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## From the Editor's Desk

It is a matter of great delight to announce the appearance of Volume VI of the *Journal of the Post-graduate Department of English* of Maulana Azad College. It is a double-blind peer-reviewed journal that is being published again with the theme of Parerga, a Greek word meaning supplements.

The journal intends to supplement the production of knowledge focusing upon art, architecture, literature, theatre, music, philosophy, film and history. It is particularly interested in material that crosses traditional disciplinary boundaries and takes up new approaches.

This issue is a proof of our commitment to interdisciplinarity: It presents a wide variety covering the domains of French literature, Victorian English literature, Indian writing in English, Indian spy fiction, Utpal Dutt's theatre, Thomas Hardy, Indian writing in English in translation, commentary on the art of a contemporary artist Buddhadev Mukherjee, and the history of the revolt by the Andamanese against the British. The journal also introduces a section of Book Review containing two review articles on authors as relevant as Michel Foucault and William Dalrymple.

In an erudite essay Sanjay Kumar looks at the different treatment of the Oedipus myth in the hands of Voltaire, in the process analyzing the intellectual context of the Enlightenment. Using Derrida's concept of repetition, he points out how learning from Racine and Corneille, Voltaire re-moulded the Oedipus story.

Abin Chakraborty analyses three plays by Utpal Dutt, viz. *Kallol*, *Surya Sikar* and *Tiner Talwar*, in the process bringing out the multiple European influences on his dramaturgy and celebrates him as a champion of decolonization.

Anjan Saha brings into focus the obscure courtesan-singer Malka Pukhraj by discussing and analysing her autobiography

*Song Sung True* delving into the socio-culturally marginalized world of the nautch-girl in the early twentieth-century colonial India. In the process Saha examines the intersectionality of gender, class and power dynamics.

Aliya Halim takes up five Victorian Gothic novels by Emily and Charlotte Bronte, Stevenson, Oscar Wilde and Bram Stoker to demonstrate what she calls “Gothic representations of speculative fiction”. The essay attempts at throwing light on how power vested in aristocratic males and the Church invited scrutiny and a critique by these works of fiction.

Daisy Majumdar in her essay on Thomas Hardy takes up six of his popular novels and through an ecocritical lens examines how Hardy’s novels challenge anthropocentrism, highlighting the intimate connection between nature and man, influencing each other. Some of his novels, the author argues, portray the environmental degradation by introducing technology; Hardy’s notion of loving-kindness is added to the discussion.

Laki Molla adds an interesting dimension by bringing into discussion a psychoanalytical reading of Gitanjali Shree’s novel *Ret Samadhi* in translation (*Tomb of Sand*); the mother-daughter relationship represented in the novel is lucidly analysed through the moorings of Freudian and post-Freudian theories of female identity formation.

Subham Patar in his paper on Kunal Basu’s *Kalkatta* takes up the themes of home and belongingness; he argues that for a refugee the idea of home is not a place or space but it is fractured, performative, entwined with ambition, alienation, identity politics and urban marginality. Patar establishes how the protagonist in Basu’s novel through the angst of home and homelessness is compared to a stray dog.

Haradhan Malik in his paper takes up an area that is little explored, that of the spy fiction. Basing his discussion on Amar

Bhushan's *Escape to Nowhere*, Malik focuses scholarly light on the plight of a spy who loses all identity when not in consonance with the state, rendered invisible like the homo sacer or 'bare life' in Agamben's theory. Malik argues that the novel critiques both the act of treason and the cold, impersonal machinery through which the state isolates and removes disloyal subjects.

Amrita Ghoshal reminds the reader of the forgotten history of the freedom fight of the Andamanese against the British, known as the Battle of Aberdeen. Though the rebellion was crushed, largely thanks to the act of betrayal by a convict, the paper establishes the complexity of the colonised island where the indigenous people, the convicts sent to the penal colony and the British formed a complex socio-political reality that cannot be simply explained through the lens of postcolonial theory. The paper brings to the fore perspectives of anthropologists, the status of tribes and the conflict with modernity.

Siddhanta Goswami's essay on a contemporary artist Buddhadev Mukherjee's sketches sends us happily reeling through the quasi-surreal visual imagination of Mukherjee. Goswami argues that Mukherjee's representation of the abject and a trenchant critique of the 'civilised eye' is an exercise in humour, where laughter is a signature of the grim recognition of the postmodern and the posthuman resulting in a new hermeneutic of 'history from below'.

In the Book Review section Somrita Misra takes up William Dalrymple's recently published book *The Golden Road*. While acknowledging how the book highlights the intellectual dominance of ancient India, Misra notes that the book misses any representation of the marginal presences of the Bahujan castes and focuses mostly on Brahminical learning. The question is deep and historians often miss the wished-for data but Misra's review is a pointer in the right direction.

Debabrata Sardar gives us a systematic analysis of Michel Foucault's *The Birth of the Clinic*. Explaining how Foucault's discussion bases itself on the history of the French society leading to the theorization of the rise of the Clinic as an institution, Sardar points out that 'space', 'language' and 'gaze' are the cornerstones in Foucault's theory. Finally, he elaborates how the ideas of bio-ethics, bio-politics and bio-power bring out a paradigmatic change in medical understanding and how objectification of the patient's body creates a dilemma.

Happy reading!

**Niranjan Goswami**

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