EDITOR’S NOTE

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In a review of Gurinder Chadha’s 2017 release, *Viceroy’s House*, Fatima Bhutto remarks,

*Viceroy’s House* betrays the profound inferiority complex that plagues colonised people, a trauma as severe as the physical assaults and violence done to the land and bodies of subjugated people. It is exactly this kind of thinking that infected those who rioted and murdered their compatriots—a sense of fully absorbing the coloniser’s claims of racial, moral and civilisational superiority. How else to explain the damage to the colonised psyche, whose imagination is so deeply corroded that it can believe that white skins are superior to brown skins, that the British are greater than Indians, that one religion prevails over another? It is in accepting these tragic untruths that nations are crippled with a paralysing fear of others and sincere loathing of the self. (*The Guardian*, 03 March 2017)
Bhutto’s remarks and her anguished response to the film signify the abiding relevance of postcolonialism and the need to generate effective counter-discourses which are as much applicable to people in the West as they are to the people of the formerly colonised countries. We find ourselves at a particular historical juncture where racial hatred against non-white communities, particularly Muslims and migrants, rages in various parts of the West, even as other parts of Asia or Africa plunge into different forms of sectarian violence. India, in particular, is witnessing a rabid surge of majoritarian fanaticism which is principally fuelled by the typically Eurocentric notion of a nation consisting of one race, one culture, one language and one religion. It is almost as if the experiment of forging for ourselves a nation-state that could harmoniously integrate differences is being abandoned in favour of a discredited European model because our imagination and affective solidarities have run dry. As a result, we see the nation plunging into a widespread network of division, hatred and violence where the mere choice of meat can lead to the loss of one’s life. If postcolonialism is about strategic interventions in the name of our future then it falls on us to mount discursive and material challenges against the dominant discourses coloured by seepage from colonial history to override the manifold adversities of the present.
The current issue of *Postcolonial Interventions* decides to take up this responsibility through its various contributions which focus on the diverse avenues through which postcolonial agency manifests itself. Beginning with Krishna Sen’s erudite exploration of travelogues by Rabindranath Tagore and others which subvert the power-relations of colonial travelogues and sketch the outlines of an alternate modernity, the issue encompasses within itself a wide range of discussions and interventions that include ecocriticism, diasporic negotiations, Arab nationalism, representations of women in Chinese literature or notions of cosmopolitanism and refugees. One theme that runs through these papers is the idea of resistance, often in acknowledgment of adverse material circumstances that provoke resistant actions, at time desperate, but also governed by emancipatory aspirations. This is particularly true of Mengyao Liu’s paper on the representation of rural women in the novels of Ding Ling which explores both the adversities to which Chinese women were often subjected, especially in the wake of Japanese colonialism and the representational complexities that have circumscribed their subjectivities in various contexts.

Such gendered considerations are also the subject of Sandra Cox’s exploration of the works of Bharati Mukherjee and Jhumpa Lahiri, where she particularly focuses on feminist refashioning of selves and identities in a global context of transcultural negotiations.
brought about migratory movements. Her paper foregrounds the ways in which fiction offers a challenge to preconceived notions about Bengali and Indian marriages and identities even as it analyses the productions of female subjective spaces in a global context. This global context also plays a particularly significant role in Soni Wadhwa’s discussions of the city as a site of cosmopolitan negotiations which at times filters or entirely bypasses the pressures of the national. Based on the fictive world of Rushdie and the configurations of several key theorists, the paper explores the significance of the cosmopolitan city and the unique values it is capable of generating – values that are particularly significant in an increasingly xenophobic age where movements across borders of different kind are viewed with growing suspicion and even hatred. Alternate values are also proposed through Puspa Damai’s analysis of arboreal articulations in Mahashweta Devi’s fiction where she locates a kind of rhizomatic activism of grass and plants which interrogates the ideological assumptions of both colonial discourses and hegemonic nationalisms that function by erasing the voices and agency of indigenous communities. What emerges in the process is a kind of subaltern utopianism, a term which the author cautiously eschews, that remains strikingly relevant. But utopian gleams are necessarily offset by predicaments of the present and Tasnim Qutaït’s analysis of patrilineal nationalism in Arab countries astutely uncovers the various pitfalls
and sloughs of disillusionment that bar our path to any promised land. But recognising the pitfalls too is an important critical enterprise which prepares us for the future. this task is also carried on by the paper of Fouad Mami which simultaneously explores the possibilities of agency and critique through the space of digital media.

The aim of these intermingled critical explorations is to further enhance our consciousness of the multidimensional challenges of the present, both material and discursive. At the same time, such endeavours are also part of a larger network of critical thinking which is vital for the cultural, affective and imaginative well-being of humanity as a whole which remains imperilled by the networks of empire, capital and racial and religious fanaticism. As educational systems around the world, especially humanities and social sciences, face the onslaught of instrumental rationality and experience an attendant colonisation of lifeworlds, in Habermas’ terms, it is all the more essential for us to keep alive the horizons of critical thought which must not be conquered by utilitarian logic of one kind or another. With the cooperation of our contributors and authors, we too hope to keep such horizons visible for the foreseeable future.