

ISAS Public Lecture Series



Tug-of-Ear: The Play of Dialect in Modern Bengali and Tamil Literature

a talk by

Dr. Rebecca Whittington

Ph.D (2019): South and Southeast Asian Studies, UC Berkeley
UCLA's Sardar Patel Award for Best Doctoral Dissertation, 2019

Abstract: Literary representation in modern South Asian literature of dialect and colloquial language is often seen as a simple technique to lend the narrative authenticity. Dr. Whittington's research asks whether dialect, as a bearer of the speaker's lifeworld, offers something irreplaceable in a literary text. She suggests that the seeming untranslatability of dialect into standard language raises questions about the power, aesthetics, and ethics of the representation of speech forms. The interplay of standard and non-standard forms heightens the reader's awareness of the materiality of language.

Speaker Bio: Dr. Whittington earned her PhD candidate from the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. She holds an MA and BA in South and Southeast Asian Studies from UC Berkeley. She has worked as a graduate student instructor in the Department of South and Southeast Asian Studies, as a research assistant translating Tamil, Bengali, and Hindi materials for several faculty and student researchers at UC Berkeley, and as a private instructor of Hindi and Urdu. Her publications include *Time Will Write a Song for You*, an anthology of contemporary Sri Lankan Tamil writing that she translated and co-edited; and "Patni (Wife)," a translation of a Hindi poem by Gopal Prasad, excerpted in Zan Boag's "Alienated from the pleasures of work" in *New Philosopher*. In addition to Tamil, Bengali, and Hindi-Urdu, she has a working knowledge of Persian, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, and Icelandic. Her interests include comparative literature, literary translation, literary modernisms, and South Asian studies.

Tuesday, September 24, 2019

5-7 pm

10 Stephens Hall, (For directions look up "Institute for South Asia Studies" on Google Maps)

Cosponsors: Department of South & Southeast Asian Studies, Sarah Kailath Chair of India Studies.

Event is free & open to public. 510-642-3608 or southasia.berkeley.edu