



Editorial

Memory, Mediation, and Alternative Epistemologies

With every age, new methodologies, technologies, and tools evolve that shape acts of remembering, forgetting, imagining, and revisiting. In the contemporary times of uncertainty and volatility, there is an ethical challenge to the production of the knowledge. Against the backdrop of digital acceleration, ecological crisis, contested histories, and shifting social identities—there is a larger emphasis on the ‘how’ rather than ‘what’ of knowledge: the methods, mediations, and circulations that determine what can be remembered, imagined, or made visible. Issue 46 brings together these contested perspectives across various disciplines using befitting methodological approaches. It brings forth the essential contribution of humanities by showcasing its impact and participation in the making of the contemporary realities. Though varied in themes and approaches, the contributions remain connected through mediation itself—the ways in which stories, images, institutions, and cultural practices shape collective imaginaries and epistemic framework.

If Foucauldian theory reminds us that knowledge is inseparable from power and discourse, Deleuze and Guattari extend these disciplinarian axes into poststructuralist trajectories of inclusion and fluidity articulated through their concepts of assemblages, multiplicities, and becoming. As literature, media, and other forms of arts are representations of reality; these are challenged for their claims to transparency which then becomes a contested field where meanings are continually produced, revised, and negotiated. Stuart Hall becomes relevant here as he theorises representation as a constitutive rather than merely reflective practice; in the same vein, Judith Butler insists that identities emerge through repeated performances rather than

fixed essences. The research papers align well with ongoing academic discourses surrounding representation, regional marginality, ethical media practices, and the politics of cultural narration in South Asia. Thus, Culture as a lived reality is not a passive reflection of reality but an active site where social meanings get produced, revised, and sometimes transformed.

Human subjectivity too has acquired renewed urgency amidst the changing denominations in the contemporary ecosystem which are increasingly shaped by algorithmic cultures, artificial intelligence, and social media ecosystems. Several research articles engage with this concern by examining the intersections of technology, culture, and identity. Mediation also occurs through the technological advancement which allows the fragmentation of the digital self in ways that compel us to reconsider the relationship between representation and reality, appearance and being, in contemporary times. As societies continue to negotiate the promises and perils of technological advancement, such critical interventions remain indispensable for understanding the evolving contours of human identity and social relations. Posthuman entanglements and ecocritical enquiry further complicate questions of agency and ethics, showing that the human is never autonomous but always entangles with nonhuman worlds.

The first two papers, Iqbal Singh's study of the First Anglo-Sikh War and Chahat Rampal's exploration of Stephen Alter's *Birdwatching*, investigate the documented historical narration to contest the idea of history as a mere collection of facts. They highlight the dynamic processes through which communities remember, participate and negotiate the past; they establish that memory is more than just looking back as it actively constitutes present identities and political imaginaries. This destabilises the belief that the history is simply a repository of facts as it becomes a site of ideological contestation—marked by negotiations,

reinterpretations and becomings—that foreground the fluidity of lived realities against state authored narratives.

A compelling intervention into the politics of representation in the contemporary debates is seen in the article ‘Of the “Disposable”: (De)colonialising Climate Coloniality in Climate Bildungsroman Fiction’ by Faruk Hasan and Dr. Oindri Roy which makes a decolonial critique of contemporary climate politics through a comparative reading of Prayaag Akbar’s *Leila* and James Bradley’s *Clade*. It engages with the idea of the ‘climate Bildungsroman’ in an innovative way to show how narratives of personal growth and social transformation can illuminate the ethical, political and ecological challenges of the Anthropocene. Irrespective of geographical categorisation, both colonialism and neo-colonialism do impact ecological equilibrium through environmental exploitation.

The research papers continue to engage the questions of marginality as they examine regions, communities, and voices often relegated to the peripheries of national discourse. The article on Siddhartha Deb’s *Surface* interrogates the media sensationalism and the historical imagination of Northeast India, exposing how dominant narratives often ‘manufacture’ and politicise rather than report reality. The article is also timely in its discussion of public perception, especially in the context of recent events that demonstrate how racial stereotyping persists and how the Northeastern voices continue to be marginalised in national media narratives. It also brings forth the main cause behind this misrepresentation as the absence of local reporters. Similarly, Anirban Chatterjee’s reading of Tamsüla Ao’s ‘The Curfew Man’ shifts attention from spectacular accounts of conflict to the fragile yet enduring ethics of everyday life. In doing so, it reframes conflict literature from disturbance and tension to micro-narratives of personal negotiation and survival at the emotional level. It foregrounds the nuanced power of silence over spectacle; as a strategy to overcome strain in such

wars over romanticisation of suffering. Together, these essays highlight what thinkers such as Judith Butler and Veena Das have described as the ordinary life of violence and survival, where tenderness, memory, and community become modes of resistance against erasure.

Alternative Masculinities are foregrounded through depictions of insanity in select fiction from Anirudh Kala's *The Unsafe Asylum: Stories of Partition and Madness* that explores how the trauma of the Partition destabilises conventional patriarchal notions of masculinity. The article highlights the asylum as a 'counter-space' or 'heterotopia' where new but innate forms of gendered subjectivity emerge which otherwise remains repressed. The conventions of hegemonic masculinity perpetrate violence, and the psychosomatic suppression they engender damages the socio-cultural fabric of the society irrevocably. The paper by Vivek Sachdeva moves a step further and instead of understanding the challenges of the Partition within the framework of Western theory of the nation, he argues that the Partition caused a schism among *watan*, *mulk* and *qaum* which is crucial to comprehend the dynamics of identities in post-Partition India. This is done through a historical and narrative analysis of *Garm Hava* (1974) and *Mammo* (1994). The paper studies the state of exile more in social and psychological terms than in territorial terms, which gives people a sense of being undesired, unwanted and alienated. It is more about denying people their 'home' and the subsequent feeling of alienation at the hands of power structures or groups.

This is followed by another form of social exclusion akin to stigmatic practice of 'othering' women during the menstrual 'period.' The research paper by Himanjali Kalita and Paramita Dey looks at menstrual seclusion practices in the short film *Gaokor: A Period House* and reveals how social practices become technologies of discipline and control. Such social practices that showcase gender inequality call for interventions

that can challenge embedded cultural structures of control to promote justice and social inclusion. A related contribution, though tangentially different, is the research paper by Azhar Uddin Sahaji and Nidhi Sharma that revisits texts on Manasa Mangal to reinterpret medieval vernacular literature through the lenses of disability, caste, and gender. This can be situated within the broader discourse of Bhāṣā literature, as it demonstrates the vitality of such religious texts that enable them to provide indigenous frameworks demonstrating how medieval local stories still matter and can enrich ongoing debates on embodiment, power, caste, and resistance. Thus, this issue is equally attentive to the politics of embodiment and identity as these essays demonstrate how bodies become sites where power is inscribed, contested, and reconfigured across historical and cultural contexts.

The article ‘Women, Crime and Power: A Postfeminist Study of Delhi Crime Season 3’ examines the OTT series through Rosalind Gill’s concept of postfeminist sensibility, offering yet another timely and intellectually engaging intervention in the fields of gender studies, media studies, and contemporary Indian cultural discourse. It provides a nuanced exploration of how contemporary Indian OTT narratives have become important sites for reimagining women’s identities and negotiations with power. Samridhi Rampal’s ‘Navigating Non-Monogamy: An Exploratory Study of Media Representation and Personal Perspectives among Indian Women’ extends this discussion from the Indian platform to global media narratives, analysing how non-monogamy intersects with the socio-cultural realities of urban Indian women. Here again, tension emerges between the established heteronormative regulatory structures and emerging relational possibilities which are both represented and regulated through media.

The issue steers towards posthumanism with Jaswinder Singh’s re-reading of a canonical Indian English novel in his

research paper ‘A Study of Arun Joshi’s *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* as Posthuman Epistemology’ through the lens of critical posthuman studies. The mystic strangeness of Billy Biswas gets unfolded as a ‘multi-subjective consciousness’ as he is seen as a posthuman subject whose consciousness transcends anthropocentric boundaries. It is noticeable that how there has been a sustained questioning of the human at the central position as the essays collectively participate in what Rosi Braidotti has described as a posthuman reconfiguration of ethical relations. Human identity emerges out of its entanglements with the surrounding tangible or intangible non-human worlds of memories, environments, and technologies and it is never autonomous or self-contained.

Shradhananda Dash and Ananda Sethi take the selected stories from Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreter of Maladies* and Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s *Arranged Marriage* and *The Mistress of Spices* to explore the power of food in the immigrant kitchen. Food becomes a powerful cultural signifier that positions women as custodians, translators, and transmitters of cultural heritage and familial bonding across generations and between continents. The analysis highlights the gendered dimensions of the culinary experience and its contribution to nostalgia and familial identity. Engaging the theoretical lens of hybridity, postcolonialism, and diaspora studies, we see how food operates as a language of affection, a medium of resistance, and a marker of generational transformation. The paper further juxtaposes the traditional culinary practices with contemporary American lifestyles, showing how food becomes a crucial measure of assimilation and negotiation.

The article ‘Digital Representation of the Fragmented Self through the Lens of Reification: A Cultural Examination’ interrogates the transformation of selfhood into a commodified spectacle in contemporary digital representations and offers a compelling critique of postmodern digital culture, where the

digital increasingly functions as a substitute for lived subjectivity. Drawing upon Lukács, Debord, Habermas, Jameson, and contemporary studies on social media behaviour, the paper demonstrates how digital identities become marketable objects, fostering alienation, fragmentation, and a culture of perpetual self-curation.

The present issue is also enriched by a photo essay by Jasmine Kaur Chandla, an ethnographic research that explores the celebration of Sangla Holi in the Baspa Valley of Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh, which has a unique religious combination of Bon traditions, Buddhism, and Hinduism. This visual documentation captures the cultural transmission and ‘restored behaviour’ while also lamenting the loss when the sanctity of the ritual opens itself to become a tourist spectacle.

Our creative and review sections complement the research essays; they extend the dialogue across genres, languages, cultures, and intellectual traditions. In the Book Reviews section, Pousali Bhar offers a thoughtful and incisive review of *Climate of Denial: Darwin, Climate Change, and the Literature of the Long Nineteenth Century* (2024) as it highlights Allen MacDuffie’s compelling exploration of denialism as a cultural and psychological phenomenon whose roots can be traced to the nineteenth-century responses to Darwinian thought.

The second book review by Geeta Rani examines Neha Bansal’s poetry collection *Six of Cups* (2024), a collection that situates memory within domestic spaces, culinary practices, family relationships, and everyday rituals. Drawing on the symbolic resonance of the tarot card from which the collection derives its title, the review demonstrates how Bansal transforms ordinary moments into sites of affective and cultural significance, suggesting that history often survives through intimate and seemingly insignificant gestures.

The section devoted to creative writing further enriches the journal as it reveals the power of poetic expression that remains inaccessible to purely analytical discourse. Swapnadeep Kundu's poem 'Lowercase Moments' is a reflective meditation on the poetics of everyday life. Through a conversational tone, the poem transforms ordinary spaces—cafés, bus stops, rainy afternoons, and fleeting encounters—into sites of wonder and emotional discovery.

Complementing this extended lyric meditation are the haiku poems of Neetu Kumari Gupta, which demonstrate the evocative power of brevity. Through compressed imagery and suggestive emotional landscapes, the poems explore themes of affection, interpersonal tensions, betrayal, trust, and shifting human relationships. 'The Salty Sweet' and 'The Playful Jab' reveal the complexities of intimacy, where love is intertwined with irony, teasing, and unspoken understanding, while the concluding haiku reflects on fractured bonds, institutional dynamics, and the subtle erosion of trust. Together, these contributions demonstrate poetry's enduring capacity to illuminate the intimate dimensions of lived experience.

Translation, as scholars from Walter Benjamin to Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have suggested, is never a mere transfer of words. It is an ethical encounter between languages and worlds. The translations featured in this issue exemplify how linguistic crossings create new forms of cultural continuity while preserving the distinctiveness of local histories, emotions, and epistemologies. Ramyani Gayen's translation of Rabindranath Tagore's poem 'Abirvab' ('Advent'), originally published in *Kshanika* (1900), brings contemporary readers into dialogue with one of the most celebrated voices of Indian literature. In tandem with the research papers, this poem explores a revelatory moment or 'advent' of spiritual awakening. The translation carefully preserves the lyrical richness, spiritual longing, and emotional intensity of Tagore's original while making it

accessible to a wider English-speaking audience. The second translation of Acharya Shivpujan Sahay's Bhojpuri short story 'Kundan Singh Kesar Bai' is noteworthy as it highlights questions of nationalism, gender, sacrifice, and collective resistance within a village setting. The translation not only recovers Sahay's only Bhojpuri short story as an important literary text but also broadens our understanding of the diverse linguistic and cultural contributions to India's anti-colonial movement. These sections on creative writings invite readers to move between critical inquiry and imaginative engagement, local histories and global concerns, and the archival and the contemporary. In doing so, they enrich the intellectual and aesthetic conversations that define the spirit of this issue.

Whether through critical engagements or through the imaginative terrains of poetry and translation, the contributions remind the readers about the dynamics of knowledge that keeps evolving and is neither static nor isolated. The papers collectively suggest what Rosi Braidotti calls 'a colossal hybridisation.' Through their analyses they seek reformulation of the humanist ideals towards an 'ethical appreciation' of diversity that crosses constructed liminalities. It emerges through dialogue, contestation, interpretation, and creative renewal. This re-instates the importance of humanities as indispensable spaces for reflection, ethical engagement, and critical imagination.

At a time when public discourse is increasingly shaped by polarisation, ecological uncertainty, technological transformation, and competing historical claims, the humanities reaffirm the enduring relevance of literary and cultural studies in fostering nuanced understanding and meaningful dialogue across differences. This is evident from the contributions in this Issue 46 which celebrate plurality—of voices, methodologies, histories, and forms. It invites readers to inhabit these diverse intellectual and creative landscapes while remaining attentive to

the complex interconnections that bind them together. In this spirit, we offer the present volume as both a site of inquiry and a space of conversation, contributing to the ongoing task of understanding our world through the transformative power of literature, culture, and critical thought.

The scholarly rigour of these essays is noteworthy as they foreground contradictions, sometimes embedded, in the politics of the accepted mainstream theories. At times, contributors have read texts beyond analyses of their apparent concern, delved deep into the causes and have offered plausible solutions towards rectification. Many research papers have engaged with the concerns of identity, marginalisation, negotiations with power, inter-species networks, foreshadowing broader issues of environmental interconnections, collective existence, ethical responsibility etc. They successfully participate and contribute to more equitable and humane response to planetary crisis. The contributions in this volume reinforce dialog's commitment to exploring diverse literary traditions, marginal voices, and alternative epistemologies that enrich contemporary scholarship in Humanities. Thus, this edition reinforces the ways in which literary forms shape our capacity to perceive and respond to historical, ecological and cultural realities. Together, these diverse voices reaffirm the continuing relevance of literary and cultural studies as spaces for critical reflection, creative engagement, and intellectual transformation.

We thank our contributors, reviewers, readers, and editorial team for making this Issue 46 of dialog possible and trust that the questions raised within these pages will continue to generate new reflections, dialogues, and possibilities for understanding. My heartfelt gratitude to the editorial team which includes Dr. Kamalpreet, along with Ms. Sonali Negi and Ms. Arushi Bhandari, the editorial assistants. The team has made sustained efforts in reaching out to authors and experts, as well as in updating and disseminating timely information and

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