

AIPS Travel Grant Final Report

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I was awarded an AIPS Travel Grant to attend the 5th Annual THAAP Conference: Culture, Art and Architecture of the Marginalized and Poor, held in Lahore, Pakistan, on November 7-9, 2014. The international conference was hosted by the THAAP collective and included scholars, architects and artists from many countries, including India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Switzerland and the UAE. I was the only delegate from the US there. I presented a paper called “Realism and Resistance in South Asian Literature,” which used the writings of Pakistani writers Saadat Hasan Manto and Mohammed Hanif to argue that political literature can take many forms. Both Manto and Hanif bend and reshape language to make searing social critiques of the circumstances of Partition and contemporary Pakistan, respectively. The paper offered a new reading of both authors, outside of the dominant narrative of “social realism.” Additionally, by reading two authors across Urdu and English, the paper attempted to chart a new vision for Pakistani literary studies outside of singular literary histories.

I am a scholar of Indian literature, but this fantastic visit and conference furthered my interest in Pakistani literature – a field I will move towards in my future projects. The incredible hospitality and generosity of the hosts also confirmed my frustration with the mistrust many Americans have of Pakistan and Pakistanis. I was treated wonderfully as an American of Indian origin. I found it a lovely country and I look forward to many return visits.