

## This Issue of the *Annual*

THE WORLD OF URDU LITERATURE was still reeling from the effects of Quratulain Hyder's departure from the scene when, on 14 September 2008, death claimed Urdu's great benefactor and scholar Ralph Russell. What the world owes to Ralph for his lifelong engagement with Urdu is evident to every perceptive scholar and well-wisher of that language, but few know the extent of his contribution to the *Annual*. He helped it when it needed help the most, and helped it in many different ways. It was thus both expedient and incumbent that the *Annual* devote a section of this issue to his memory. A number of Ralph's friends made it possible for me to assemble a fitting tribute to this extraordinary human being whose warmth and kindness will be sorely missed and eagerly remembered for a long time. Different aspects of Ralph's career are covered in what his friends have written about him as a scholar, as a promoter of Urdu language, as a teacher, as an ardent communist, and as a great lover of life and mankind. I owe a special note of thanks to Ahmad Bashir Ahmad, Arjumand Ara, Daniela Bredi, Kasim Dalvi, Marion Molteno, Francis Robinson, Alison Safadi, Safia Siddiqi, Jogindar Shamsher, and Alison Shaw for responding to my request to write on him.

Among the Western admirers of Urdu another victim of the proverbial *čarkh-e nīlī-fām* was Victor Kiernan, the famed translator of Iqbal and Faiz's poetry.

On other matters, readers will notice that a board of advisors has been added to the *AUS* beginning with this issue. Although the editor has regularly sought help from scholars in the past to review articles submitted to the *Annual*, many up-and-coming scholars have frequently expressed the desire to see some explicit reference to the fact that the *Annual* is a refereed publication. So the formation of the board formalizes what has hitherto been an informal practice. The members of the Board

are Elena Bashir, Aamir R. Mufti, and Christina Oesterheld.

Elena Bashir (Ph.D., Linguistics, University of Michigan) does field research on the languages of northern and western Pakistan. Her dissertation was on the Kalasha language and her current research centers around Khowar, the lingua franca of Chitral. She has published on several of the languages of Pakistan, including Kalasha, Khowar, Pashto, Brahui, Balochi, Wakhi, Burushaski, and Urdu. She has regularly reviewed articles on Linguistics and related fields for the *AUS*. A list of her publications is available at: <http://salc.uchicago.edu/facultybios/bashir.html>.

Aamir R. Mufti pursued his doctoral studies in literature at Columbia University under the supervision of Edward Said. He was also trained in Anthropology at Columbia and the London School of Economics, and his research and teaching reflect this disciplinary range. His work reconsiders the secularization thesis in a comparative perspective, with a special interest in Islam and modernity in India and the cultural politics of Jewish identity in Western Europe. His areas of specialization include: colonial and postcolonial literatures, with a primary focus on India and Britain, and nineteenth- and twentieth-century Urdu literature in particular; Marxism and aesthetics; Frankfurt School critical theory; minority cultures; exile and displacement; refugees and the right to asylum; modernism and fascism; language conflicts; global English and the vernaculars; and the history of anthropology. His most recent contribution to the study of secularism is a book, *Enlightenment in the Colony: The Jewish Question and the Crisis of Postcolonial Culture* (Princeton University Press). His current work includes two book projects, of which one concerns exile and criticism and the other, the colonial reinvention of Islamic traditions. He edited "Critical Secularism," a special issue of the journal *boundary 2* and also co-edited *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives* (University of Minnesota Press). His work has appeared in such periodicals as *Social Text*, *Critical Inquiry*, *Subaltern Studies*, *boundary 2*, the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, *Theory and Event*, and the *Village Voice*. He also served for several years as a member of the editorial collective of *Social Text*. He has taught at the University of Michigan and is currently Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Christina Oesterheld did her Ph.D. in Indology with a concentration on Urdu from Humboldt University, Berlin, and is currently Senior Lecturer of Urdu in the South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg. She is the author of many research papers, has translated Urdu fiction into German, and has contributed a wide range of articles to the pages of the *AUS*. She has also participated in many conferences and was the organizer

of a highly acclaimed workshop on “Between State Ideology and Popular Culture: Urdu Literature and Urdu Media in Contemporary Pakistan,” which took place at Heidelberg in July 2006.

The formidable expertise of these fine scholars will further strengthen the *AUS*. Please join me in welcoming them. □

M.U.M.