

Editorial

It's a special delight to present to you the latest issue of JTREL. Our endeavour is to provide a thoughtful and thought-provoking range of research pieces that stimulate your engagement with literary creations. Our offerings in this issue are focussed on pieces that analyse one of the most enduring and popular forms of literature – the novel. In doing so, we seek to move forward in our experiment to create issues of JTREL that are devoted exclusively to a single form of literary creation.

The word 'novel' comes from the Latin *novella*, meaning 'a new story' and refers to a narrative work of fiction published in book form. As they are longer than short stories and novellas, the greater length of novels enable their authors to expand on the basic components of all literary fiction - character, conflict, plot and setting, to name a few. Writers usually craft novels to tell detailed stories about the human condition which are presented via an infinite number of genres and styles. While ancient Greek, Roman and Sanskrit narrative works are considered as the earliest forebears of modern novels, this literary form has an amazingly rich history which has been shaped by basic standards, much experimentation and a diverse range of cultural and social influences.

The first of the five pieces analyses Margaret Atwood's novel *The Robber Bride* which explores the condition of women and their status in Canadian patriarchal society. The paper by M Muthulakshmi argues that Atwood has portrayed woman both as victim and avenger and often employed Canadian and universal myths to reflect on the female/human predicament. It asserts that her works are well-known for their intertextual nature and *The Robber Bride* uses such intertexts like the Triple Goddess and Three Little Pigs. In the light of intertextuality, the paper looks at the novel's protagonist Zenia who rebels against male sexual politics and reflects how she rejects society's view of fallen women. In doing so, the novel becomes a powerful statement about a woman who revolts against male hegemony.

In the next paper, S A Najar and Irshad Ahmad Mir provide an overview of the history and evolution of the Arabic Novel. They analyse the development of the Arabic novel and its sequence from pre-Islamic period to the Modern Era. The authors trace the literary trends in modern Arabic literature after it was influenced by Western literature. The paper highlights the contribution of Arabic novelists through the issues raised by them to create greater awareness about modern trends and challenges in their society.

The next three papers provide a broad focus on India. Kedar Joshi's paper highlights a rarely discussed aspect of Ayan Rand's influential novel *Atlas Shrugged*. The scholar claims that the symbolic presentation of India throughout this novel provides a biased interpretation of India on material as well as philosophical levels. Surprisingly, this interpretation posits India as a spatial entity supporting anti-human thoughts and deeds of the group of opponents of the heroes in this novel. The paper reiterates the need for finding reasons behind this distorted image of India from future researchers on this significant text.

The next paper by Durdana John tries to study the formulaic typecasting of the trans-woman 'Dimple' in Jeet Thayil's novel *Narcopolis*. The paper stresses how the major traits of a trans-woman are not explored to truly understand the character. A trans-

woman is a “female” who was assigned “male” at birth, and then decides to go after her true self, after discovering her identity as one. The novel is written in the year 2012 but the story is set in the 1970s. The paper argues that as the novel is written for the current generation, it could have experimented with the character of the trans-woman, keeping in view the latest developments about the Rights of the LGBTQ community and their efforts in trying to erase stereotypes held against them. The methodology of textual analysis is used in this insightful paper to understand the deeper meaning of the novel under scrutiny.

The final paper of this edition focuses on the theme of communal violence that has afflicted India in the past and still remains one of our gravest challenges. Pramod Kumari’s research paper provides a thoughtful reading of Indian diasporic writer Anita Rau Badami’s novel *Can You Hear the Night Bird Call?* It is based on the grief-stricken narratives of the lives of three female protagonists who are engulfed by the tragedy after the 1984 Anti- Sikh riots and the Sikh separatist movement in Canada. How the three react and respond very differently to largely similar tragedies provides rare insights into the futility of communal riots. The paper points out that the novel’s key message has an enduring significance. The recasting of history on communal grounds using violent means gains nothing for anyone - the real remedy lies in forgiving and forgetting. Dr. Maithry Shinde’s poems “Ode to the Virtual Classroom” and “A Race Forever” reflect the contemporary times capturing the changing classroom scenario and anxiety.

We hope the sumptuous offerings in this issue make *JTREL* a must-read delight of your reading menu!!

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