

Zunaira Yousaf
American Institute of Pakistan Studies
April 22, 2018

Significance of My Presentation

I presented my paper “Nostalgia and Identity in Mohsin Hamid’s Fiction” in a seminar “Constructing South Asian National Identity in Literature and Film” at NeMLA 49th Convention. The session comprised six presenters, each representing a literary tradition of South Asia. While other presenters expanded on Bangladeshi and Indian perspectives to highlight the role of their respective literature in shaping the South Asian identity, my paper provided an essential Pakistani perspective on the collective culture of South Asia.

My paper focused on quintessential Pakistani novelist Mohsin Hamid’s novels *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and *Exit West*. I argued that not only the protagonists are afflicted with nostalgia, but the nations they belong to also yearn for their past. By discussing the sensitive and contemporary theme of refugee crisis in present world, I contended that these crises are changing the nations all over the world, and the nations also react to these changes. I interpret nostalgia as a constructive affect that helps the characters in the novel reclaim their lost identity as well as the identity of their nations.

By introducing Pakistani novels and advancing the novels’ potential to complement South Asian identity, my paper makes a very timely contribution in the emerging field of South Asian Literature.