



## Editor's Note

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A very warm welcome to the first number of the journal of the Department of English, Kidderpore College. Everyone associated with this publication has been waiting with bated breath to witness the fruition of long hours of planning, designing, writing, reviewing, and editing. Apart from the usual pangs that accompany every birth, there have been unforeseen challenges, ushered in by the pandemic. In the wake of an epic event like this, spaces are being repositioned at a meteoric pace, structures of power altered, margins redrawn, and identities interrogated. For a calibrated understanding of the deep shuffle that the human civilization is going through, we shall have to wait.

The theme of this volume is 'Women and Writing, Women in Writing'. The flux resulting from a conjunction of women and writing, as also the representations of women in cultural texts, have occupied academic thinking considerably. The connections women have with writing have been fraught, since antiquity, with suffering, silences, absences, compliances, and lies. The Department of English, Kidderpore College, had organized an International Students' Webinar last September, to plough through the depths of these intricacies. The Webinar threw open an 'unreal' meeting ground to thrash out the issues that problematize women's relationship with the gendered discourse on writing. The young minds who came out to help, helped initiate the journey of this journal.

Every woman has the right to de-scribe and question how she is scripted, as the act of writing can invest a woman with an identity or release her from it. Women are written about in a language that is not their own and put in a subculture bereft of the layered nuances that inform their condition in society. What stands out is an inauthenticity that has endemically devalued women's selves. It would not be audacious to claim then, that women have been systematically misrepresented in writing. This misrepresentation/ silencing of the other, so crucial to the consolidation of the position, power, and identity of the male self, precipitates the other's anonymity; and anonymity sinks women into powerlessness.



This volume opens with a contribution by Ananya Dutta Gupta, the Keynote Speaker of the Webinar. She begins with the clarification that her essay is not ‘divisive’, but ‘militantly inclusive’ in intent, and asserts, that the ‘ideal’ gaze is created through an amalgamation of the masculine and feminine ways of looking. She goes on to trace the predicament of the modern woman to her earliest conflicted appearances in Pandora and Eve – both implicated in bringing ‘mischief on mankind’. We are grateful to Ananya for sending us this essay.

All the other contributors to the volume are undergraduate and postgraduate students. The articles that follow, span a wide spectrum of cultural texts – from vernacular literature to literature in English, from Malayalam film songs to Indian English films, from utopian fiction to autobiographical fiction, and from graphic novels to epic literature. They explore marriages, female friendships, the problems intrinsic to language, including the gendering of language and literature. The essays traverse a broad field of intersectional issues which interrogate relentlessly the monolithic institution of academic feminism.

Abeer Khatoon’s (‘Analysis of Gendered Differences through the use of Conjunctions: A Writer’s Perspective’) position reminds us of 20<sup>th</sup> century French Feminists when she says that language reflects traditional male power structures. Abeer argues that the use of conjunctions in a sentence is analogous to women’s existence as mere addenda to society. In her essay Ramsha Ahmed (‘The Oppression of the Other by the Absolute in Mahesh Dattani’s *Bravely Fought the Queen*’) critiques Dattani’s depiction of the oppression of women. She shows how women, othered by the machinations of patriarchy, are expected to surrender to it. Satarupa Chatterjee’s (‘The Silent Crusader in Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay’s *Rajmohan’s Wife*’) reading of the transgressive character of Matanagini in *Rajmohan’s Wife* serves as a counterpoint to Dattani’s women as analysed by Ramsha. In the following essay, Shuvra Mondal (‘Gendered Representation, Engendering Fantasies: An Analysis of Abanindranath Tagore’s *Kheerer Putul*’) engages in a critical reading of the depiction of women in *Rupkatha* (Bengali fairy tale) by positing the conventional ‘good woman’ against the deviant ‘bad woman’. And in the war between the good and the evil, the society is de/constructed, Shuvra reasons.

*Herland* by Charlotte Perkins Gilman can rightly be regarded as one of the most remarkable delineations of women whose lives exist beyond the limits of patriarchal dictates. Suparna Roy (‘Patriarchy and Women: A Queer View of Gilman’s *Herland* and Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*’) explores the feminist utopia in *Herland*, and draws out a contrast to Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, to hint at the queer tendencies inherent in the utopic model. Shubhangi Yadav (‘The Position of Women in 19<sup>th</sup> century America: Reading Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper*’) affirms that all disturbances of the female mind were labelled ‘hysteria’ in 19<sup>th</sup> century America and argues that a repressive patriarchy strategically advised them ‘rest cure’ to perpetuate female subjugation. Ranjana Sarkar (‘Women in Graphic Novels: Exploring Love, Death and Self across Cultural Spaces in *Kari* and *Fun Home*’) moves into a more popular genre. Her paper examines how Alison Bechdel’s *Fun Home* and Amruta Patil’s *Kari* use the literal and graphic mediums to bring to light alternative gender orientations and sexual preferences. She tries to fathom the different shades of love that women who are not cisgender experience.

The next essay is by Sukanya Mondal (‘Voiceless Muses: A Study of Social Voyeurism and Silences in the Gendered Politics of Lyrical Poetry’). Since ancient classical times, the Muses have been integral to poetic creation. This essay contends that despite being deified, the Muses remain voiceless. Ruby Roy (‘Globalization through Translation: Subaltern Crossing the Margins’) offers a close reading of a quintessentially subaltern voice; the life narrative of



Bama, a Dalit writer who is doubly subjugated under the rubrics of caste and gender. Poulami Datta ('Subservient Voices: Exploring the Silence of Women in our Epics') questions the voicelessness of women in the Indian epic narratives and brings up Sita and Draupadi as cases in point. She also draws our attention to contemporary depictions of these characters in works like Mahashweta Devi's 'Draupadi', where Dopdi Mejhen is shown claiming agency over her sexuality and identity.

Films present a very effective medium for the mirroring of the ills of society. Debjani Chakraborty, ('Representation of Women in Deepa Mehta's *The Elements* Trilogy') argues that Deepa Mehta's films, *Fire*, *Earth*, and *Water* mark a departure from mainstream cinema. She closely examines Mehta's uncovering of the deeper recesses of women's minds, and comments on the protest that Mehta raises against the injustices that are caused to women. The essay by Jijimol Saji ('Gender Identity in Malayalam Film Songs'), may be regarded as a companion piece to Debjani's article. Jijimol cites a selection of Malayalam film songs to expose how gender stereotypes are deeply embedded in the social fabric.

Before concluding, I must thank Dr Abhijit Ganguly, Principal, Kidderpore College. Without his ready permission and motivation, the journal would not have seen the light of day. He has been particularly enthusiastic and supportive of this publication.

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Best wishes.