit by austerity, such as Spain, Italy, or Greece. In this context, the present paper investigates the relationship between austerity and (absence of) populism in the Portuguese case. In doing so, it asks: can the absence of relevant populist

uprisings in Portugal during the 2010-14 period of austerity be seen as “surprising”? To this end, the paper examines three themes linked to demand for populist politics: constructions in collective memory, migratory movements, and patterns of modernization. It concludes that even though austerity impacted on the demand for populism in the country, this impact was mitigated by contingent factors specific to the Portuguese case. This conclusion suggests that similar outcomes may be observed if comparable factors are present in socio-political environments elsewhere—a suggestion that would benefit from further research.

Sneharika Roy, The American University of Paris, France

Can the Subaltern Sing? Privilege, Precarity and Alienation in Derek Walcott’s Epic Omeros

Derek Walcott’s *Omeros*, an epic poem of his native island St Lucia, has traditionally been analysed in terms of its poetics and politics (Burnett 2000, Breslin 2001). However, its deep preoccupation with neocapitalism and the attendant precarity inflicted on St Lucians has been relatively unexplored. A valuable exception is Natalie Melas’s seminal essay “Forgettable Vacations and Metaphor in Ruins” (2005). Melas opens a fecund avenue of investigation into the intersection between precarity, populism and post-truth epistemes by arguing that the poem’s unstable, extravagant imagery creates “nodes of resistance” against the homogenising, flattening processes of global capitalism that commodify St Lucia’s land and people into holiday packages for American tourists. *Omeros*, she rights contends, should therefore be understood as an epic “counter-text” to the twentieth-century tourist brochure rather than to nineteenth-century colonial discourse. Shifting attention from Melas’s emphasis on “cultural politics” to Gayatri Spivak’s focus on signifying practices for subalternity, I concentrate on the discursivity of precarity in *Omeros*. I argue that Walcott represents the St Lucian subaltern’s precarity as a double-movement, dialectically and irremediably mediated and complicated by his own position of privilege. *Omeros* is a textbook example of Spivak’s theory of the impossibility of a “transparent” representation of the subaltern by the third world intellectual. Yet, the privileged narrator’s distance from the precarity of his fellow St Lucians is caught in a dialectic relationship with the professed proximity between his intellectual labour and their manual labour. From this dialectic, however, emerges no facile synthesis but an ongoing and unresolved precarity of representation. The poem exhibits a keen awareness of the propaganda disguised as truth peddled by St Lucian populist politicians who condemn the fallacies of colonial discourse even as they perpetuate its rhetoric of sophistry. Walcott therefore ultimately falls back on the primacy of poetic insight over “reality”, a move at once aesthetically conservative in its echoing of an elitist canon culminating in T.S. Eliot and ethically radical in its repudiation of the foundation on which any certainty that serves a vested interest, whether masquerading as truth or what we know today as post-truth, can be founded.

María Pilar Royo-Grasa, University of Zaragoza, Spain

Asylum Seekers’ Precarity in Australia as Reflected in Gail Jones’s “The Ocean” (2013)

The asylum-seeker constitutes one of the most precarious figures of our modern contemporary world. As Butler (2004) and Tyler (2006) have denounced, governments have used this figure as a strategy to delay the recognition of their legal refugee status and rights. Their immediate imprisonment in immigration detention centres by the countries where they look for protection contributes to reinforcing their illegality. The asylum seeker is metonymically associated with the abject, that which constitutes a threat to the wellbeing of

the nation and, thus, should be eventually expelled. This anti-immigration rhetoric has also been used by mainstream Media companies in the US, Europe and Australia. Their portrayal of asylum-seekers as an unknown collective, a burden, a flood, erases asylum seekers' painful experiences and hopes from the public discourse, and prompts xenophobic attitudes towards them.

In opposition to this context of hostility, there has been an increasing publication of narratives on asylum which seek to challenge the negative rhetoric of hate and fear attached to this figure by opening up a hospitable space from which asylum seekers' personal stories can be narrated and empathically perceived (Scott and Keneally 2013, Woolley 2014; Popescu 2017). Gail Jones's short story "The Ocean" (2013), published in the Australian anthology of writings on asylum seekers *A Country Too Far* (2013), is one example of this type of narratives. This short story narrates 'the Tampa affair' from a double perspective. One of these perspectives is that of the character Amina, who fictively stands for one of the 438 refugees who, in August 2001, were rescued from a sinking Indonesian fishing boat by the Norwegian containership MV *Tampa* in the international waters near Christmas Island. The other perspective is that of a fictive Australian female character who watches the Tampa affair on TV. The Australian government responded to the Tampa humanitarian emergency by forbidding the Tampa to dock at Christmas Island. They approved a punitive legislative system, known as the Pacific Solution, under which asylum-seekers could be processed offshore and removed to detention centres in Nauru and Papua New Guinea. The main aim of this paper will be to analyse how Gail Jones's short story questions the media negative rhetoric on asylum seekers and the federal government's Pacific Solution. For this purpose, the paper will examine its narrative structure and ambivalent use of the trope of the ocean as a space of both hostility and hospitality.

Esther Sánchez-Pardo, Complutense University of Madrid, Spain

Precarious Attachments: Border Thinking and the New Afro-Spanish Generation

This paper is an attempt to disentangle the complex web of interconnected oppressions operating upon the colonial subject on her way to a less constrictive socio-cultural regime. This collective endeavour promoted by those who have been excluded from knowledge production, vexed and enslaved by the colonial matrix of power, will be studied in the in-between space of the border between Equatorial Guinea and Spain, where the Atlantic Ocean plays a crucial role, as an impassable frontier for migrants from Africa to Europe. Formerly colonized by Portugal and later by Spain, the Republic of Guinea makes for a very interesting case of transnational "passage" among many routes, all of them constitutive of a current reality which remains (neo)colonial by virtue of its precarious links to free developed states and to their African neighbours.

My aim in this paper is to address the situation of the new generation of Guineans both in the country and in the diaspora, and specifically the case of Guinean expatriates in Spain. Precariousness is, in their case, a long-lasting historical and generational condition. With insights from intersectionality (Crenshaw, hooks, Belleau), decolonial thinking (Quijano, Mignolo) and strategies from the pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire), I will address major differences between how two important figures, writer and intellectual Juan T. Avila Laurel (Malabo 1966), and poet, composer and singer, Buika (Concepción Balboa Buika; Palma de Mallorca 1972), look into the legacy of colonial Guinea from very different perspectives.

Avila Laurel left his country of origin in 2011 to settle in Spain, where he has continued to write and reflect upon the current life and political situation of the Republic of Guinea. Buika, born in Majorca, the daughter of writer Juan Balboa Boneke (1938-2014) has become an important Afro-Latin composer and singer who, in her debut album Buika (2005) coined the term, "new Afro-Spanish generation". Her novel way of understanding identity will

certainly shed light on our current concerns regarding nationality (versus the stateless condition of temporary residents and refugees), displacement and privilege. Buika found in music the way to express her feelings against poverty, marginalization and repression. Far from “representing” an African identity, Buika’s poems and lyrics exhibit hybrid forms in which ideas and musical styles –from soul and jazz to flamenco- grant her new avenues for expression.

Homelessness and statelessness is the condition of today’s displaced peoples. Ávila Laurel documents in his work the tensions between the traditional rituals and customs of the old tribal ways of relation and how they were crushed by colonialism. In his novel *Arde el Monte de Noche* (2009), Ávila’s allegory of the colonial situation is framed on an island, an isolated community deprived of the essentials to live, and struggling to hold on to history and memory.

From Buika’s condition of having “no one homeland” to Ávila’s “exile”, their work will lead us to discuss border thinking in their own practice and to reflect upon their contribution to an epistemology of exteriority so crucial at present.

Cheryl Stobie, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Breaking the Chains of Slavery: Precarity, the Personal and the Political in Nkosinathi Sithole’s Hunger Eats a Man

In South Africa, the effects of colonialism and apartheid cast a long shadow of racially inflected precarity and inequality. Exacerbating factors include rurality, gender and sexuality. Currently, economic disparities are deepening, and radical transformation is necessary. Politicians tend to rely on populism to promote simplistic slogans that deny complexities or viability. By contrast, literature has the power to offer nuanced visions of pain and promise.

Judith Butler links her work on precarity to her earlier work on performativity and gender, and she also explicitly mentions race as a form of Othering. Butler’s work enables an intersectional conceptualisation of humans’ fragile social interdependency. Precarity studies is compatible with fields such as feminist, subaltern and postcolonial studies, which enable challenges to Eurocentric models of the precariat. This paper examines a specifically African narrative about precarity as an act of communication possessed of its own aesthetics and truth-values, that the reader is called upon to respond to imaginatively.

The paper employs textual analysis as a research method, in order to explore questions about political and cultural history and sexual politics represented in a prize-winning contemporary South African novel, Nkosinathi Sithole’s *Hunger Eats a Man* (2015). I establish the conditions giving rise to the precarity of certain characters, textually compared to slavery. I analyse the effects of the economic gap between the black middle class and the desperately poor, rural slum-dwellers. Using the theoretical work of Pumla Dineo Gqola on rape, I pay particular attention to voice, perspective, agency, subversion and resistance in examining the novel’s representations of sexual abuse and rape. I note the implications of the story-within-a-story revolutionary narrative about the starving poor occupying the homes of the wealthy. I further explore ways in which the novel employs techniques that shape readers positively, offering an ethical dimension that allows for social change.

Gaurav Sushant, VIT University, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India

Chile's Centre-Left Coalition Government and Its Interplay with Equity in Social Policies from 1990 to 2009
(VIRTUAL MODALITY)

As per the world development report, equity is a normative concept, one which has a long history in cultural and philosophical traditions and is pertained with equality, fairness and social justice. It also intends giving equal and unhindered equitable access to representation and developmental resources irrespective of gender, ethnicity, class, etc. According to Harry Jones (2009), equity is based on three principles which are equal life chances to everyone, equal concern for people's need and meritocracy based on fair competition. Chile, under the authoritarian rule of General Augusto Pinochet, was dealing with the inequality of income and high poverty rates due to the implementation of neoliberal economic policies and structural economic reforms. After the reinstatement of democracy in 1989, Centre-left coalition also known as "*Concertación*" formed governments in Chile by continuously winning four presidential elections from 1990 to 2009 under different candidates. After assuming office, the centre-left government precluded a possible surge of populism like other Latin American countries by espousing equity-enhancing social policies and redistributing the fruits reaped from better off sectors to the poor via improvements in the health, education, housing and poverty alleviation.

Although it was a centre-left coalition, the *Concertación* governments gave importance to market-correcting, public, solidaristic and egalitarian models in their 'growth with equity' model. Similarly, social policy reforms were based on a neoliberal model with characteristics like selectivity, privatisation, decentralisation and compensation. With this background, the paper first aims to explain the concept of equity and its distinctiveness from the concept of equality. Apart from that, it is also pertinent to look into the arguments related to the form of equity with special reference to Chile. Subsequently, the paper will analyse the implementation of social policies from an equity perspective. The research will then base its study on the outcomes of these social policies which showed contradictions in terms of stratification, competition and distrust among the targeted social groups and classes.

Veronica Thompson, Athabasca University, Canada

The Precarity of Women's Rights in a Post-Truth, Populist Age

In April 2017, the television adaptation of Margaret Atwood's 1985 novel *The Handmaid's Tale* was launched on Hulu. The series' release coincided with the first 100 days of Trump's presidency. This fortuitous timing has garnered *The Handmaid's Tale* significant purchase amidst the fear and anxiety generated by the racist and misogynistic rhetoric and actions of the Trump administration; the series recently won 8 Emmys and the novel topped best seller lists for several months this year. In September 2017, the adaptation of another Atwood novel, *Alias Grace*, was launched on CBC-TV and Netflix. Atwood's now seemingly prescient *The Handmaid's Tale* imagines a near-future dystopian police state in which women's rights have been rescinded and female reproduction is state controlled. *Alias Grace* returns to Canada's colonial history and the story of Grace Marks, accused and convicted of murder in 1843, while raising issues regarding the treatment of immigrants, women's rights, sexism and violence; *Alias Grace* is also "a meditation on the shifting nature of truth, perfect for this era of fake news and alternative facts" (Cronenburg 43).

This paper will resituate Atwood's novels and the recent adaptations within the Canadian political context, while acknowledging that these novels provide a particular perspective on the construction of race, class and gender in Canadian culture, as they engage with the

erosion of women's rights within a settler colonial context and from the position of the settler subject. As Amartya Sen reminds us, however, gender inequality "is not one homogeneous phenomenon, but a collection of disparate and inter-linked problems" (35), and Atwood's fiction must also be considered within the broader realm of Canadian literature. This paper will also situate Atwood's vital fiction alongside immigrant and indigenous Canadian literature that represents the sexism, violence and unacknowledged erosion and denial of rights experienced by racialized communities in Canada, with an emphasis on maternity and motherhood, to examine the precarity of women's rights.

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The Dark America: Gender, Sexuality and Poverty

Subject to an assortment of discriminations, tagged as castrators, jezebels, whores, sluts, mummies, and matriarchs, the black women of America have been the most inopportune, and despondent group in the 'Promised' land of America. No matter how much we humans have progressed, the advancement of girl child specially the dark, the marginalized, never changed. It is observed only in black and white that the women have been empowered. The situation of African American women needs attention of all the progress designers. It is time to follow the lines of Daniel Webster, "Ye daughters of a long down-trodden race, rouse ye to action bold, and do not dread..." For black girls of America mere survival has been a challenge. Redundant for their parents, school and society, they live with scruffy self-esteem and diminished sense of self. Black girls are often deprived of their sense of childhood. Racism and sexism, the two life threatening forces are still part of the white American society. Sethe in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is three times marginalized; dark, poor and girl. She challenges every situation of her life but never surrenders. Paul Marshall, Anne Moody, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker have been continually highlighting the situation of these marginalized voices of the intellectually growing society. These women writers have demonstrated the growth of African-American girls, and depicted different fates met by their heroines. The purpose of the paper will be to present the multiple marginalized women in the land of America. Various experiences of the black girls are incorporated as quotes in the presentation. They will not only depict the plight of black American women, but also show the strength and courage which helps them in their survival.

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Mimicry, Anglophilia and Counter-History in The God of Small Things

My aim in this paper is to analyze and compare the postcolonial themes of mimicry, Anglophilia and Counter-History in *The God of Small Things* (1997), by the Indian writer and political activist Arundhati Roy (1961). This novel addresses the problems and the consequences of the decolonization of a nation and makes an original reflection about both colonialism and the sense of constant estrangement and non-belonging that it has left in the colonized. It also criticizes the devastating effects of neocolonialism, stressing the internal contradictions that it incorporates. Roy explores, both openly and implicitly, themes such as the caste system, communism in Kerala, hypocrisy, double standards, corruption, gender violence, mimicry, the postcolonial hangover, the effects of globalization and many other taboos. Most of the characters in this work are what Frantz Fanon (1952), in his sociological study of the psychology of racism, calls "black skins [with] white masks." Thus, they have lost their native cultural origin and they embrace the culture of the Mother Country, i.e. the culture of England and the culture of the US. Characters such as Baby Kochamma,

Mammachi and Chacko have an inferiority complex so they try to appropriate and imitate the culture and the society of the colonizer. According to Fanon, mimicry is more evident in upwardly mobile and educated people, like Baby Kochamma and Chacko, who can afford to obtain status symbols within the world of the colonizers, such as an education abroad and mastery of the language of the colonizer, the white masks. Taking this into account, I would like to focus especially on how the characters emulate and appropriate the pastimes, the language, the habits, the literature, the religion and the institutions of the colonizers in the novel. I will conclude that the characters in *The God of Small Things* are victims of what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o calls "the cultural bomb." The effect of the cultural bomb "is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves" (wa Thiong'o, 1986:7).



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