



Editorial Note

Interlocutor, an online journal of the Department of English, The Bhawanipur Education Society College, has returned with its second volume. The journal which is published annually, provides an interdisciplinary research platform for critical inquiry and discursive questioning by scholars across the disciplines of liberal arts with a view to initiate academic discourses based on diverse and varied fields of research exploring novel perspectives on theory, praxis, and pedagogies in literary studies.

The 21st century has seen a rapid expansion in the literary trends, namely theoretical and critical praxis propelling forth an explosion in the range of studies through cultural productions such as literature, music and various forms of mass-media. Vincent Leitch in his latest book, *Literary Criticism in the 21st Century* has enlisted a chart on literary theory and criticism. Leitch's chart consists of "94 sub disciplines and fields circling around 12 major topics", which he deems stems directly from the recognisable contemporary schools and movements of theory. His book explores the outburst of new theoretical approaches which has seen a regeneration in theory and its importance in the institutional settings of the present. Many are of the opinion that literary theory as we know it is on the wane but on the contrary, there is a rise in studies, cultural or otherwise. This opens the field for a plethora of new research areas for scholars to work on.

The second issue of *Interlocutor* seeks to reflect the accelerated pace of changing perspectives and forms. It has invited scholars to make submissions which would provide original insights into such areas of theoretical and critical trends ranging from nationalism, subnationalisms, ethnonationalism; critical ecologies; new perspectives on marriage, sexual contract, patriarchy and law; to representations of sexualities and disabilities; the production and circulation of popular culture in the age of new media.

The Hermeneutics of Patriarchal Heterotopias

The subtext of a broken and harrowed marital discord reflecting the 'othering' of women in domestic spaces through Foucauldian heterotopias forms the major argument of Sohini Sen's article *The Hermeneutics of Symbol and the Subtext of a Dilapidated Marriage: A Close Reading of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's Short Story "The Bats"*. Relying upon Saussurian structural codes 'signifier' and 'signified' and Richardian 'vehicle' and 'tenor', the article deciphers the symbols and metaphors associated with the metanarrative and the social connotations surrounding the institution of marriage when a woman tries to escape the shackles of an abusive marriage. Through the Foucauldian lens of power and violence, a distorted picture of marriage in Indian society is presented, where a woman prefers to return to an abusive marriage rather than put up with the indignity of being an estranged wife.

'Nature is Nurture', the maxim held in mainstream literary and cultural representations, essentialises and restricts women's identities to their biological role of procreation. Ashapura Devi's writings defy this conventional feminine reductionism to explore the aspirations, inner desires, psyche and



expectations of its women characters. This subversion of motherhood and its depoliticisation in Devi's short stories is examined through Puja Saha's article *The Fragmented Mother: Subversion of Normative Motherhood in Ashapura Devi's Short Stories*. Foucauldian heterotopias are prudently redefined as the normative motherhood is strategically subverted in Ashapura Devi's short stories and her women characters are depicted constantly overturning the 'archetypal mother' trope by renegotiating their domestic positions to establish their individualities as women, alienated from the 'divine mother', echoing the words of Simon de Beauvoir "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman". The Freudian aphorism 'Anatomy is Destiny' is also strategically questioned and destabilised.

Interspersing Mythology with Modernity in Mani Ratnam's Cinema

Filmmaker Mani Ratnam's forte of creatively bringing to the forefront diverse ideas and aspirations in his films needs no introduction. His films are known for weaving together art and commercial elements that garner both critical acclaim and commercial success. The majority of his films have been characterised by wide socio-cultural themes through his discourse on Indian mythology, its recreations and contemporary renderings as such. Veena SP's article *From Mythology to the Modern Age: Exploring the Role of Mythology and Literature in Mani Ratnam's Cinematic Adaptations* explores the dialectics of mythological literary references through songs, dialogues and characterisation in Mani Ratnam's films. She examines how his films acclaimed by the masses have created an intense fervour for the original literary texts. The mythological literary acclimations and references in his films which have created modern critical perceptions and vernacular trends, and its emerging contemporariness in the particular time period of his visual works of popular art and culture are scrutinised in the article.

Duality of the New Woman Identity and the Female Body

The stereotyped ideal Victorian woman due to its 'Angel in the House' manifestation has always been perceived as pure and pious, and anyone who deviates from the norm is deemed a fallen woman. At the same time, the female body has often been regarded as the object of desire to be conquered, and a mystery to be unravelled through the patriarchal male gaze. Sayendra Basu's article "*Kiss me with those Red lips*": *Duality of the female body and the new woman in Bram Stoker's 'Dracula'* looks at the stereotypes and the creation of dualities that leads to discrimination and vilification of women. Stoker's androcentric reaction to the concept of the new woman identity and the duality and polarisation of the female body to either be oppressed or resisted through a regulation of her sexual autonomy has been discoursed upon. The resultant marginalisation and the generation of 'the madwoman in the attic' trope has also been touched upon.

Reorienting a Travelogue through Postcolonial Alterity

William Dalrymple's *In Xanadu* traces the path taken by Marco Polo from Jerusalem to Shang du, the capital city of the famed "Kubla Khan". A travelogue is a literary discourse which documents the socio-cultural history of different lands travelled to. This emphasises the differences of cultures and Arup Kumar Bag through his work *Mapping the 'Quest' in In Xanadu with Special Reference to "Kubla Khan": A Comparative Study* raises the question as to whether a travelogue should foreground the



'otherness' of identity or celebrate its diversity. In this paper, he examines ways to justify Dalrymple's *In Xanadu* as less of a travelogue and more of a discourse on non-Eurocentric cultures. The hegemonisation of a Eurocentric canon, and its subsequent lack of emphasis on the postcolonial alterity, the failure of justification of the subtitle of the text, *A Quest* is critiqued through an evocation of 'Sahasrara' of the 'Kundalini', the sublime consciousness, lacking in Dalrymple.

Mapping Feminist Temporalities, Geopolitics, and Trauma through Fiction

Rita Felski's article "Telling Time in Feminist Theory" alludes to feminist temporalities of redemption, regression, repetition and rupture that lead to the formation of multiple female subjectivities like personal, maternal, psychological, domestic, social, corporeal, among others. The dynamics of such temporalities as reflected in the rich fabric of female saga fiction in the works of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Before We Visit the Goddess* and Gurmehar Kaur's *Small Acts of Freedom* are assessed through Swethal Ramchandran's article *Feminist Temporal Dynamics and Implications on Subjectivities: A Reading of select Indian English Female Saga Narratives*. Adopting the Felskian lens, the article contextualises modes of feminist temporalities in South Asian feminist narratives to assert and establish the cyclical functioning of time in alignment with the examined feminist subjectivities.

Northeast Literatures continue to be a critical field of inquiry seamlessly integrating theory with praxis to depict decades of multifaceted unrest, protests, and activism. The students' agitation in the late 1970s in Assam which demanded the deportation of all non-Assamese people from Assam started the unrest. This gave rise to several Assamese sub-nationalist fringe groups which demanded freedom from the Indian Union. Their agitation caused violence which led to the birth of fear and trauma amongst the people. Abantika Dev Ray in her article *Trauma and Women in the Late Twentieth Century Assam: A Reading of Mitra Phukan's The Collector's Wife* draws upon Cathy Caruth's hypothesis on trauma and violence to trace its effects through the perspectives of women who were in the middle of the crises. Alluding to Garland's theories of trauma and violence and Butler's theory of precarity, Dev Ray examines the political conflicts, manifestations of violence and power establishing women's experiences at the centre in the backdrop of Assam unrest unravelling the peace versus ideology dialectic and its underlying ramifications.

Corporeality and Posthumanism

The consumerist fascination around representation of corporeal horror and terror in media, and its jarring manifestations interwoven with ecological degradation and rising belligerence in the backdrop of contemporary neocolonialism forms the critical mode of inquiry of Chitrangada Deb's article *Abominable Corporeality: A Discourse on Reptilians and Hybrids in "Rakka" and "Firebase"*. The sci-fi horror genre's usage in exploring and understanding the study of the non-human sauropsids, cyborgs, and corporeal physiognomy of the predatory crocodiles to redefine the discourse on Lovecraftian horror is significant. Two crucial episodes titled "Rakka" and "Firebase" thriving on apocalyptic posthuman visions from the independently made miniseries *Oats Studios* (2017) have been strategically chosen by Deb to shed light on how the human body becomes a site of transmutations and monstrous creations. Horror is created with these predatory other worldly creatures who overturn the normative way of life creating terror among the masses.



Streaming Media Phenomenon, Late Capitalism, and Postmodern sporting celebrity culture

The streaming media platforms have become an increasingly preferred mode of popular culture as a great source of entertainment meant for easy consumption. With this popularity, a body of scholarship with regard to this is also expanding and becoming a nucleus of investigation for many scholars. Arup Ratan Samajdar's article *Cultural Calculus of Netflix Phenomenon: Investigating Relational Matrix of Serialised Narratives, Algorithmic Operations, and Late Capitalism* concentrates on two focal points, the mode of narrative distribution which creates an eagerness in people to watch, even "binge" watch, and how an algorithmic system forms to recommend titles. A theoretical explanation of the streaming media phenomenon alluding to the centrality of algorithmic recommendations, subscription politics within the larger purview of emerging data capitalism and its socio-cultural manifestation is surveyed through Samajdar's article.

Another noteworthy marker of contemporary culture is the postmodern sporting celebrity phenomenon in the backdrop of a global new democracy. Celebrities generate a lot of interest amongst the masses as they show them a way to escape from their humdrum lives and fantasise over a glittering lifestyle. The culture of the 21st century is engrossed with exuberant lifestyles and its disconcerted exhibitionism, which are the fantasies of the common man. Drawing from Stardom Studies, Subhasish Guha in his article *Postmodern Features of Contemporary Culture: Representation and Sporting Celebrity* gives insights into the phenomenon of media representation of the sporting celebrity David Beckham, arguing that Beckham belongs to a postmodern celebrity culture where his representation is not 'real'. The media vortex generates a consumerist ideology initiating a new cultural capital associated with celebrity culture in the new democracy in a postmodern era.

The Review Section

The Review section of the issue highlights new creative, critical, theoretical, and pedagogical works as well as narration through the performative arts. Indo-American writer Avni Doshi's debut novel *Burnt Sugar*, first published in India as *Girl in White Cotton*, in 2019 integrates themes of motherhood, memory, trauma and pain. Sneha Roy's *Exploring Memory and Motherhood in Avni Doshi's 'Girl in White Cotton': A Detailed Book Review* evocatively traces a complicated mother-daughter bond fraught with unhappy, even terrifying memories for a child. The toxicity of the mother-daughter bond and relationship, the idolisation and glorification of normative motherhood are seamlessly destabilised in this review. Foucauldian and Beauvoirian theoretical frameworks are used to elucidate the dynamics of human nature and the social impositions placed upon the protagonists of the novel.

The emergence and rise of the Film Studies Departments in Indian academic institutions has led to the study of films as social and cultural artefacts beyond the domain of aesthetics serving as signifiers of socio-political and cultural changes. Queer studies came to the forefront in the 1990s during the third wave of feminism and has created its own niche in academic culture and art today. A coherent amalgamation of Queer Studies, Literary Studies and Film Studies is represented through Shreyan Mukherjee's film review entitled *Nagarkirtan: Politics of the Body, Spaces and Religion*. Kaushik Ganguly's 2017 film *Nagarkirtan* showcases the othering and marginalisation of the trans and queer communities and their intrinsic struggles for gaining societal acceptance. Mukherjee alludes to the theories of Michel Foucault and Paulo Freire to investigate the influence of religion, architecture, and



body politics on the lived experiences of the queer community and its interactions with society through *Nagarkirtan's* narrative, laying bare modern society's oppressive and exploitative aspects, heteronormative paraphernalias and its deeply entrenched hegemonic linguistic politics.

At the end, the Editorial Board of *Interlocutor* would like to express its deepest gratitude to the members of the Advisory Board for their crucial guidance, the Editorial Team for their timely assistance and cooperation, the peer-reviewers for their meticulous assessment of the articles, and the management of the Bhawanipur Education Society College, Kolkata, for extending their support in our endeavour to publish this volume.

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