

EDITORIAL

Greetings from the editorial team!

We are delighted to bring to you Volume 18 of *Spectrum, Journal of the Department of English*, University of Dhaka.

The turn to an interdisciplinary approach in the study of literature and language has led to an opening of new paths and new perspectives. The consequent diversity and permeability of borders have enriched both the scope and methods of research, a point amply reflected in the articles selected for this issue of *Spectrum*. I am excited to see the range of interests among scholars from language teaching to literature and engaging with British, South Asian, Caribbean, and Finnish writers, an indication of the impact of globalization on literature. Although this was not a themed issue, the contributors seem to have embraced a common ethos of interdisciplinarity in the plurality of approaches and genres that we find in their articles. More than an eclecticism in text selection, the potential of an interdisciplinary framework emanates from the decision to move beyond closed textual analysis to the exploration of historical, social, and other contexts and dimensions which result in multilayered and original interpretations.

Rajeev S. Patke's position paper on the integration of AI apps in the humanities opens the conversation on current pedagogical challenges and suggests that adopting an interdisciplinary approach by accepting technological innovations can be fruitful. He reflects on the development of AI applications and their transformative potential for teaching/learning. It is an insightful review of the possible threats and advantages of harnessing the availability of AI tools in academic institutions. As he writes, "we are standing on the cusp of momentous change", thus, his essay is a timely intervention on a relevant issue confronting us; moreover, he exhorts that "we have to be vigilant, creative and adaptable", a principle that aligns with the interdisciplinary approach.

Following the theme of AI in classrooms, Benazir Elahi and Rumana Rafique probe deeper into the implications of using technology from a teacher's perspective. They focus on Bangladeshi teachers' preparedness to deal with this revolutionary development. The authors have surveyed teachers of public and private universities to discover the level of teacher familiarity with AI tools and their usage in teaching language skills, predominantly writing. Their findings offer a nuanced understanding of the challenges and possibilities of integrating technology, particularly AI in Bangladeshi higher education settings.

Moving on to the articles on literary topics, it is not surprising to note that South Asian writers have drawn the attention of several contributors. Batool Sarwar's examination of media narratives in Arundhati Roy's *Ministry of Utmost Happiness* shows the linkage between postcolonial studies and media studies to interrogate representations of marginalized subjects. She deconstructs the multiple dimensions embedded in representations of transgender individuals such as Anjum in media discourse. Blending Said's theory regarding Orientalism and Butler's concept of precarity, Sarwar presents a fresh reading of politics in contemporary media discourse.

An essay that reconfigures our understanding of canonical authors and their texts is Ashim Dutta's interpretation of the novel *John Sherman*, Yeats's only completed novel. The centrality of space in shaping Yeats's identity formation along with interconnections with the writer's life writings forms the core of the essay in Dutta's analysis of the complex Irish-English dichotomy. Written from a South Asian context, the essay also offers a postcolonial reading that is attentive to the tension between cosmopolitanism and nationalism.

A postcolonial recognition of the conflict between colonial discourse and nationalist assertions emerges in Sanjeeda Hossain's essay on Jamaica Kincaid's travel narrative *A Small Place*. Hossain exposes the tensions that are embedded in Kincaid's account of her

homeland. She argues that *A Small Place* is complicated both by the traveller's postcolonial resistance and her gendered travel experiences. Hossain's focus on dual cultural allegiances and spatial imagination links her essay with Dutta as well as a few other essays on this issue that also deal with transnationalism and mobility.

In fact, Khadiza Akhter's essay expands on the theme of transnationalism in contemporary literature. In her reading of select novels by Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, and Khaled Hosseini, she argues that colonialism engendered transnational mobility and cross-border relationships. The dislocations brought by colonial structures have led to fragmented identities and the pull of nostalgia and longing for home might complicate the lives of the transnational characters.

Contemporary Bangladeshi interest in South Asian literature is found also in Md. Imran Khan's article. His essay on Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* illustrates the benefit of combining environmental concerns with literary analysis. The ecocritical perspective is an influential means to raise awareness and contribute towards climate action. Besides drawing on ecocritical theories of biophilia hypothesis and sustainable modus vivendi, Khan widens the scope of his analysis by highlighting the use of folktale, Ghosh's own anthropological approach in the novel. This article can also be linked with the earlier essays in their common interests of travel, migration, and marginalized characters.

Gender remains a critical category in English studies and two articles provide current and fresh interpretations. In "Defamiliarizing Privilege: A Journey from Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain's *Sultana's Dream* to Greta Gerwig's *Barbie*", Sumaiya Kabir compares the reversal of gender roles in two texts originating in very different contexts. The article delves into the differences and similarities in the treatment of women's social position in two very different cultures as well as in two diverse media. Viewing gender from the perspectives of a colonial Bengali writer and an American film director renders the opportunity to trace a transnational feminist concern.

Gendered identity forms the subject of Jahin Kaiissar's article where she takes a post-structural view to explore gender instability. In her reading of Pajtim Statovci's novel *Crossing*, she reveals the intersection between trauma and sexual identity in arguing that the protagonist Bujar's queer identity was moulded by traumatic experiences he underwent. Kaisar's research advances a comparatively new direction in studies of gender and sexuality as well as introduces a Finnish novel to the South Asian audience of literary criticism for further exploration.

With Musrat Alam's article on *The Lonely Londoners*, we return again to the theme of transnational mobility and migration. A postcolonial interrogation of Englishness, borders, and national allegiances appears to fascinate current researchers. Sevlon's novel about Caribbean settlers in postwar Britain is analyzed through the theoretical framework of deterritorialization. The article invites the readers to reflect on how migration narratives persistently shape the construction and negotiation of national identities in a globalized world of increased mobility, fluidity, and contestation.

From colonial texts to contemporary fiction and from essays to novels to travel memoirs and films as well as issues of technology in classrooms, this issue has offered an exciting and variegated collection of essays. On behalf of the editorial committee, I would like to thank our contributors for sharing their research works with us. We are also grateful to our reviewers for their meticulous reading of the submissions. Among others, our Junior Librarian Abdul Hannan has been an invaluable support in helping us to publish this issue online. I take this opportunity as the editor to acknowledge and appreciate the assiduous efforts and generosity with time and effort that the editorial team has given. I hope the articles will provoke interest and inspire more research.

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