

## Editorial

### *Introduction*

The current thematic issue cover topics of interest in literary criticism, philosophy, and transcultural studies. Three articles focus directly on the theme of “Calamity and Immunity,” whereas an article and a translation with commentary draw attention to the contemporary relevance of two thinkers from the Indian subcontinent.

The opening two articles identify Jacques Derrida’s sense of autoimmunity in reading two contemporary novels. Yasemin Karaağaç brings to the fore the interrelations of autoimmunity with hostility and hospitality in Ismail Kadare’s novel *The Fall of The Stone City*. The novel, which narrates the events of two successive political contexts in Albania – the German occupation during the World War Two and the post-war communist regime – has proven a prolific resource for Karaağaç to put to work the conceptual instrumentarium of deconstruction in revisiting the relations, actions, and fate of its main characters.

For her part, Catherine MacMillan focuses on the political sense of autoimmunity, which she reads throughout José Saramago’s novel *Seeing*. The novel, which depicts a political crisis after democratic elections, has offered an opportunity for MacMillan to explore potential benefits and risks from actions of governments addressing such crisis. Employing the concept of autoimmunity, she keenly shows its convergence with Saramago’s reflective narrative in support of the need for democracy as a permanent political critique.

The third article also makes use of Derrida’s deconstructive philosophy for purposes of literary critique, this time in conjunction with Alice’s Jardine’s feminist notion of gynesis and in a reading of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s Novel *The Scarlet Letter*. Here the concepts of immunity and autoimmunity are deployed along with those of woman-in-effect, trace, patriarchy, discourse, and phallogocentrism, amongst others, in a joint deconstructive feminist perspective aiming to identify the sense of life-affirmation throughout Hawthorne’s narrative and thus trace what Derrida has called ‘the becoming literary of the literal’.

In her article, Priyambada Sarkar offers a comparative discussion of aspects of the thought of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Rabindranath Tagore. She focuses in particular on Wittgenstein’s claim that ‘ethics and aesthetics are one’ and endeavors to identify it in Tagore’s work. In an exposition full of insights, which goes over an admirable amount of the works of and the research on these two thinkers, Sarkar shows that for both of them words fall short of conveying the sense of value, but that the clarification of this peculiar ‘running against the boundaries of language’ is conducive to the harmony of philosophical and poetic thinking.

The issue ends up with a selection of the songs of Lalon Fakir, the Bengali poet-philosopher from the 19th century, translated and with commentary by Sayed Muddashir Hossain. Lalon’s songs are unique and remarkable in many ways, as has been also his life story. Today’s reader will be able to find in them that, among other things, questions about religion,

gender, and social equality, which are major concerns of our time, were raised so keenly and long ago by this brilliant – at once poetic and philosophic – mind. Hossain’s commentary is very informative, proving truly useful in grasping the sense of Lalon’s unique metaphors.

We hope you enjoy these pieces and find in them something to benefit from. Thank you for your time!

*Rossen Roussev*