

PREFACE TO THE EDITION

The collection of ideas in this volume of journal are deeply rooted in established literary and critical tradition, when placed side by side, they begin to reveal a pattern: a persistent unease with the stories we tell, and more importantly, the stories we refuse to tell. At its core, this body of work is not just about literature. It is about failure—narrative failure, ethical failure, historical failure. And perhaps, most urgently, it is about the failure of imagination.

There are books that arrive as finished arguments, polished and certain of their place in the world. And then there are collections like this one—restless, searching, unwilling to settle into the comfort of coherence. Across the collection, a pattern emerges. It is a pattern of failure—not as deficiency, but as revelation. The failure of narrative to contain the scale of ecological catastrophe. The failure of diasporic memory to reconcile longing with reinvention. The failure of canonical structures to accommodate voices that refuse to be aestheticized into comfort. These are not isolated concerns. They are symptoms of a deeper fracture: between the stories we have inherited and the realities we now inhabit.

Consider the question of climate. The argument, following Amitav Ghosh, is by now familiar but no less unsettling: that the modern novel, shaped by the logics of probability and individual interiority, cannot adequately register the enormity of environmental crisis. But what these essays make clear is that this is not merely a formal limitation. It is an ethical one. When literature cannot imagine the forces that define our present, it does not simply fall short—it participates in a collective evasion. The absence of climate from the novel is not neutral. It is structured silence.

That silence echoes elsewhere. In the domain of diaspora, for instance, what appears at first as variation—Jhumpa Lahiri's quiet melancholia set against Bharati Mukherjee's kinetic reinvention—reveals itself as a deeper tension between two incompatible ways of belonging. Nostalgia, in these readings, is not a stable emotion. It fractures. It distorts. It demands allegiance while simultaneously exposing its own impossibility. To remember, here, is not to return. It is to confront the unsettling truth that home may no longer recognize you.

If diaspora unsettles belonging, Dalit autobiography unsettles literature itself. The essays on Omprakash Valmiki and Bama do not seek to position these writers within an existing canon. They refuse the premise altogether. These texts are not requests for inclusion. They are acts of disruption. They alter the conditions under which literature can be read, taught, and valued. They insist that aesthetics cannot be disentangled from experience, that form cannot be privileged over truth. And in doing so, they expose the quiet violence of literary frameworks that have long mistaken exclusion for universality.

The encounter between Tagore and Yeats offers a different kind of disturbance. Often romanticized as a meeting of minds, it is here approached with a more careful attention to asymmetry. What emerges is not a story of mutual understanding, but of partial recognition—of two figures shaped by different histories, attempting to meet across an uneven terrain of power and perception. Misrecognition, in this context, is not failure in the conventional sense. It is evidence. It reveals the limits of what could be shared, and the conditions that made those limits inevitable.

Elsewhere, the essays turn to theatre, pedagogy, and subaltern fiction, but the underlying impulse remains consistent: a refusal to accept inherited categories. Mahesh Dattani's dramaturgy is read not merely as representation, but as an act of excavation—making visible what dominant narratives render unseen. The engagement with Gordon's synectics

model asks uncomfortable questions about creativity itself: who is permitted to imagine, under what conditions, and within which institutional frameworks. The subaltern essay, perhaps the most candid of the collection, acknowledges the limits of its own project. It does not claim to resolve the problem of representation. It insists, instead, on remaining within its tension.

What ties these diverse concerns together is a single, disquieting recognition: literature is not only reflective. It is constitutive. It shapes what can be seen, what can be said, what can be imagined. Its failures are therefore not incidental. They are consequential.

And yet, there is a quiet optimism embedded within this recognition. To identify the limits of narrative is to begin to move beyond them. To acknowledge complicity is to create the possibility of change. These essays do not offer solutions in any definitive sense. What they offer instead is attention—serious, sustained, and ethically grounded. They demonstrate what it means to read not as an act of mastery, but as an act of vulnerability. To allow the text to resist, to unsettle, to alter the terms of engagement.

Editing this collection was, at times, an exercise in discomfort. Several arguments here move in directions that resist easy agreement. Some conclusions remain open, deliberately unresolved. But that, finally, is the point. A journal of this kind is not a monument to settled thought. It is a record of thinking in motion—of scholars willing to inhabit uncertainty rather than conceal it.

If there is a single thread that runs through these pages, it is this: that literature, at its most vital, does not confirm what we already know. It exposes what we have refused to see. And in doing so, it demands not just new interpretations, but new forms, new vocabularies, new ways of imagining the world.

The question, then, is not whether literature is capable of meeting the demands of our time.

The question is whether we are prepared to let it change enough so that it can.

Happy Reading!

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