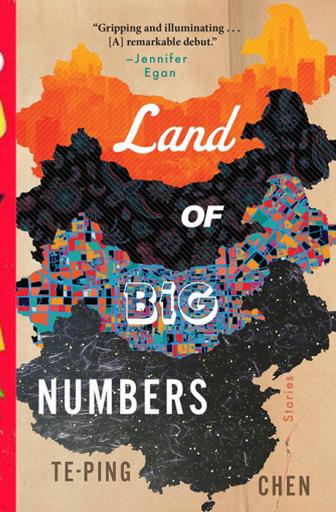
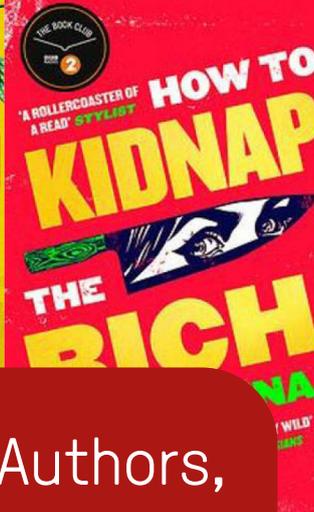
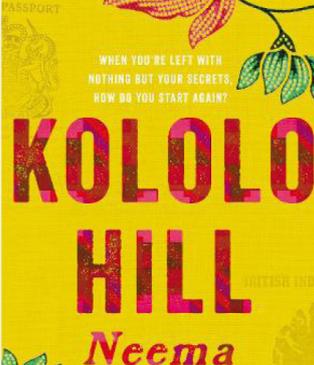


HOW WE MET



"Unforgettable." – Bryan Washington

SPEAK,
KINAWA



"Gripping and illuminating... [A] remarkable debut."
– Jennifer Egan

Highlighting UK Debuts by Asian Authors, Bagri Foundation Launches the Second Season of 'The Bottom Drawer'!

The Bottom Drawer: Books That Changed My Life

Due to popular demand, Bagri Foundation is pleased to announce a second season of the successful [The Bottom Drawer series](#) launched in 2020, which explored writers' influences and inspiration. As part of the Foundation's Chang/ce theme for 2021, the team have invited a new set of writers to share the books that changed their life, how and why they did – and discuss their UK debut novel.

Featuring authors whose books have been published this year, each event is presented on the Foundation's digital channels throughout May and June. Each of the guests is asked to ponder a number of questions that will be telling about what inspired them to write, hinged around their earliest efforts, often described as 'The Bottom Drawer', as that is where these are usually consigned to. Within the theme of 2021, the writers will also be asked about major turning points for them, including books or moments that changed their life and the publishing of their latest novel.

The authors and dates of release are as follows:

27 May – Te-Ping Chen interviewed by Chelsea Pettitt

3 June – Neema Shah interviewed by Ashanti Omkar

10 June – Huma Qureshi interviewed by S S Haque

17 June – Elizabeth Miki Brina interviewed by Rowan Hisayo Buchanan

24 June – Rahul Raina interviewed by Sarah Shaffi

"The fantastic response we had from the online community of book lovers to last year's Bottom Drawer interview series, compelled us to deliver this programme again. With the hopes that we can all see each other in person again soon at literature events, our online series has, in fact, allowed us access to fantastic international authors. This year, we focused on debuts because of the current lack of opportunities for new authors of Asian descent to tour their latest novels. Let's hope in 2022, we can meet them in person!"

- Chelsea Pettitt, Head of Arts, Bagri Foundation

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-END-

NOTES TO EDITORS

Biographies

Te-Ping Chen's fiction has been published in, or is forthcoming from, The New Yorker, Granta, Guernica, Tin House, and The Atlantic. A reporter with the Wall Street Journal, she was previously a correspondent for the paper in Beijing and Hong Kong. Prior to joining the Journal in 2012, she spent a year in China as a Fulbright fellow. She lives in Philadelphia.

Elizabeth Miki Brina received her MFA in creative writing from the University of New Orleans. She is the recipient of a Rona Jaffe Bread Loaf Scholarship and a New York Summer Writers Institute Scholarship. She currently lives and teaches in New Orleans.

Huma Qureshi started her career on The Observer and The Guardian and worked as a reporter and features writer across consumer news, news and the life and style sections for several years before going freelance to write her first book, *In Spite of Oceans*, published in 2015 by The History Press. *In Spite of Oceans* received the John C. Laurence Award from The Authors' Foundation. Qureshi's essay, 'By Instinct', appears in *The Best Most Awful Job: Twenty Writers Talk Honestly About Motherhood* (2019) and her next book, *How We Met: A Memoir of Love and Other Misadventures* was published in January 2021. Qureshi's debut short story collection, *Things We Do Not Tell The People We Love*, will be published in November 2021, with Sceptre. She is represented by Laurie Robertson at Peters, Fraser + Dunlop.

Rahul Raina divides his time between Oxford and Delhi. He runs his own consultancy in England for part of the year, and works for charities for street children and teaches English in India in the down season.

Neema Shah built a career in marketing after leaving university, specialising in TV, digital and brand strategy for companies including the BBC. Neema has always been an avid reader, but rekindled her early love of writing in 2015 while doing a short online course. She is now trying to make up for lost time. Neema Shah's grandparents left India for East Africa in the 1940s. *Kololo Hill* is inspired by their lives, as well as those who were expelled from Uganda by brutal ruler Idi Amin. She was born and raised in London, spending many school holidays with family in East Africa. Neema also once ran away to join a circus in New York, but that's a story for another time...

Guest Interviewers:

S S Haque is a British Sylheti-Bengali writer living and working in London. She writes fiction and poetry and has published works in various anthologies, journals and magazines. In November 2019 she designed, bound and self-published a chapbook, featuring the poem *wished myself a bird* alongside photographic works. She performs her verse at poetry nights across London. She's currently completing a historical novel set in sixth century Arabia. She is a graduate of the master's in Creative Writing, University of Oxford. She is represented by Rocking Chair Books.

Rowan Hisayo Buchanan is the author of *Harmless Like You* and *Starling Days*. Her work has won the Authors' Club First Novel Award and a Betty Trask Award. She has been shortlisted for the Costa Novel Award. She has been published in *Granta*, *The Atlantic*, *Guernica* and elsewhere.

Ashanti Omkar FRSA is a writer and broadcaster, who has worked within the UK and international media for nearly 2 decades, across various cultural landscapes, from print to broadcast. Her words can be heard on the BBC, and read in *The Guardian* and *Total Film Magazine*. She is the first South Asian woman member of the film and music sections of the UK Critics' Circle, and a long time associate of the Bagri Foundation London Indian Film Festival. She moved into media after a flourishing career in technology, at companies like PepsiCo, Hilton Group and Oracle.

Sarah Shaffi is a freelance literary journalist and editor. Her work has appeared in publications including Stylist, Vogue Australia, Boundless and The New Arab. Sarah was a judge for the Jhalak Prize 2019 and for the Orwell Prize for Political Fiction 2020, and served as managing editor at Penguin.co.uk. She is editor-at-large at independent children's publisher Little Tiger Group. She regularly chairs author events, and is co-founder of BAME in Publishing, a networking group for people of colour in publishing. She can be found tweeting @sarahshaffi, on Instagram @sarah.shaffi and online at www.sarahshaffi.com.

About the Bagri Foundation

The Bagri Foundation is a UK registered charity, inspired by unique and unexpected ideas that weave the traditional and the contemporary of Asian culture. The Foundation, with its roots in education, is driven by curiosity and a desire to learn, and aims for each project to challenge, engage and inspire. Through a diverse programme of film, visual arts, music, dance, literature and talks, the Bagri Foundation gives artists and experts from across Asia and the diaspora, wider visibility on the global stage. Recent projects include [At Home in the World](#), a series of digital commissions; [Tantra: enlightenment to revolution](#) at the British Museum; [Object, Story, Wonder: Museum Collections Revealed](#); and [From Here to Eternity: Sunil Gupta, A Retrospective](#) at The Photographer's Gallery, London.



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#BottomDrawer

