

*Researchers' Colloquium*

Department of Liberal Arts

IIT Bhilai

**Book of Abstracts**

Wednesday, 10 April 2024

3:30 to 5:30 pm

L 107

## ***A Country for Old Men: Exploring Sporting Heroism and Ageing Masculinity in Moti***

### **Nandi's Bengali Sports Fiction**

Rhitabrata Das

This paper aims to explore the representation of aging male sports heroes through a discursive analysis of Moti Nandi's Bengali sports fiction. While commercial sports are often represented by the media—both print and audio-visual—through the lens of masculinity, the developing field of sports sociology highlights the significant use of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in its analysis. A majority of the fictional narratives on sports also convey similar values in their portrayal. In sports fiction, the ideals of hegemonic masculinity are reflected through the narrative representation of the athletes championing certain characteristics that legitimize men's dominant position in the societal structure and justify the subordination of female and other male members of the society. This concept also prioritizes athletes who are at the prime of their sporting youth, and advocates for a virile and spartan representation of a sports hero deemed essential to achieve sporting success. Contingent upon Nandi's portrayal of ageing sports heroes Kamal Guha and Jawhar Paul in *Stopper* (1974) and in *Buro Ghora* (The Veteran) (1996) respectively, this paper questions the traditional representations of sporting heroism following the hegemonic masculine values Raewyn Connell has identified. This study examines Nandi's reflection on ageing sports heroes advocating a complicit reading of masculinity, which also offers an alternate understanding of ageing and sporting heroism in South Asian sports fiction.

**Keywords:** Sporting heroism, ageing; ageing sports hero; hegemonic masculinity



## **Women's Life Writings and the Reimagining of Partition Histories**

Nidhi

The historical marginalization of literary production by female writers reflects systemic biases ingrained in cultural and societal structures. Women authors have often faced disproportionate challenges, ranging from limited educational opportunities to gender-based expectations that hinder their creative expression. Literary canons, traditionally dominated by male voices, further marginalized female perspectives. However, contemporary efforts to revisit and reassess literary

histories strive to contest such biases, acknowledging the invaluable contributions of female authors and fostering a more inclusive literary landscape that reflects the diversity of human experiences.

This paper engages with the historiography of the Partition of British India in 1947, specifically focusing on women's life writings as a nuanced and underexplored facet of this tumultuous period. It takes into account two texts, namely Kamla Patel's *Torn from the Roots: A Partition Memoir* (2006) and Anis Kidwai's *In Freedom's Shade* (2011), written by women who experienced the Partition first-hand and were involved in the recovery and rehabilitation process—these texts interject existing Partition narratives of gendered violence with a distinct perspective. We also find a semblance of understanding and sympathy for the dilemmas faced by abducted women or those who left voluntarily and those who were reluctant to return—whose voices otherwise are silent—in these narratives. Through a textual analysis of these primary sources, the paper elucidates the multifaceted dimensions of women's experiences, emphasizing narratives that extend beyond victimization. It also aims to position women's life writings as critical testimonies that demand reconsideration of the established historical narrative.

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**Liminal Places and nonhuman Agency: An Ecocritical Reading into Shubhangi Swarup's  
*Latitudes of Longing***

Barsha Santra

Contextualizing place in the larger framework of ecocriticism, the paper will critically engage with the narrative construction of the liminality of diverse geophysical places in Shubhangi Swarup's *Latitudes of Longing* (2018). It will analyse how the novel, through its four loosely connected chapters, "Islands," "Faultline," "Valley," and "Snow Desert," establishes the primacy of material agency of those places in shaping the immediate ecosystem along with the planetary linkages. It foregrounds the essential mutability of liminal places that are always in the mode of becoming and emergence through the processes of earth systems, tectonic displacements, and geological transformations. Drawing from the insight of new materialism, and ecocritical place studies, the paper will establish liminal places as sentient, agentic beings defined by their regional specificities and planetary linkages rather than political boundaries.

**Keywords:** Liminality; place/space; nonhuman agency; South Asia

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**(Un)Framing Madness and Narrative Disruptions in Reshma Valliappan's *fallen, standing***

Deepanwita Dey

Madness is often characterised by deviations from the accepted norms of society and disruptions in an individual's identity and sense of selfhood. Individuals suffering from mental disorders are often reduced to pathologising labels of their condition and subjected to discrimination, stigma and deplorable conditions. Due to the lack of any externally visible signs, the pain and suffering entailed by madness and mental disorders are often dismissed as just something inside their head. Consequently, the act of framing these non-normative experiences within linguistic and narrative structures gives rise to tensions and contradictions in the literary text. Through a critical analysis of Reshma Valliappan's *fallen, standing: my life as a schizophrenist* (2015), this paper seeks to examine the complexity of articulating and narrating madness as portrayed in Valliappan's memoir, and the possibilities and limits of such representations. Valliappan employs a variety of paratextual and extralinguistic elements and metafictional tropes to make sense of and narrate the traumatising experiences of acute pain and distress resulting from her illness. This leads to a collapse of the conventional frame of language and narrative structure (characterised by linearity, reason, and order) and a simultaneous creation of new frames and a hybridised narrative form. The paper will explore how this subversion of language and experimentation with narrative structures is both engendered by and symbolic of the complexity of representing madness. Drawing on Derrida's theorisation of the parergon in *The Truth in Painting* (1978) as a methodological tool, this paper will examine the narrative construction of the crumbling mind, the difficulties of framing madness within a narrative form, and explore the ramifications of representing that which refuses to be grasped and captured. In doing so, it will explore how Valliappan's account actively interacts with and unsettles the readers, demanding them to engage with these non-normative experiences and struggles of those living at the margins of society's psychosocial regimes.

**Keywords:** Madness; narratives; language; parergon

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**Transgressions and Assimilations: Negotiating Queerness and Indian Womanhood in  
*Maja Ma* and *Gulmohar***

Rudrani D. Chaudhuri

Since the advent of subscription-based video streaming services in the Indian market, there can be seen an impetus towards representations of queerness in web content. Such representations are invariably informed by the neoliberal consumer culture discourse. However, the neoliberal idioms of choice, freedom, and individuality expressed in such representations of queerness are often subsumed within the Indian heteropatriarchal family structure. This paper attempts a textual analysis of two films *Maja Ma* (2022) and *Gulmohar* (2023) released exclusively on OTT platforms that covertly and overtly engage with narratives of women loving women. While *Maja Ma* labels the lesbian and reels from the consequences of such labelling, *Gulmohar* falls back on strategies of evasion to secure the transgressive acts of its queer protagonist. In both films the queer protagonist is a woman from upper or middle class, upper caste Hindu families. In their roles as mother, wife, aunt, and grandmother they are perpetually negotiating with the image of the Indian woman as the receptacle of family honour. In the two films, queerness of the Indian woman disrupts the domestic space of the home but does not completely dismantle it. Rather, the image of the wife-mother-aunt-grandmother takes centerstage while queerness is either relegated to outside the margin of the film's narrative or is played out in a sanitised form under the benevolent gaze of patriarchy. Such films offer insights into the evolving discourse of queer representation in Indian media. This paper argues that such representations are a move towards a new Indian homonormativity that seeks assimilation with the normative through a depoliticized queer culture and integration into Hindu nationalist discourse.

**Keywords:** Indian; queer; lesbian; representation; neoliberalism

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**Recuperating Trauma and Challenging History through Analysing a Child's Narrative  
on Partition 1947**

Chandrani Sanyal

Veera Heeranandani's *Night Diary* (2018) falling under the category of Young Adult's Fictions dealing with the cataclysmic event of the Partition of the Indian subcontinent brings forth the

experiential aspect of the traumatic historical event on a child's personal memory. Analysing the young female protagonist's journal records, the paper would like to draw attention to how the young child re-authorizes the national and historical memory from her subjective point-of-view. Expanding on Cathy Caruth's approach to trauma, the paper proposes how Nisha's character in the novel offers an exception to the conventional trauma theory model as she chooses to speak on and about the trauma of Partition and its subsequent impacts like, displacement and rupturing of interpersonal relations. Through the journalistic pattern of narration, Nisha pens down her inability to make meaning out of the significant socio-political changes taking place in the adults' world while simultaneously forming an alternate subjective discourse on the traumatic events of the Partition. This particular act of narrating trauma through documenting it in the form of a diary entry draws attention the scope of how there is a possibility to move beyond the unspeakable or the non-narrative aspect of trauma. The young protagonist navigates through the ruptured everyday experience by the act of journaling not only the stories of rupture but that of harmony as well, narrating her personal history. The paper also offers to read the child's act of expressing the traumatic event through the act of writing, as her way of 'working through' (to use LaCapra's term) the trauma. Further, the paper also focuses on analysing the narrative strategy—the urgency and the earnestness in a child's perspective—as that would help to realize how the young protagonist performs a simultaneous act of acting out on and working through the traumatic memory, thus exhibiting the potential for resistance to official historiography as well as a scope of emotional healing through the act of narration.

**Keywords:** Children's Literature; memory, Partition, healing, trauma