I would like to begin by offering both gratitude and best wishes to Dr. Rahul Gairola, the former editor of this newsletter, who helped produce this edition and has served SALA for many years. He has been instrumental in updating the newsletter during his tenure these last three years. As I carry on this mantle, I hope to do Dr. Gairola proud, as well as those former editors whose shoulders on which I invariably stand. We wish you the best in your future endeavors.

I sincerely hope you find this issue of salaam to be full of warm and insightful articles concerning the field of South Asian Literary Studies. While I stand proudly behind these informative pieces offered from our membership, I fear the only editor’s commentary I can make is quite beyond the scope of what this text offers. From a campus attack in Pakistan, the deaths of Professors M. M. Kali-burgi, Rezaul Karim Siddique and the continued outcry at that of Shrinivas Ramchandra Siras, to the recent violence in Bangladesh, Germany, Belgium, and America, this year and the end of the last have been marked with great trepidation and sorrow. It is my belief that while we are preoccupied in this field with flows of text, culture, theory, and pedagogy, we are likewise deeply concerned with the ineffable power of life and its corresponding fragility. I therefore leave a textual silence in the remaining space for this letter in dedication to those both within and beyond our field of study who have been touched by the violence affecting our times, and those bravely standing against it.

Melanie R. Wattenbarger
Like Walter Benjamin’s “Angel of History,” South Asian literary studies has been marked by the backward glance and its attention to the past—its preoccupation with the (post)colonial. Indeed, ideas of the postcolonial, postcoloniality, and postcolonial theory inform the boundary condition within which we come to understand the placement of South Asian literatures and cultures. Analyses of South Asia’s multiply-inflected literatures have mobilized around prominent postcolonial themes such as home/homelessness, diasporic and hybrid consciousness, and race and ethnic difference. Additionally, South Asian literary studies has gained visibility from its cultural proximity to postcolonial theorists with connections to the subcontinent (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Arjun Appadurai) to a point where imbrications between postcolonial theory and South Asian studies are ubiquitous and near synonymous.

Given the framing of the field, particularly in the period between the 1980s through the 1990s, what kinds of reflections and questions about the past, present and futures of South Asian literary cultures have we put aside? Anthony Appiah asserts in the CFP for the 2017 [Presidential Theme on Border and Boundaries] MLA that “traditions of scholarship have developed indifference towards how literature and other representational arts cross the ethnoterritorial.” How does postcolonial studies in the current historical moment characterize or complicate “the ethnoterritorial”? If so, what are the ontological, environmental, ethical, and aesthetic implications of our continued marking of time and space via the imperial-colonial project? Is South Asian literary studies being haunted by a spectre, and is that spectre postcolonial theory? Can we reconcile Robert J. C. Young’s energizing endorsement of the value of the postcolonial in his 2012 essay, “Postcolonial Remains” with novelist Amit Chaudhuri’s desire to discuss “culture as distinct from the post-colonial discourse?” As we settle into the 21st century, in what ways is the imperial-colonial project important or even pertinent to a subcontinent now marked in some ways by neoliberal globalization and shifting diasporic and transnational flows?

We need to map the frontiers of the postcolonial beyond ahistorical imaginations and reductive identities. As newer generations of those who write on South Asia, we must ask ourselves about what constitutes the “newness” of such projects. How can analyses of the recursive nature of theory help us to develop alternative and radical discourses that can lead to transformational politics? To this end, we invite panels to define, interrogate, and analyze spaces and places that affect our understanding of South Asian literary and cultural projects. That is, we invite panels and papers that approach the spaces and places in the context of postcolonial studies such as:
• concerns in governmental policy and policing
• shifts in the production of knowledge and art
• crossing disciplinary divides in research and pedagogy
• absolutes and liminality in articulations of gender and sexuality
• the advance of film, digital humanities, and social media
• oceanic studies and national and cultural contact zones
• ‘travelling theories’ especially across East/West and global North/South
• the representation and reception of hybrid and diasporic texts
• themes of transnational world order(s) in the age of terror
• eco-criticism, animal studies, and the postcolonial anthropocene
• emergent critical approaches, recent authors, and developing forms
• the nuclearization of South Asia
• Comparative Partitions
• Head gear as signifiers of pathology/religious affiliation

Please submit your abstract of no more than 300 words, institutional affiliation, and a/v needs online [here](#) by the firm deadline of September 15, 2016.

Please note that all accepted participants will be expected to become members of SALA by October 15, 2016. For membership and other details, please visit the [SALA website](#). Conference participants are expected to present their accepted papers in person. SALA does not encourage proxy presentations or Skype presentations.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email the conference co-chairs, Dr. Priya Jha (University of Redlands), Dr. Prathim-Maya Dora-Laskey (Alma College), and Dr. Melanie R. Wattenbarger (University of Mumbai), at [salaconference2017@gmail.com](mailto:salaconference2017@gmail.com).
SALA Conference 2017 Hotel

Wyndham Philadelphia Historic District Hotel
400 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106 USA

RESERVATION PROCEDURES
Check-in Jan. 2 - Check-out Jan. 5 ($109 for a king- or double-sized bed)
Individual Call In - Cut Off Date of 12-02-2016
Call the reservations department at 1-877-999-3223 (Conference Code: SALA).
Or follow the hyperlink to be posted soon on the sala website.
All individual reservations should be made by 12-02-2016.

The Jaipur Literature Festival….in Boulder
By Bonnie Zare, University of Wyoming

It’s an unusual story. A castle in the air becomes a reality, linking the home of one of the world’s most well-known free literary festivals to a mountain city of 103,000 that exists eleven time zones away. While traveling back from a spiritual retreat in Nepal, a Boulder Colorado resident, Jessie Friedman, took a detour and visited Jaipur for the exciting Jaipur Literature Festival. She was so impressed by the array of speakers and topics she returned to her home and began networking. Her dream was to gather enough donations to bring JLF to the US – not once, but as a yearly event to occur in Boulder. After working with others to gain grants, Friedman was able to do just that, and the Boulder Jaipur Literature Festival took place in September 2015. Those of us in the Rocky Mountain region are lucky we’re able to participate in this showcase of international and South Asian writers.

Since I’ve had the chance to attend both the Jaipur and Boulder incarnations of JLF, I had to admit my expectations were high. In Jaipur, one enters and finds oneself un-
derneath a hundred celebratory Rajasthani parasols as well as crowds of super polite college volunteers. In Boulder, where naturally the number of attendees (6,000 versus India’s 250,000) was much smaller, I was pleased to find the venue’s lobby still welcomed people with the suspended colorful parasols. One major reason to keep returning to JLF in particular is its format. Although readings have their place, JLF arranges 4-5 person panels based on interviews or a local or global theme. The moderator is often not only skillful at eliciting equal participation but contributes his or her own insights. These sophisticated interactions showcase the fine art of conversation as well as the pleasure of the humanities in a lively and intimate way, giving the listeners the feeling of being at a salon. The Boulder festival followed the same pattern, hosting 40 sessions and 100 speakers such as Vikram Chandra, Hari Kunzru, Arvind Krishna Mehrotra, Christi Merrill and Amitava Kumar. One could easily meet the authors in the bookstall or while having tea near the one food station. A lot of festivals strive to create what the Jaipur Literature Festival achieves. In the words of one visitor, “It offers personal engagement on an international scale. And yet it’s free!”

Three panels became my particular favorites. In the “Skin Deep” panel Nayana Currimbhoy interviewed New York writer Margo Jefferson (author of *Negroland: A Memoir*) and New Mexico writer Mira Jacob (author of *The Sleepwalker’s Guide to Dancing*). Jacob’s fiction captures the family dynamics of one Indian family in the West who struggle with apparitions from the past. Jefferson spoke of growing up in Chicago’s upper class black circles, describing the wounds she experienced from whites as well as the guilt of staying away from what might be the “wrong kind” of black people. Both Jacob and Jefferson spoke about the challenges of being seen and heard as individuals, and Jacob explained the many frustrations of being typecast as a “foreign” writer. (For the flavor of this, check out Jacob’s Buzzfeed essay on being sidelined by the publishing industry: “You Will Ignore us at your own Peril.”)

Later in the day came the “Rainbow Readings” panel, which included Janice Gould sharing her moving poem about the former Stanford University mascot (Red Indian), followed by an excerpt from William H. Henderson’s memoir which put us inside the mind of a young Wyoming ranchland worker who was burning to sleep with a man for the first time. Nepali-Indian author Prajwal Parajuly read from *Land Where I Flee*, set in Sikkim, which he described as taking “all the taboo issues in the Indian subcontinent such as homosexuality, inter-caste marriages and eunuchs” and having “a blast with them.” Manil Suri had the audience in stitches as he read a scene from his novel *The City of Devi*. 
Another memorable panel was based on Namita Gokhale’s compilation of essays on Sita, *In Search of Sita*. The contributors revisited the myth of Sita and added their own interpretive direction to various aspects of her story. Gokhale and contributor Arshia Sattar began by emphasizing Sita’s prominence: “Sita is someone against whom we constantly have to construct ourselves.” Gokhale, who described herself as “raised as a skeptical but practicing Hindu” said she had questioned Sita as a model from a young age. “Across Asia Sita is held up as a model of virtue yet it felt to me as if she was a receiver of injustice.” She and Sattar both argued that Sita was a stronger figure than is commonly thought and that there are many ways to read old stories (and, for instance, to go beyond the idealized images found in Raja Ravi Varma’s paintings). The speakers emphasized that not only women but also men have mixed feelings about Ram’s treatment of his wife and about Sita. They concluded by characterizing Sita as a tantalizing "absent presence" for many readers across the world.

Along with the Literary stars, the setting itself shone bright. Boulder is laid out at the base of the majestic Flatiron Range; furthermore, the organizers made the happy choice to partner with the Boulder Public Library, a jewel of a building which was remodeled in 2014. One does have to put up with the occasional white-yogini-sporting-dreads audience member who wants to use the Q&A to share her latest mystical experience, but the granola-munching-backpacking type next to you might also turn out to be a Global Studies Grad Student studying Modi’s rise (true story). The Festival is on again this year and will feature Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Devdutt Pattanaik, politician Jairam Ramesh and classical musician Vidya Shah among many others.

For those of you who want an intellectual feast and a chance to mingle with some of your favorite authors, do keep September in Colorado in mind!
SALA Member News

Hearty congratulations to our colleagues & allies for their impressive accomplishments over the past year!

RIP Srinivas Aravamudan, professor of English, Literature, and Romance Studies at Duke University. The article from his university can be accessed here.

Lopamudra Basu was promoted to the rank of professor in the department of English, at University of Wisconsin-Stout. She has been named Dahlgren Professor at UW-Stout for 2016-2017. This honor comes with a grant for professional development. She has received a full year sabbatical for 2016-2017 and is researching the plays of Ayad Akhtar, Pulitzer award winning South Asian American playwright. Her essay on Akhtar "Between Performativity and Representation: Post 9/11 Muslim Masculinity in Ayad Akhtar’s Disgraced" was published in the anthology Masks of Threat: South Asian Racialization and Belonging after 9/11 Ed. Aparajita De (Lexington Books, 2016). Basu's essay "The Languages of Diaspora: Meena Alexander, Sujata Bhatt, and Imtiaz Dharker" was published in the volume A History of Indian Poetry in English Ed. Rosinka Chaudhuri (Cambridge University Press, 2016).

Congratulations to Professor Chauhan and his South Asian Review staff for producing a fine Special Topics Issue (37.1): New Directions in South Asian Canadian Literature and Culture, guest-edited by Chandrima Chakraborty and Robin Field, and edited by Professor Chauhan.

Christopher Ian Foster accepted the position of Assistant Professor (tenure track) in the department of English and Modern Foreign Languages at Jackson State University in Jackson Mississippi. He also has an article in last Winter’s South Asian Review.

Rahul K. Gairola participated in the GIAN (Global Initiative of Academic Networks) Workshop sponsored by the Government of India titled "Digital Humanities: Texts, Tools, & Theories" at IIT Indore in March 2016. He participated in the "Knowledge Architectures Mumbai" event co-hosted by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and Columbia University in the City of New York, and presented at the Persons & Sexualities conference at Mansfield College, Oxford University, and Digital Humanities 2016 annual global conference in Krakow, Poland, in July 2016. He has completed a number of essays on postcolonial digital humanities and translation studies for Routledge and Edinburgh University Press, and joined Routledge as a Manuscript Reviewer in July. His review essay of Shyam Selvadurai’s The Hungry Ghosts appears in the current issue of South Asian Review, and he continues to work with Postcolonial Text as an Article/Section Editor. His first monograph is titled Homelandings: Postcolonial Diasporas and Transatlantic Belonging (Rowman & Littlefield).
and will be published in September. He is also part of a working group based in Bangalore that seeks to create an Indian chapter of the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO). He is currently working on a third book project tentatively that examines the shifting meanings of home and identity in cyberspace.

RIP Lakshmi Holmström (1935 – 6 May 2016)

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an Indian-born British writer, literary critic and translator of Tamil fiction into English. Her most prominent works have been her translations of short stories and novels of the contemporary writers in Tamil like Mauni, Pudhumaipithan, Ashoka Mitran, Sundara Ramasami, C. S. Lakshmi, Bama and Imayam. She obtained her undergraduate degree in English Literature from the University of Madras and her postgraduate degree from University of Oxford. Her postgraduate work was on the works of R. K. Narayan. She was the founder-trustee of SALIDAA (South Asian Diaspora Literature and Arts Archive) - an organisation for archiving the works of British writers and artists of South Asian origin. She lived in the United Kingdom. She was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the 2011 New Year Honours for services to literature. Mini Krishnan's article in The Hindu is available here.


She is also presenting a paper entitled “‘Girls Gone Wild’: Kamala and Amala’s Decolonial Storytelling in Bhanu Kapil’s Humanimal: A Project for Future Children.” Ecocriticism and South Asia at the Modern Language Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA Jan 2017. (upcoming)

Congratulations to Eddie Mallot for his SALA session being selected by Anthony Appiah as a President’s Theme Session (Boundary Conditions) at the upcoming MLA Convention in Philadelphia.
Eddie Mallot and Feroza Jussawalla are both up for election to the MLA Delegate Assembly. If you are a member of the MLA, don’t forget to vote. Best of luck to both of you!

Liam O’Loughlin’s interview, “‘A Different Way of Seeing’: An Interview with Minoli Salgado,” will be published in Ariel 47.4, 2016.


Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has most recently engaged in the following professional activities:
A full list of her scholarly activities from the past year can be accessed here.

Melanie R. Wattenbarger graduated with her PhD in English from the University of Mumbai in March 2016.

Bonnie Zare co-taught “Telling My Story,” a course on memoir writing and storytelling, at the Wyoming Women’s Prison in May. University of Wyoming students paired up with incarcerated women to coach the women as they wrote autobiographical stories. These stories will appear in the Spring 2017 issue of Wagadu.
GIAN Digital Humanities: Tools, Texts and Theory
19-25 March 2016
Indian Institute of Technology Indore
By I Watitula LongKumer and Reema Sukhija

GIAN (Global Initiative of Academic Networks) is a program initiated by the Government of India that aims at bringing Higher Education of the country to the standards of global excellence. The program includes an intensive two weeks long workshop that focuses on reforming existing academic resources and is supported and funded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

The GIAN course at the Indian Institute of Technology Indore was held from the 19th - 25th March, 2016 on the theme Digital Humanities: Tools, Texts and Theory. As a new entrant subject in the scholarship of literary studies, this was the first course of GIAN hosted at our institute as well as the first nationwide workshop on the topic of Digital Humanities. It was indeed a pleasure for us to have a sizeable number of participants from different parts of India that included undergraduates, graduate students and faculty members who are currently engaged in the subject of Digital Humanities at their home institutions.

Professor Paul Arthur from the University of Western Sydney, Australia was invited as the international expert to lead the two weeks course for the GIAN program and his session covered important topics such as Researching the Digital World, Digital Humanities in Global Context, Identity and Biography in Digital Era, The Future of Publishing (Academic and otherwise), Digital Culture and Communities, Surveillance and Data collection, Data Aggregation and Analysis, Close and Distant Reading and Network Mapping. Professor Rahul K Gairola from Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee was also invited for lectures and some of his interesting sessions covered topics on Migration in Absentia: Multinational Digital Advertising and Manipulations of Partition Trauma, India Rising: South Asian Digital Humanities, Cultural Critique and Rural Literacy etc. Professor Nirmala Menon, the faculty coordinator of the workshop, engaged the participants with informative lectures on Digital Humanities in India: Policy, Research and Curriculum, Decolonizing Digital Humanities: The Intersection of Postcolonial Studies and Digital Humanities and also conducted a small project for the participants who came up with some amazing ideas and topics of five minutes presentations. The project, as it is based on lectures, gave participants the opportunity to look at how Digital Humanities as a subject enhance/add to present research interest. The presentation included some interesting titles such as: Digital Humanities in Curriculum, Rickshaw Art of Allahabad, Digital Textualities, Do not Define* DH, Application of Digital Humanities and a Conceptual Design along with a fascinating project of Digital Humanities and Tilonia (a village in Ajmer district in Rajasthan, India) a presentation based on the inspiring journey of Barefoot College founded by Sanjit “Bunker” Roy.

Paul Arthur’s plenary lecture on Researching the Digital World talked about technology in the Humanities as an aspect of influencing the way we conduct our research and teaching. He also gave an insight to the web 2.0 era, an interface that emphasizes user-generated contexts in place of passive reading, mass online
participation and social networking, formation of large virtual communities, use of collaborative software and wikis, and crowd sourcing and collaborative intelligence. In one of later sessions on Digital Humanities and Global Contexts, he talked of how technology in the field of Digital Humanities revolutionizes research methods and pedagogy, further stating “machines are talking to one another in an electronic panopticon.”

Rahul Gairola in one of his lectures acknowledged this quote by stating that the engagement of technology in the Digital Humanities is important as “it invokes the notion of surveillance and being watched behind the console.” Rahul Gairola talked of DH Hashtag as a way that critiques imperialism and its application to Digital medium and to disseminate it. Some of his interactive session engaged the participants through close observation of advertisements on Google Search: Reunion and Coco-Cola Small World Machines that projected partition narratives in a different perspective. He further elaborated on this through his lecture on Digital Advertising and Manipulations of Partition Trauma.

Nirmala Menon took on some pertinent questions such as why Digital Humanities is important especially in the area of electronic academic publishing. She stressed the next generation of humanists who are equipped to understand and critically evaluate the data driven digital highway. As she put it, “it is not a replacement or a rejection for the Humanities nor it is techno-determinist, to use a cultural term; it is more than a center to understand technical medium and landscapes that changes the inherent and complex contradictions…it is about pedagogy and scholarship that is publicly visible in the ways which are generally accustomed.” The three lectures collaboratively expressed how Digital Humanities connects to various disciplines together through technology by citing examples on the archeological and anthropological documentation that delves into the history of human civilization through digital recording of samples.
The workshop came to end with a very interactive and engaging Q&A session with Paul Arthur facilitated by Nirmala Menon. The session carried forward some important questions from the participants on how Digital Humanities as an area of research connects to the other disciplines, how students of Computer Science can contribute in this emerging field in the Humanities, and how Digital Humanities is practiced in Universities at the administrative level. Close to the discipline of Humanities, relevant questions were asked on how to preserve Digital Poetry as a subject, how to tackle the challenges of working in a fast-changing digital environment and the challenges in publishing a digital document which is relatively new in the area of literature studies.

Some of the issues discussed include:
1) How to tackle the entrant of a new discipline at the Institution/Universities across the globe
2) How Digital Humanities affect Universities’ bureaucratic and marketing practices
3) How libraries are challenged as having always been the center from where the initialization of a digital documentation come into the institution. There is a need to look into government policies and funding for furthering the growing interest in Digital Humanities in India, similar perhaps to governmental support seen in countries such as South Korea, The United States and Australia. In response to a vital question of conducting cross-disciplinary studies, Nirmala Menon states that the idea of cutting across disciplines is definitely acknowledged as it does not dilute the primary research of a scholar but only adds value to what is already existent. Reciprocating the same, Paul Arthur also stressed the need for establishing a common ground that can stimulate and bridge varied disciplines. He states further that technologists have to find the answers to the challenging questions put by the other side of the discipline to push the boundaries in between. Workshop participants also discussed issues on how “web as an archiving platform is ageing,” and more specifically the possible solution to include responsibility in preserving the web through snapshots that preserve the history of website. For which again, libraries play an important role in maintaining vast amounts of data.

Overall the workshop was an enriching two week program that left the scholars from the host institution and participants with questions on how Digital Humanities as a discipline is critiquing and enabling scholars to understand the centrality of technology in our social structure, how it embodies the interdisciplinary nature of knowledge production and in the process deprovincializing the traditional spectrum of literary engagement. It also helped in harnessing research skills by encouraging participants to embrace and incorporate in their own work cutting-edge research that is beginning to shape the world of academics.
Hello, grad students and other interested readers! My name is Asha Jeffers, and I am the current graduate student representative on the SALA executive committee. I’m also a PhD Candidate in English at York University, in Toronto, Canada. Over the last few years of attending SALA’s annual conference, as well as a number of other conferences in three countries, I’ve had the pleasure of meeting and talking to a lot of other graduate students. These conversations have been enlightening in terms of the similarities and differences amongst grad school experiences across regions and institutions, as well as the incredible diversity of graduate students themselves. Keeping in mind these wide ranges of experience and circumstance, I want to share some of my thoughts on what it means to be a graduate student in this moment.

No one occupies just one subject position. From birth onwards, we are shaped and defined by numerous relationships and positions, some of which are fairly steady but others which are constantly changing. Child, sibling, friend, partner, parent, citizen, member - all these aspects our lives are intertwined with one another. When we become graduate students, we stay all of these other things but gain one identity that is actually at least three identities for the price of one. For most, being a grad student means being a student, a scholar, and a worker all at once. The relationship amongst these three facets of the grad student experience is far from simple.

As students, we know that we are actively learning. Our duty is to soak up every bit of knowledge and skill that we can. We acknowledge that our supervisors, mentors, and committees know things we don't and we do our best to learn from them. This role is probably the most comfortable aspect of being a grad student for most of us; after all, we went into grad school knowing that we were good at being students. By the time we get to this point, we are usually quite adept at learning, researching, and reading.

At the same time, as scholars we recognize that we are not just receivers of knowledge; we also produce it. This is the identity that asks us to recognize that we must know things that other people don't and it's our duty to communicate that knowledge. Sure, we wrote papers and gave presentations and so on in undergrad, but the transition to producing knowledge for not just our professors and classmates but for a wider audience can be as daunting as it is exhilarating. Going to academic conferences is a particularly great but potentially nerve-racking way to start learning how to be a part of academic communities centered on areas of interest rather than geography, and is for many of us the first place we get to test our ideas out on people who are thinking about and writing about the same things we are. This is why I think attending academic conferences is so incredibly valuable for grad students, and why attending all different kinds of them – focused and more intimate like SALA’s annual conference or massive and wide-ranging like MLA, close to home or international, discipline-specific or interdisciplinary – is a really important way to grow as a scholar and professionalize as an academic.

The process of submitting articles for publication is another significant milestone in developing our identity as scholars. In particular, the peer-review process, while at times brutal, is one of the few circumstances where we might find our work evaluated entirely separately from our person. A published article can also go places we have not and be read by people we may never meet, which is a really wonderful prospect. While the discourse of “publish or perish” can make seeking publication seem like a fiery hoop to jump through in order to get and keep a job, it’s important to remember that it is, at its core, meant to be a means of communication and scholarly exchange.

Most of us enter grad school quite comfortable with the student identity and slightly freaked out
by, but also desirous of, the idea of being a scholar. For those of us whose graduate school experience includes teaching, it’s in the classroom where our transformation from student to scholar becomes particularly stark. By being in charge of other students’ learning, we come to see how our own knowledge can be mobilized and shared. But it is also in the classroom where we begin to come to know ourselves as workers.

Thinking of ourselves as workers, and what precisely that particular role means alongside all of our other identities can be a complicated thing. Recognizing that as teachers, we are a part of the complex economic ecosystem that is the university requires a shift in how we think about the institution as it becomes a workplace as well as a site of learning. Never was that more clear to me than last year, when my union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) local 3903, went on strike.

The Latin term we use to describe our universities, *alma mater*, translates to “suckling mother.” Apart from sounding a bit more graphic than one might like, this description casts the university in a specific and benevolent light. But in our current historical moment, the relationship between grad student and institution is much more complicated than such an appellation suggests. This holds true especially now in what many call the “neoliberal university,” where a corporate model of education has shifted a greater portion of teaching duties onto graduate students and untenured faculty in order to save money and where fields such as ours that are considered less productive in the market are given fewer and fewer resources. These circumstances can skew the balance between our roles as scholars and as workers when we are at times expected to do more with less.

I won’t bore you with an excess of details of the lead up to the strike or the strike itself but I will offer some contextualizing information as I use the strike as a jumping off point to discuss grad students as workers. In Canada, the vast majority of universities are public (private universities are usually religious or focused on distance education) and at many universities, teaching assistants, contract faculty (also known as adjuncts), and tenure-stream faculty are unionized. At my university, teaching assistants and contract faculty, as well as research assistants (mostly master’s students) are members of the same union local. The strike was a result of an inability to agree on a new collective agreement (contract) between our union and the university, our employer. There were a number of issues at stake, but here I will only mention two. One was tuition indexation, that is, the policy that the university cannot claw back our wages by increasing tuition, which had been established as a result of a strike in 2000/2001. The university had reinterpreted this aspect of our contract in order to massively increase international student fees. Another one of the issues was better funding for master’s students.

For me, the strike was about accessibility. Having a well-funded PhD program is great, but if master’s programs are prohibitively expensive then smart people who could do amazing work at the PhD level won’t necessarily make it there. Charging international graduate students exorbitant fees means missing out on brilliant scholars from countries of the global south. My own mother came to Canada as an international student at a time when it wasn't common practice at universities to treat foreign students as cash cows and she and her peers have contributed a great deal to Canada.

Nonetheless, being on strike didn’t feel noble; it felt messy and exhausting and cold. Getting snowed on and rained on, honked at, and yelled at day after day for a month was a rough sort of education, but it was very much that. I really had to think about what it meant to be an academic worker and
what it meant to be a part of a group with at times very disparate interests. Even when interests were aligned, there were markedly different approaches to achieving our shared ends. Recognizing that as a worker my relationship to the university was dictated by many if not all of the same factors that would be in play if I worked for a corporation. This meant that I needed to separate my idea of the university as my site of learning from the university administration as my employer.

As grad students, we often have to make choices about our time and resources knowing that something’s got to give. The hours we get paid for teaching rarely line up with the amount of time we actually have to put in to do a good job – especially if we are, as is often the case in our field, teaching outside of our area of expertise and have to read a new novel every week to teach it on top of our own necessary reading. It's no secret that many if not most research institutions could not function without grad student labour. In this age of austerity, it is important that grad students demand to be recognized as an integral part of the university workforce whose labour needs to be valued. After all, being a teaching assistant is not just practicing to be a professor – the grades we assign students affect their degrees and the things that we teach them affect their lives.

Indeed, recognizing that as teaching assistants we are also workers is important because it also means that we as grad students need to take our teaching seriously. Bringing a passion and professionalism to the classroom and treating our classrooms, offices, and lecture halls as workplaces goes a long way to make us strong teachers now and better prepared to become course directors in the future. Also, we should remember the power of bringing our other identities into the classroom. Much has been written about the difficulties that women of any ethnicity and people of colour of any gender face when teaching in the university context and these struggles are real, but the increasing presence of women and people of colour at the head of classrooms is one of the key solutions to combatting the biases that are at the heart of such problems. I’ve also found that as a postcolonialist, incorporating the theory and ideas that I’ve learned from studying postcolonial texts and history into any class that I’m teaching, whether it focuses on children’s literature or satire or the Bildungsroman, can significantly add to my students' knowledge and analytical tools. In fact, bringing the topics I’m teaching into contact with the topics I’m writing about has even given me insight into my own research. The work we do as instructors is valuable to our students and ourselves.

As strange of a fit as it can be, the university can be our benefactor and our employer, a place of learning and a place of conflict. And solidarity among grad students, in the same institutions and otherwise, has the potential to be powerful. Since the end of the strike, York has pulled some shady moves to try to side step certain aspects of our new contract, so the strike can’t be read as an unmitigated success. But it taught a whole lot of grad students to really consider the value of their labour, the nature of fairness, and the importance of not taking for granted gains for which others before you fought. Undoubtedly, being a grad student is in many ways a privileged position. But I think it is a mistake to allow recognition of this fact to be used as a reason to demand that we be happy with whatever the university sees fit to give us. As in many areas of life, it is necessary to advocate for ourselves.

Life happens during graduate school – especially a PhD. Many people start or raise families, care for elders, move across countries or continents, get married and get divorced, get sick, learn about themselves in myriad ways. A lot of people are doing grad school during one of the most transitional times in
their lives and others are doing it after having had another life all together. In all cases, the particularities of this life requires a particular kind of juggling that can at times feel impossible to keep up. There’s no easy, one size fits all way to do grad school or to manage our multiple identities as people and as students, scholars, and workers. But one thing I know for sure is that talking, collaborating, and engaging in solidarity with other grad students can help.

As SALA grad student representative, I hope that I can contribute to making these connections with you.

Feel free to reach me at jeffers@yorku.ca.

Asha Jeffers is a PhD Candidate in English at York University in Toronto, Canada. Her research focuses on literature about the children of immigrants, “the second generation”, across national and ethnic lines. Her critical work has been published in *South Asian Review* and her creative writing in *The Puritan* magazine.

Up-Coming Calls for Papers (continued on page 20)

"Designing (Post)Colonial Knowledge: Imagining South Asia"

In Saloni Mathur’s 2007 book, *India by Design: Colonial History and Cultural Display*, she analyzes sites of artistic and cultural productions and institutions as they represent Indian design within colonial power structures. Reading sites as varied as museums and colonial postcards contrapuntally, Mathur proposes that the arts’, crafts, and aesthetics were significant not only in a conscious effort to control the visual display of culture and as a set of aesthetic traditions, but also how they signified dynamic shifts in imperial contacts. Work by scholars such as Mathur, Karen Fiss, S. Balaram, and Ashoke Chatterjee, among others, contributes to a growing body of scholarship that examines the relationship between design and its construction of knowledge about multicultural identities in the colonial and postcolonial periods, and serves as a springboard into the call for papers for this special issue on South Asia, (post)colonialism, and design. Designs may be regarded as diagrams of mental maps of individual and collective cultures, which can have profound implications for the re-envisioning of postcolonial histories. The infusion of design studies with strands of postcolonial theories such as nationalism; transnationalism; transculturalism; diaspora; displacement, among others, can reveal the much-needed work in linking these modes to the distribution of power through emotional evocations and “experience”. We begin with a definition of design as a cognitive assemblage which translates information and/or ideas into concrete forms. How can the study of design help us to challenge assumptions about the distribution of power in a globalized, transnationalized era, particularly around notions of authenticity, exotic-ness, and colonial passivity in relation to post-colonial identity formations across nations? Well into the 21st century, we have witnessed profound changes in the ways that identities are positioned within and against global and local economic and cultural forces, and, between public spaces and private ones. How do we theorize the mobilization of emotional negotiations being made as we buy increasingly into becoming global citizens-as-consumers and vice-versa? Design studies centralizes the continued interrogation of the cognitive dissonance between products that may be coded as “authentic” and the “lived-in-ness” of products and their concomitant symbolic and ideological meanings in the “real” world, something that is inherently problematic for the analysis of non-western cultures. Critics in design studies emphasize the vernacularization of culture
The 16th Annual SALA Conference on “Cultural Practices in the South Asian Public Sphere” by Abdollah Zahiri and Jana Fedtke, 2016 Conference Co-Chairs

In January 2016, it was time for another gathering of South Asia enthusiasts. Held in conjunction with the MLA Convention, the 16th Annual SALA Conference took place at the Wyndham Garden Hotel in Austin, TX, January 5-6, 2016.

As this year’s co-chairs, we – Abdollah Zahiri at Seneca College in Toronto and Jana Fedtke at the American University of Sharjah/UAE – worked tirelessly throughout Fall 2015 to put this conference together and to make it a success. We couldn’t have done it without the support and participation of all the conference contributors as well as the SALA Executive Committee. A big thank you to everyone for their help, advice, and participation in the conference!

The topic of this conference was “Cultural Practices in the South Asian Public Sphere.” Our Call for Papers initially drew over 100 submissions, and we eventually ended up with about 70 presenters from South Asia, North America, Europe, and the Middle East.

The conference represented a broad range of subject matters within the theme of the South Asian Public Sphere. We had panels on, for example, Kashmiri literature, Pakistan in the public sphere, panels focusing on genders and sexualities, urbanization, religion, minorities and transnationalism within the public sphere, South Asian film, Sri Lanka in the public sphere, issues of social justice, and Caribbean diasporas in the public sphere. Each panel consisted of 3-4 speakers, with one participant chairing the session. The presenters and the audience engaged in lively discussions after the presentations. From what we were able to observe, these discussions were often continued in private and over tea or coffee around the conference location. A special thank you to the panel chairs for chairing the sessions and ensuring that the conference proceeded so smoothly.

In addition to the “regular” panel presentations, the conference also featured a couple of special events. On the evening of the first conference day, we had our traditional literary arts event, Hamara Mushaira. As usual, this event was organized and moderated by Amritjit Singh. Invited readers featured Chaitali Sen from Austin, TX, and Roshni Kustomji from Alameda, CA, as well as other participants from the SALA crowd who read excerpts of their creative writing to an attentive audience. At the end of the second day, many of us celebrated a successful conference and many other achievements of individual participants during our dinner at Bombay Bistro in Austin.

This conference was also the first time that we held a roundtable discussion of current events. Aply titled, “Intolerance and Challenges to Free Speech in the Indian Public Sphere,” the roundtable featured brief presentations by Josna Rege, who had proposed this topic, Nalini Iyer, Amritjit Singh, and Sourit Bhattacharya. It was followed by a sometimes heated and personal discussion of issues related to this topic that seemed to have struck a chord with many of the conference participants due to its relevance and timeliness.

In the morning of the second day of presentations, we held a Graduate Student Professionalization panel, which was designed to provide graduate students with advice regarding their careers. The panel included brief remarks by Aniruddha Mukhopadhyay, Moumin Quazi, Cynthia Leenerts, and Melanie Wattenbarger. The session was open to all participants and the presenters welcomed questions from the audience.

Since graduate students are an integral part of SALA and the conference, SALA also awards the Graduate Student Paper Prize each year to the presenter(s) of the best graduate student paper(s). Graduate students may submit their papers before the conference, and members of the jury decide based on the quality of the paper itself and the presentation at the conference. The jury had the tough task to choose between a number of great papers and presentations, but ultimately decided to award three prizes. The winners were Muhammad Waqar Azeem (“Drone-Zone as a Camp: A New Public Space in Pakistan”), Debojoy Chanda (“The Neo-Intimate Hindu Sphere: Sexual ‘Purity’ in the Neometropolitan Indian City”), and Dibyadyuti Roy (“Radioactive Masculinity: Anxious Atomic Publics and the Postcolonial Bomb”). Congratulations!

Each year, SALA also features a keynote address by a well-known scholar in the field. We were lucky this year to have Barbara Harlow with us, the Louann and Larry Temple Centennial Professor of English Literature at the University of Texas at Austin. Barbara joined us for the whole conference and delivered her timely keynote address on the second day. Her topic was “In the Age of UAVs: Targeted Killings, Collateral Damage, and Drones in the Public Sphere.” This engaging speech addressed literature in the age of drones. It focused on contemporary literary representations of drones such as Dan Fesperman’s Unmanned (2015) and Mike Maden’s novels on drones in the Troy Pearce series, among others. After the lecture, Barbara answered questions from the curious audience. To recognize her scholarship on various subjects and regions over the past few decades, SALA awarded Barbara Harlow the SALA Distinguished Achievement Award at the Awards Ceremony following the talk.

From our perspective, the SALA conference in Austin was a huge success. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone again for their participation, advice, and help in running the conference. Thank you to all the presenters, the panel chairs, and the Executive Committee. We sincerely hope that you enjoyed this conference as much as we did. We look forward to keeping in touch and to seeing everyone again at the next SALA conference in Philadelphia in January 2017!

Thank you, and best wishes,
Abdollah Zahiri and Jana Fedtke.
GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING
JAN. 5, 2016
AUSTIN, TX

5:45 PM start

President’s Report:
Moumin Quazi stated that we are working on creating SALA as a 501(c)3 organization. First step is to create a corporation and for that we need a Board of Directors that will function in an Ambassadorial capacity for SALA.
In light of the establishment of the Board of Directors, we need to change the role of the Advisor. Currently Advisor is a 6 year term, and ExComm recommends that Advisor be a 3-year term. We need the General membership to vote on this issue.

Discussion of the issue included:
President of SALA will be non-voting member of the Board. Board will be 3+1; Advisor will be continue to be a non-voting member of ExComm, but a voting member of the Board of Directors (one of the four).
Role of Advisor in ExComm according constitution is provide advice on SALA matters, how SALA grows, and its institutional memory.
Board of Directors will be Ambassadorial and won’t run the yearly business of the ExComm/SALA.
Motion made by Moumin to change Advisor role to 3 years, seconded by Cynthia and passes unanimously.

Changes made to the Constitution from Vancouver 2015 conference.
SALA-MLA panels -- person who coordinates a panel can choose to chair or present but not both.
Article 1, section 3, part 5. Honoraria for Hamara Mushaira and Keynote speaker was clarified.

For current discussion:
SALA conference co-chairs: Motion being presented is that we want to extend the conference co-chairs call and appointment to at least two years out if not more. Priya Jha, Melanie Wattenbarger, and Prathim Maya Dora-Laskey have offered to co-chair 2017 in Philadelphia.

Rahul Gairola, Cynthia Leenerts, Amrita Ghosh for 2018 in NYC.
Pennie Ticen seconded motion made by Moumin to extend time for planning

Discussion of issue included:
Reservations expressed about 3 co-chairs and also not locking too many years in advance as it will dissuade people from membership.
Decide co-chairs only when we know the location of MLA.
Two years is good and prudent but 3 years or more is thinking too far ahead. We need to have people who do have SALA experience at least 2 years before we commit to co-chairs.
Executive committee membership is a good place for people to engage the organization when new to SALA.
For emerging scholars, planning 3 years ahead might be challenging in terms of job search and/or tenure process.
Motion made withdrawn.
New motion: change the Constitution’s language from “next conference” to “next two conferences.”
Seconded by Amritjit. Passes unanimously.
Next issue—how many on the co-chair committee; we leave that to the discretion of the Ex Comm. We appreciate Afrin and Sukanya’s volunteer spirit but we will work on the 2019 conference in 2017.

Treasurer’s Report: SALA is in good financial health. We have about $22,000 in the bank. Co-chairs and Treasurer increased revenue by $4000 from last year by being consistent in following up on dues and ensuring that all participants are paid members.

Newsletter: We thanked Rahul for his excellent work. We thanked Josna as founding editor.

Comments: Session 493 in MLA panel got left out. Pay special attention to Member news, possible articles or creative writing etc.
Melanie will be co-editing with Rahul this next year to assist in developing the newsletter. She may become the next Editor.
Suggestion about appointing regional representatives to gather news such as for Pakistan. Moumin will pass along the idea to Rahul.
SAR report.

*SAR* has had a successful year. Arcadia U is providing us a budget line, $15000 towards costs, allowing us to use their bulk mailing rates, and providing stipends for two grad students and for work study undergraduates.

We share royalty revenue (50%) with Arcadia which last year was $1200 total with $600 to Arcadia.

Nishat Haider’s essay on Satyajit Ray in the *SAR* special issue won the Meenakshi Mukherjee prize from IACLALS.

Dr. Verma’s email was read aloud. With permission, we can perhaps include the email in the next newsletter.

Conference co-chairs—thanks to the audience for participation.

Web Manager report: Ani stepped in when Madhurima stepped down due to time constraints. We thanked Ani for his work.

We thanked Summer (VP) for editing abstracts and bios, which are published on the website.

Task force to create a non-discrimination and harassment policy for SALA. Invite volunteers. Waseem Answar, Yubraj Aryal have volunteered to serve. ExComm will establish this task force soon.

Affirmation of free speech in South Asian public sphere motion. Proposed by Josna, endorsed by ExComm. Seconded by Waseem and Shahzeb

Language says “SALA” and not “members”

South Asian countries and their diasporas—check that sentence out for sense

“cannot flourish;” take out “remain”—typo.

Paper ballots called for and motion passed unanimously

Statement will be posted on the web after suggested minor corrections are made

Motion was passed unanimously and voting was done by paper ballots

Election for Ex Committee members. Thank you, Alpana and Melanie, for your excellent service. Two positions open and at least one must be a grad student.

For Grad Student position, 3 nominations received: Asha Jeffers, Binod Paudyal, Ruma Sinha

Candidates made brief statements and Asha Jeffers has been elected to serve a two year term.

For the second position, nominations included: Binod Paudyal, Ruma Sinha, Shahzeb Khan, Jana Fedtke.

Candidates made brief statements and Jana Fedtke was elected to serve a two year term.

Other Business: People discussed *SAR* becoming available electronically. We are missing valuable scholarship on South Asian lit that is searchable and accessible. Our scholarship is invisible in this digital age. Also questions were raised about how editorial board is chosen and if there are term limits. Moumin noted that we are working on electronic access and the urgency of the issue will be conveyed to Dr. Chauhan as Editor of *SAR*.

Meeting adjourned at 7:07 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Nalini Iyer

Secretary, SALA

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**CALLING ALL GRADUATE STUDENTS:**

Submit your papers for the SALA Graduate Student Paper Prize!

Details on deadlines and submissions can be found [Here](#).

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**DONATE TO SALA TODAY!**

As a non-profit organization that is dedicated to exploring, challenging, promoting, and publishing cutting edge research in South Asian Studies, we are totally self-supporting! Your kind gift supports our conferences, graduate student travel, and the efficient publication of our recognized peer-reviewed journal, South Asian Review. To learn more and/or make a donation, please click [here](#). Thanks!

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Do you have news, pictures, feature story ideas, CFPs, and/or personal milestones you’d like to share with the SALA community of scholars, teachers, and allies? Submit it for publication in the Winter 2017 issue of *Salaam*! Please send your items in MS Word format to Melanie R. Wattenbarger at salanewslettereditor@gmail.com by 1st November 2016.
vis-à-vis analyses of the uneven processes of colonization and globalization. There is a process of indigenization of consumer goods, along with their attendant symbolic and ideological values, which cannot be transferred in an uninterrupted and unmediated way to passive consumers. Moreover, the invocation of being “haunted” by “ghosts” of cultures and experiences reconfigured by marketing that makes use of (and thereby recreates) aspects of post-colonial cultures can aid in tracing the processes by which material culture is inherently self-reflective in that it recognizes its own historicization in colonial cultures and recursive in its newer forms. This special issue of South Asian Popular Culture asks for essays that pose questions about colonial history, colonial and postcolonial cultural practices, and the aestheticization of South Asian art, design, and media forms as they inform identities in a deterritorialized global culture.

We are looking for critical essays, which should be 6,000-7,000 words, or pieces for the “Working Notes”, which should be 2,000 – 3,000 words. The “Working Notes” selections may be more experimental, creative, or informal and should draw on theory or other intellectual issues that fit into the theme of this special issue.

Possible topics include but are by no means limited to:

- How can design subvert the “exotic” and/or the “authentic”?
  - World Markets
  - Postcolonial bodies on display
  - Histories of design and its industries in South Asia
  - Colonial architectures
- Representing “traditional” culture within a transnational framework
  - Bollywood’s design of the national and diasporic citizen
  - Design and postcolonial development
- Emergent technologies and design for postcolonial nationalism
  - “Barefoot designers”
  - Software design
- Design and the Experience of Trans/National Experiences
  - Vernacular architecture
  - Religion, religious practices, and popular culture
  - Re-reading Orientalism
  - The future of design

Please send 300-500 word abstracts to Dr. Priya Jha at priya_jha@redlands.edu and Rajinder Dudrah at rajinder.dudrah@bcu.ac.uk by Friday, October 7, 2016. Please indicate on your abstract whether you are submitting a critical essay or a piece for the “Working Notes.”

Culinary Routes/ Roots: Department of English, University of Delhi
2-3 November 2016
Call for Papers

What are the implications involved in making sense of food today? Commensality, consumption taboos and culinary literature that surround food practices and cultural history function as markers of the identity of individuals and communities. Grand narratives on the subject are more likely to render identity fragile rather than robust, and often need interrogation themselves. Food, even when relegated to the realm of the everyday, manifests its presence and pressures in complicated ways. Given this reality, can food or even the language and literature surrounding food be taken for granted?

This conference aims to address literature, popular media and culture and the symbolic or metaphorical engagement with food inscribed within. In this context, the questions evoked are many:

- Why is food central to language, literature and cultural modes of existence? How does one account for its representation? Is it merely the given or does it become a symbol or metaphor evoking epiphanies?
- How does representation of food impact our existence and what are its links to identity – personal, collective, religious, regional and national? Can consumption of food as represented in various ways be read as consumption of culture?
- Can language capture the nuances associated with food such as taste, flavour and fragrance and its inevitable link to memories? Is it possible to imagine food which one has not tasted, Ambrosia, for instance? Do we relish the imagined food or that which we eat? How do we understand the ways in which this sensory experience is translated into a play with space and time?

The possibilities pertaining to these questions may be explored under the following heads, which are indicative but not restrictive.
Up-Coming CFPs (cont.)

Imagining, translating, visualising and performing the experience of food
   Can the subaltern eat?
   Gastronomical Gendering
   Globalization and Gastro-anomie
   Ambrosia: Food for the Gods/Goddesses
   Hunting Games to Hunger Games: Detours and Deconstructions

Please submit abstracts of no more than 300 words, institutional affiliation, and a/v needs by the firm deadline of 16 September 2016 to dufoodconf2016@gmail.com. Notification of acceptance will be sent via e-mail by 27 September 2016.

Registration Fees
   Faculty Members: Rs. 1000/-
   Independent Scholars/Researchers: Rs. 700/-
   Students: Rs. 200/-

Important Dates
   16 September 2016   Submission of abstracts
   27 September 2016   Notification of acceptance
   12 October 2016     Last date for registration
   2-3 November 2016   Conference

Conference Committee
   Swetha Antony (Convenor)
   Advisory Committee Members
   Raj Kumar
   Ira Raja
   Pooja Negi

Desi Writer’s Lounge’s Short Story Contest is now open for submissions. Please read the guidelines below before you apply. You can email your entry to info (at) desiwriterslounge dot net by 11:59 PM (Pakistan Standard Time) on 31 August 2016. Results will be announced during the first week of October.

The contest has no entry fee and is open to writers worldwide. Just like 2015, this year again we have a total of nearly $800 in prize money, including the PKR 50,000 Dastaan Award (read more about the annual award). The top 3 entries for the contest will win $100 each and one of the top 3 stories will also receive the Dastaan Award. The jury for the contest is composed of DWL and Papercuts magazine staff members. Winners will be announced during the first week of October.

Jaggery (www.jaggerylit.com), a digital journal of South Asian and diasporic arts and literature, is seeking editors in essays, fiction, poetry, and reviews to join our volunteer staff (we generally aim to have three editors in each department). We are also looking for copyeditors and a few people to work on PR / publicity; these are relatively low time commitments, a few (critical) hours, three times / year.

We publish three issues / year, and the work is done entirely online, so we welcome applicants from anywhere in the world. We publish primarily in English, so excellent English skills are a must, although applicants who also have facility with other South Asian languages are welcomed; we do publish translations when possible. Previous editorial experience would be beneficial, but is not required.

To apply, send a one-paragraph introduction of your and your qualifications to our editor-in-chief, Mary Anne Mohanraj, at mohanraj@uic.edu. Please use the subject line: JAGGERY CALL FOR EDITORS, and indicate in your message which position(s) you're applying for. We hope to make selections by the end of August.

Thank you for your interest in Jaggery!
The formation of a diaspora could be articulated as the quintessential journey into becoming; a process marked by incessant re-groupings, recreations, and reiteration. — Okwui Enwezor

Since the past two decades, many researchers have made scholarly interventions with respect to defining ‘diaspora’. An overused, over-theorized yet an uncontested term, scholars have now begun to not only use it as a collective noun but also an adjective, a verb and an adverb: ‘diasporic’, ‘diasporization’, ‘post-diaspora’. At this conference, we ask, what lies next? The basic focus of this three-day conference is to examine, within an inter-disciplinary and an alternative framework, both the historical phenomena of ‘diaspora’ and contemporary alternative approaches to diaspora studies.

This conference will be jointly organized by the Diasporic Constructions of Home & Belonging Indian Diaspora Centre (CoHaB IDC), the Indo-Canadian Studies Centre (ICSC), and the Centre for Advanced Studies in India (CASII). The conference seeks to explore how the use of the concept of diaspora has become dispersed through different semantic, conceptual and disciplinary spaces and the Diaspora term itself has become ‘Diaspora’. We aim to do this by not only giving an opportunity to our speakers to read out their papers on diaspora studies but also to think beyond and present their ideas differently. The conference seeks to address the following questions:

What constitutes the discourse of diaspora and diasporic culture? What is the current state of diaspora studies and what are its trajectories of evolution? What’s next and are we thinking post-diaspora/post diaspora? How does the language of various disciplines like economics, mathematics, sociology, history and so on travel and intermingle to define and expand the contours of the notion of “diaspora”? How does the language of literature in the form of novels, poetry, short stories, plays, films, other forms of visual arts, social and mass media shape or define diasporic cultures? Who is representing them and how? What is the role of literary devices like allegory, fantasy, wit, satire, etc in representing particular diasporic trajectories and what is the result of such representations?

Eventually, this conference aims to be a part of a new emerging inclusive interdisciplinary research and promote a dialogue to encourage development in diaspora studies. Participants are encouraged to think of how their research on diaspora can be applied in multi-/inter-/cross-disciplinary, collaborative ways. To that end, proposals for presentations, papers, posters, performances, workshops, and parallel panel sessions are invited on any aspect of diaspora studies which may include but are not limited to the following themes:

- Concept of “diaspora” as discussed in recent scholarly articles, novels, films, short stories, poetry, travelogue, popular soap operas, documentaries
- Role and result of literary and visual medium in representing diasporic experiences
- Impact of the concept of diaspora on other academic fields
- The consequences of particular literary and political strategies (for instance, wit, satire, fantasy, etc) in representing diasporic trajectories.
- Cross/Inter/Multi- Disciplinary travels in diasporic literature, films and theory.

We are also considering having a fun speed-geeking talk for 2-minutes where audience/participants of the conference can present their latest ideas related to their project on diaspora studies to key-note speakers and be open to feedback! In addition, we are open to individual or
groups of researchers wanting to perform a play or read out their own poetry or short stories related to diaspora studies.

**Invited Keynote Speakers:**

Reputed experts in the area from India and abroad will be invited as keynote speakers to the conference.

**Other Speakers:**

The organisers welcome academics from India and around the world to the conference. They could send their abstracts to the organisers and if selected they will get 20 minutes for their presentations and 10 minutes for questions on their papers.

Young researchers will be given an opportunity to present their ongoing research and should send their abstracts to the organisers. If selected they will be accommodated in ‘Speed Sessions’ where they would get 10 minutes for their presentations and 5 minutes will be reserved for Q&A.

**Last date for receipt of abstracts 15th August 2016. Acceptance will be conveyed on or before 15 September 2016. Abstracts should be sent to Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha nbharucha@cohab.mu.ac.in with copy marked to Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran srajeswaran@casiindia.com**

**Venue:** University of Mumbai, Kalina Campus, Mumbai 400098, India

**Accommodation:** Limited accommodation is available for out-station participants and would be available on a first-come-first-served basis. Contact Professor Nilufer Bharucha for bookings. nbharucha@cohab.mu.ac.in

The organisers will take care of accommodation for the invited keynote speakers.

**Registration Fees:**

There will be no registration fees for invited keynoter speakers. All other participants will have to pay Registration Fees:

1. Local (Mumbai) Indian Participants: Rs. 1500/- (Rs. One Thousand Five Hundred only)
   
   Inclusive of Conference Kit, Lunch and Tea during the Conference.

2. Outstation Indian Participants: Rs.5000/- (Rs. Five Thousand only) inclusive of Conference Kit, Accommodation (conference days + one day before and one day after the conference on sharing basis) and all meals during the conference.

3. Foreign Outstation Participants: Rs.8000/- (Rs. Eight Thousand only)
   
   Inclusive of Conference Kit, Accommodation (conference days + one day before and one day after the conference on sharing basis) and all meals during the conference

**Details and Enquiries regarding Payment of Registration fees and booking of Accommodation should be sent to:**

Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha, Director and Scientist-in-Charge, CoHaB IDC
nbharucha@cohab.mu.ac.in and Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran, Director, CASII
srajeswaran@casiindia.com.

**Conference Directors:**

Professor Nilufer E. Bharucha, Director and Scientist-in-Charge, Diasporic Constructions of Home and Belonging Indian Diaspora Centre – CoHaB IDC

Professor Sridhar Rajeswaran, Director, Centre for Advanced Studies in India - CASII

Mumbai

12 July 2016
Dear SALA members,

I am writing because our journal, *South Asian Review*, periodically needs reviewers from a range of disciplines—literary studies, anthropology, history, political science, and others—to submit book reviews for the many South Asia-related books we receive from presses in Europe, USA and South Asia. We are looking for folks willing to do these book reviews, ranging in length from 850-1250 words.

Doing these short book reviews is a wonderful way to contribute to the processes of knowledge building on South Asia, and is a part of the peer-review process so integral to our scholarship. I also see it as a great opportunity to curate, as it were, the conversation on the issues in which you are invested. If you would be willing to do a book review in this academic year, would you kindly write to me at k.daiya@gmail.com? Please specify which discipline or period would be of interest to you, and I can send you the list of books available for review.

I will appreciate that very much. We can forward to you a free copy of the book you choose. Alternately, if there are important new books in your areas of expertise that you believe should be reviewed, please contact me and we can slot those in for forthcoming issues. Please feel free to connect me with friends in other disciplines who might be interested in reviewing books as well. Thank you in advance.

— Kavita Daiya, Associate Editor, *South Asian Review*

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**CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS**

**South Asian Literature, Arts, and Culture Studies**  
(Peter Lang International Academic Publishers)  
Series Editor: Moumin Quazi

The South Asian Literature, Arts and Culture Studies series invites submissions from scholars working in the field of South Asian Studies, with a particular interest in literature, the arts (print and film), politics, religion, and society. South Asian Studies especially focuses on the Indian subcontinent, particularly India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Burma, and the diaspora of Non-Resident South Asians throughout the world.

The series welcomes a variety of approaches and theories that interrogate and explore aspects and elements of South Asian thought, life, and artistic production. The series does not only focus on contemporary, but also in special cases, on the ancient or classical studies. This series welcomes a variety of analytical approaches and theories, especially postcolonial, feminist, post-structural, new historical, psychological, Marxist, and structuralist. Scholars working in related fields, such as philosophy, hermeneutics, and social theory, with a major interest in how these disciplines relate to South Asian Studies, are also invited to contribute manuscripts.

Fill out the query page at [http://www.peterlang.com/index.cfm?cid=95](http://www.peterlang.com/index.cfm?cid=95), or send your manuscripts to Michelle Salyga at michelle.salyga@plang.com.

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**A Note from the Web Manager**

I hope everyone had a wonderful grading retreat, that is, Winter break. Kris Stokes has finished work on SALA’s responsive website. If you go to our site on any device, including smartphones and tablets, the site is optimized for that screen size. This means no pinch-and-zoom, side-scrolling, etc.

This makes our website that much more accessible and convenient, specially before the conference in January when we see so much traffic on our site. You can also get a preview of what the different formats look like if you adjust the size of your PC window. We are continuing to optimize and improve the website and make it better linked to the newsletter and other points of interest for our membership. Please feel free to send me any feedback you may have at: Aniruddha.Mukhopadhyay@tamuk.edu

Best,

Aniruddha, SALA Web Manager
CALL FOR PAPERS

The 2017 Regular Issue of the South Asian Review

South Asian Review, the refereed journal of the South Asian Literary Association, invites submissions for the Regular Issue, Volume 38, Number 2 (September). SAR is a representative scholarly forum for the examination of South Asian languages and literatures in a broad cultural context. The journal invites healthy and constructive dialogue on issues pertaining to South Asia, especially to its literature and the sister arts. It welcomes critical and analytical essays on any aspect or period of South Asian literature (ancient, precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial). SAR is open to all ideas, positions, and to various critical and theoretical approaches. Recognizing the linguistic and cultural diversity of the subcontinent, the journal stays interested in essays about intercultural, comparative, and interdisciplinary studies in the humanities. For periodic publications, SAR encourages essays on music, painting, sculpture, architecture, and other related fields. The following areas are of special interest to the journal:

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Author Spotlight: Amitabha Bagchi
By Averi Mukhopadhyay

“To think that men rule the world is to put that in a box, and refuse to understand the male mental process.” - tête-à-tête Author Amitabha Bagchi chats with Averi Mukhopadhyay about his debut novel Above Average.

The last sixty years have witnessed the rise of a new genre in literature. This new genre is the ‘campus novel’ which is alternatively known as the ‘academic novel’ as well. Campus novels, as the term itself suggests, are novels usually comic or satirical, written in unpretentious language, with the action being set within enclosed world of colleges or universities, that is, the academe, highlighting the follies of academic life, and dealing with wayward academics let loose on the wider world. This kind of novel originated in America with the publication of Mary McCarthy’s The Groves of Academe in 1952. This work is a watershed in the history of English literature, primarily because World War II had ended, heralding the rapid growth of American universities. These new universities first absorbed the returning war veterans and then took in an ever-growing percentage of the baby-boomer population. There was a repetition of the same situation in Britain in the post-Second World War era, where with the emergence of ‘red brick’ universities in the cities of Liverpool, Birmingham, Leicester, Leeds and Manchester and the ‘white tile’ universities in Sussex, York, East Anglia, Essex university education became readily accessible to most young men residing there. Access to university gave the much needed impetus for the proliferation of campus literature, especially campus novels. The genre then traversed the globe, mainly Australia, South Africa, and India. Since independence from colonial rule in the latter half of the 20th century, South Asian countries have primarily dedicated their energy in writing back to the empire. Postcolonial literature tends to dominate the realm of South Asian literature. However, simultaneously a small but recognizable and important genre, that is, campus literature with a small body of criticism devoted to it, has also been taking shape in India all the while. The genre gained prominence with the publication of Chetan Bhagat’s Five Point Someone in 2004. At present the major practitioners of campus novel include Srividya Natarajan, Harshdeep Jolly, Animesh Verma, Abhijit Bhaduri, Soma Das, Amitabha Bagchi.

Amitabha Bagchi was born and brought up in Delhi. He once said in an interview with The Hindu that from a very early age, he “had some idea that I wanted to be a writer, but I was also good at math and everyone around seemed to be taking IIT [Indian Institute of Technology, hereafter IIT] so I took IIT. But in a year or two I got pulled in by the mathematical aspects of computer science…” Having completed engineering from IIT Delhi, Bagchi pursued Doctor of Philosophy in Computer Science from John Hopkins University and completed the degree in 2002. At present, he is an Associate Professor at IIT Delhi, where he is a part of the Data Analytics and Intelligence Research group. His research interests include structural properties of networks, wireless networks, random graphs and stochastic processes, social networks, data analytics, and data structures. But his concern for the human element made him seek in fiction the often ineffable interior lives of characters. Bagchi’s first novel, Above Average, was published in 2007 by HarperCollins India and became a bestseller. His second novel, The Householder, was published to critical acclaim in 2012 by Fourth Estate, an imprint of HarperCollins India. This Place, his most recent novel, was published in 2013, also by Fourth Estate, and has been nominated for the Dublin IMPAC Literary Prize 2015 and shortlisted for the Raymond Crossword Book Award 2014.

While Above Average provides an account of its protagonist Arindam’s experiences at IIT Delhi, the author’s alma mater, The Householder introduces us to the conflicted life of Naresh Kumar, Personal Assistant to a powerful civil servant, for whom corruption is a survival tool. This Place reflects once again Bagchi’s belief that “the city, like a good percussionist, should be in the background,” and shows a remarkable evolution as a writer. Although Bagchi makes apparent the stamp of the urban milieu on the inner lives of his characters, he refrains from preaching, and thus allows the story to carry itself, leaving readers to draw from it the lessons
that they may. The questions of alienation, assimilation and exile percolate as we see the characters racked with self doubt. Bagchi succeeds in keeping the story solidly grounded in reality. The characters remain believable as middle class Delhi residents who believe in the primacy of power.

In an interview with Averi Mukhopadhyay, Research Scholar, IIT Roorkee, Bagchi discusses his debut novel. The novel explores the life of Arindam Chatterjee, who floats from the middle-class security of his home in east Delhi to the fiercely competitive world of IIT and onward to the East Coast of the US. The coming of age journey reflects Arindam’s dream to become a drummer of a rock band. This is a tale of introspection presented in lucid language. In short, this is a story of adulthood being forged out of adolescence; a story about wanting, always wanting and whereas some of these demands, ambitions and aspirations are attainable, some are not and the rest hanging tantalizingly in between.

Following are the edited excerpts from the interview:
The abbreviations used in this interview are the initials of Amitabha Bagchi [AB] and Averi Mukhopadhyay [AM].

AM: How did *Above Average* happen?

AB: I had been thinking about writing a novel length work from 1997 onwards, and even attempted something in 1998 which did not work out. Finally in mid-2000 I wrote a short story which featured the narrator, Arindam, his friend Bobby and the guitarist Pandit. The voice in which that story was written immediately appealed to me and to some people I showed it to. It was a different kind of voice. It was my voice basically. Those people felt it was much better than what I was writing earlier. The earlier stuff was much more imitative. So I started thinking about the possibilities inherent in it. I began with the Mayur Vihar part but a few months into it I realized that all the stories were of young men dreaming of class ascent of some sort or the other. That is when I realized that IIT had to be part of the book. In fact in retrospect I realized that the reason I was telling (these kind of stories) was because of the experience I had at IIT, the experience of being a middle class person, of having to work towards something more than, maybe, what your parents have achieved. The ideas started building and I started writing the book in earnest in the summer of 2002 once I had submitted my Ph.D thesis and I completed it in March-April 2004.

AM: You have once said in an interview with Ashima Sood, that *Above Average* charts out the “struggle for survival”. It hints at the discontent in students as they have to meet expectations from all spheres, be it academics, profession or personal relationships. How does *Above Average* evolve as a narrative of dissent and discontent?

AB: I agree with you that *Above Average* is a narrative of dissent and discontent. I think the novel form is somehow very much amenable to the expression of authorial dissatisfaction. The individual characters in this book are not dissenters but all are not content either. The major difference between *Above Average* and other popular campus novels is that they celebrate the system whereas *Above Average* tries to critique it. The other writers who have proliferated now glorify the system in some sense, whether it is IIT or IIM or some medical institute or whatever institute they are writing about. They look at their experiences in college, which is some kind of nostalgia, as if those were the best years of their lives. The idea of great fun in college translates into the idea that college is the fun place to be. *Above Average* tries to critique this in a subtle way. College is a fun
place if the academic pressure is not that high. College is not a fun place to be if the [academic] pressure is high and then one starts seeing that it is structured in such a way that it is out to grind and torture one and to achieve certain goals, which one ultimately accepts as his/ her goal- what may be called ‘false consciousness’. It was written with the intention of describing the effect of expectations, external and internalized, on young men. It was also written with the idea of exploring the nature of middle-class Indian masculinity, by studying how it is formed in a location like IIT. These two notions were, to my mind, closely interlinked. And, you will note, this linkage runs contrary to a popularly held view of Indian men being full of a sense of ’entitlement’. That notion of entitlement is only part of the story.

**AM:** You have mentioned the term ‘entitlement’ with reference to the theme of *Above Average*. This is a term used by Pierre Bourdieu. How would you elaborate on the working of this concept and its connection with the nature of middle class Indian masculinity in your book?

**AB:** There is [already] a notion of male ‘entitlement’ in our society. But I wanted to point out the flip side of it. When people say, men are ‘entitled’, it means men own everything. To think that men rule the world is to put that in a box, refuse to understand the male mental process, and not ask the follow up questions: why do men feel that? Who makes them feel that way? What are we doing to make them feel that way? The understanding of the male pathology is very important because clearly somewhere within our society such pathology continues to develop unchecked. In terms of this book particularly, what I wanted to show was the kind of struggles these young men are going through to become [a successful provider]. The struggles are so intense that later when they get to that point these young men feel ‘entitled’. Men are not going to change by simple criticism. Without understanding their pathologies, the points [where] men can be corrected cannot be figured out.

**AM:** The ‘anti-authority struggles’, to borrow a term from Michel Foucault’s essay “The Subject and Power”, are epitomized by Neeraj, a compelling character of your novel. Neeraj comes from a dysfunctional family and is financially handicapped. Despite all odds, he invades the middle class world and then attempts to alter the status quo of that world with his sky high ambition. He aims for the much coveted Turing Award. Was there any motive in depicting Neeraj’s economic status in your book? And is Neeraj’s struggle only an instance of ‘local’ or ‘immediate’ struggle, in which he criticizes the immediate conditions of his life and the way that certain people, groups, class or institutions act on his life, or does his struggle have a wider connotation in which it evolves as a technique, a form of power in itself?

**AB:** The question of motives is interesting. As writers, we do not often write with clearly defined motives. I think the motive is more to understand a particular emotional scenario. Since *Above Average* is primarily, to my mind at least, a book about class and how young men in a specific metropolitan setting and a specific time negotiate it, Neeraj’s particular background, being so different from that of most of the other characters in the book is very pertinent. Well, Neeraj is not economically weak. His father owns a dhaba. Neeraj is the outsider to the comfortable middle class world Arindam, the protagonist, inhabits. Arindam’s father is a government officer. If you looked at the bank accounts, probably Neeraj’s father would have had more money than Arindam’s father. But Arindam possesses more cultural capital than Neeraj. Yet, because of his “supposedly super human capability”, Neeraj enters it and wants to rise to the very top.

In that sense, whether Neeraj is disruptive, [if he is undermining authority that is not entirely clear. It depends on… what is the authority that he is struggling against. Within the university system, Neeraj would ascend to power along a well-documented pathway on a narrative of capability and meritocracy… He would be a poster boy for meritocracy. If on the other hand, it is a particular social framework which says that people from [a] certain class should stay in [that] certain class, then yes, he is struggling against authority. In that he is being
to the world-- depicts one’s status and distances oneself from other, specifically from socio-economic-cultural lower groups. The other strand of thought is that of Foucault, who seems to expand upon Bourdieu, incorporating the power relations angle in such depiction of the ‘truth’ about oneself. As such, in the very process of what seems like constituting oneself as a subject, as an individual, producing knowledge about oneself, only makes one an object of discourse, an object of power/knowledge. In the present era where there is a growing tendency in humanities to use literary theories as tools to interpret texts, which one of the two lines of thought is according to you more valid in the context of Above Average?

AB: I feel Bourdieu's theories of social stratification through [aesthetic] taste provide a very useful analytical tool for understanding how the Indian middle class views itself and, as you have pointed out in your question, presents it. The Foucauldian perspective is also relevant, I feel, but in the context of Above Average it requires a more careful and nuanced application. This is because Above Average is set in the 1990s when urban India is undergoing major changes and the structures of social and economic power are in great churn. This, to my mind, complicates a theory that relies on a relatively static view of power and how it is wielded.

AM: In the campus novels of your American counterparts, Philip Roth’s The Human Stain and Francine Prose’s Blue Angel, women play pivotal roles. In fact, these two books revolve around the unacceptable relationship between the male professors and the girl students. In Above Average, women do have a place nevertheless they are assigned only stereotypical roles. What does it say about relationships between men and women in a society where the IIT model is held in high esteem?

AB: It says that women occupy an unacceptably marginalized position in a culture where the IIT model is held in high esteem. But, if you are asking me why I did not write more realized female characters, the reason is that as a writer I felt I did not have the wherewithal to write such characters and I did not want to write something that I did not know to be true. I thought it was better to not attempt a kind of cross gendered intersubjectivity that will fall flat.

AM: Amitav Ghosh had praised your book in the following words: “I like the honesty and truthfulness of the story: I like the understated quality of the emotions, and I particularly appreciate the simplicity and directness of the prose style.” Did Ghosh or any of his books play a role in determining the narrative structure of your book?
AB: Amitav Ghosh’s *The Shadow Lines* made me feel that the stories of the Indian middle-class can also be the stuff of novels. Ghosh’s own emphasis was not on the middle-class Kolkata neighbourhood his nephew grew up in, nor was it the *adda* that Tridib (the narrator’s uncle in *The Shadow Lines*) often participated in. But those were the parts that fascinated me the most. [For a deeper reading of *The Shadow Lines* that contains hints of my relationship to that book you can see http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/the-map-remade/1169302/0 especially the last part of the essay.]

AM: How far is *Above Average* different from the campus novels of your Indian contemporaries like Chetan Bhagat’s *Five Point Someone*, Abhijit Bhaduri’s *Mediocre but Arrogant*, Harshdeep Jolly’s *Everything You Desire*, Animesh Verma’s *Love, Life and Dream On*?

AB: Very much so. It is hard to quantify this. I think that is something for the critics to figure out. I write to create prose. In the stories that I tell, there is dialectic between the story, the character, the setting, and the form. I am interested in this dialectic. As for the others mentioned, it is not clear whether they are interested in form or language. It seems they are more interested in telling certain stories and entering into public discussions and debates. This book too is interested in being part of these debates but that is not its primary focus. Its primary focus is on language… It is a different matter that our critics do not look for those kinds of things. “This is Chetan Bhagat’s copy.” [Whether] this kind of thinking is there in Chetan Bhagat or not, I am not aware of. I read his first book; I did not see any such resonance. No one has written about any such thing. That I think is the difference.

AM: The last question: who according to you is the ideal reader for *Above Average* and how much has readership changed in India?

AB: I never thought of any “ideal” reader although I often thought of how different classes of readers would respond to this book. As a novelist I consider my job to be to write that book that I can write and hope that many different kinds of people can find something in it. I was surprised, for example, that many older women told me that *Above Average* helped them in understanding their teenage sons better. Regarding the readership in India, I do not know enough to make a wide-ranging judgement. Over the last two or three years my focus has been on finding a readership for my second and third novels, neither of which are “youth themed.” The reviews have been good but the sales do not compare to *Above Average* which still sells like a thousand copies a year and has sold almost 25,000 copies since it came out.

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