

Language and Migration abstract:

Seizing the Telling: Deterritorialized Hindi and Urdu Literature in Kolkata

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Kolkata's *others* are largely marked by regional and linguistic difference, namely as non-Bengali in language and ethnicity. Therefore, Hindi-Urdu speakers (mostly Marwari and Bihari) are seen as permanent outsiders even after generations in Bengal. Marwaris are merchant-traders from Rajasthan who migrated to all regions of South Asia; their migrant alterity was compounded with a host of other stereotypes that attend entrepreneurial minorities. This paper will first briefly outline Bengali representations of Marwaris and then turn to a Hindi novel and an Urdu short story that engage with the politics of representation and the issue of narrative scarcity for migrant communities. As literary critic Meenakshi Mukherjee has noted, the phenomena of relocated communities in India have seldom been examined closely in terms of literary representations (Mukherjee, 2008, p. 50). Hindi and Urdu writing inscribe non-Bengali, migrant subjectivities into the literary imaginary of this great city. The narrative strategies and breaking of literary conventions speak to both the memory and purposeful forgetting of migration. This paper discusses the structure of feeling across cultural texts that reveals legacies of alterity, language ideology, and Hindi/Urdu beyond its conventional boundaries.