

Editorial

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*And ye shall eat old store long kept,
and ye shall bring forth the old from before the new.*

Leviticus 26: 10

This special issue of *Sambalpur Studies in Literatures and Cultures* on modernist texts takes us back to 1922 even as literary criticism and research is gradually persuading us away from the past to give way to several different issues, opening up new pastures for writers, scholars and critics. The subject might appear to be a little dated, and one might wonder if there is a necessity to return to the modernists. But, with publication of new biographies like Robert Crawford's *Eliot after The Waste Land* (2022), and personal letters and diaries of canonical writers one feels compelled to throw fresh light on old texts.

The presuppositions of literary modernism as endorsed by academia, as a post-war phenomenon characterized by formal experimentation, and its self-reflexive quality, often unsettles the critical thinker making her uneasy about their contradictory aesthetic and ideological tendencies. The purpose of this special issue is not merely to provide an explanation of old texts but to look back and review the presuppositions, "the habits of assumption," as F. R. Leavis puts it in his *The Living Principle* (1975) in order to enrich academic discourse. Every revisit to the modernist texts, or a critical engagement with contemporary literature unravels undiscovered territories of this apparently innocent literary phenomena that has been confined to a 'period' in literary history. The homogenisation of the numerous, diverse and contesting theories and practices of the period, to a selected

number of post-war texts in Europe or America ignores the phenomena as a product of migration and globalisation, something that George Steiner termed as 'extra-territorial.' The product of a time not very different from ours, when frontiers appear to be fluid and nationalist identities are in a flux, the ideological debates that defined literary modernism also shape much of our thoughts and literature. It is, as Malcolm Bradbury would put it, "a usable past, leading into the present and future." Our contributors recreate the excitement that comes from original insights. Critical approaches range from postcolonial, feminist, nationalist, and diaspora, to even translation studies.

The focus of P. Muralidhar Sharma's article on Hilaire Belloc's *The Modern Traveller* (1898) destabilizes what might be seen traditionally as a shared ideology of European travel writing in the modern age. Sharma argues that Belloc's verse parody of a conversation between a recently returned colonial adventurer and a newspaper correspondent satirised British colonial expansion and the ideologies of imperialism. The desire for something new is often always invested with a contradictory yearning for the old. This is justified in N Suman Shelley and Sabita Tripathy's reading of Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Remains of the Day* where they explore the possible role of country houses in the construction of English national identity. Ishiguro, according to them, imitates the genre of the country house as a strategic measure to challenge the British imperial identity, a veiled metaphor for the criticism of the 'Englishness' of Thatcher's time. At a period in time when we have come to realize that societies and cultures are no more unitary, but ever mutating into heterogeneous bodies my own article reads Juan Rulfo, the Mexican novelist's *Pedro Paramo* (1955) as a complex narrative about the syncretism caused by the racial and cultural mix that destabilizes any possibility of interpretation through a singular theoretical perspective. Minati Mohapatra takes a feminist approach to discuss the psychological dialectics of an adolescent daughter and her mother in the short stories of the Canadian Nobel laureate Alice Munro. A close reading of Guru Prasad Mohanty's poem *Kalapurusha* by Nibedita Patel traces the influence of the modernists on Indian regional literature. Nilima Meher adopts the

Marxist theory to discuss the economic conditions that determine the miseries of Glasgow society in Scotland of 1980s as presented in Douglas Stuart's *Shuggie Bain*. Samikshya Das's essay looks at Hanif Kureshi's use of humour in *The Buddha of Suburbia* as a technique of racial subversion. Humour, according to the author becomes an effective cathartic force for liberation from racial oppression.

The articles will provide scholars and researchers with a revisionary perspective that goes beyond periodization, and supplement existing scholarship in the area.

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