



Editorial

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The observations and calculations of astronomers have taught us much that is wonderful; but the most important lesson that they have taught us has been by revealing the abyss of our *ignorance*, which otherwise we could never have conceived to be so great. (Critique of Pure Reason)

Only one word more concerning the desire to teach the world what it ought to be. For such a purpose philosophy at least always comes too late. Philosophy, as the thought of the world, does not appear until reality has completed its formative process, and made itself ready. History thus corroborates the teaching of the conception that only in the maturity of reality does the ideal appear as counterpart to the real, apprehends the real world in its substance, and shapes it into an intellectual kingdom. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, one form of life has become old, and by means of grey it cannot be rejuvenated, but only known. The owl of Minerva, takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering. (Philosophy of Right)

Starting off with two heavy chunks of German Idealist vision might raise certain brows, given the promised expanse of this special issue being as extranoetic as the Pandemic. Considering the cognitive bias of the thinkers quoted above, it is very natural for the readers to express profound suspicion at the supposed relational disjunction between an event marked by supreme egocentrism and another which could be at best understood as a metaevent or the capitalized Event in the Badiouan sense. However, the point is not to display or disperse the tissues of similarity; rather both Hegel's and Kant's identification of the immense creative plane that is paradoxically generated at the juncture of intense unthought, could be located as one of the several perverse novelties of the Pandemic. In other words, it is the oceanic vacuity marking the fierce centre of the pandemical vortex, that paradoxically engenders new ideas instead of consuming them up into its nullity. The violence associated with the Pandemic can, therefore, be best described as creative though in the most perverse sense of the word. Observing the global failure of most of the grand epistemes, it is not too unlikely to cast a suspicious glance at the discipline where lies the creature that has gathered a number of pejorative connotations – some of which are either very recent like “monstrous endocolonialist” or some as old as the Nietzschean “disease of the earth”. Shaking off the epistemic hubris as other knowledge systems are opening up to renewed possibilities, it is worth mentioning that Humanities has already started honing up its rusty critical weapons. What is effective then, is this exact creative desire to take novel lines of flight, to assemble diverse perceptual (im)possibilities – all these with a view to register a beyondness. Humanities is a constant process of ‘becoming other’ which constitutes its beyondness and it is worth mentioning that the ‘human’ in Humanities is always in the midst of a semantic flux.

In his famous “Postscript on Control Societies”, Gilles Deleuze vouched for the need of creating “new weapons” which by translating into radically novel grammatologies would sustain a thorough synchronicity with the rapidly evolving zeitgeist. The viral apocalypse that we are currently going through, has opened up many epistemic gaps whose multimodality demands a recalibrated outlook. This has resulted in many critical engagements in the field of humanities – from neomaterialist discourses on anthropocenic climactic impacts to the very recent dismissal of Anthropocene as a framework with a scale-shifting towards advancing a new epoch in the form of “Virocene”. With microbes taking charge of the planet, humanities

has to reorient its vectors towards exercising an expansion, by refashioning Early Modernist humanistic epistemologies into working out an experimental nonhumanist epistemology. To this end, a thorough anarchist overthrowing is necessary both at the level of thought and praxis – a planetary historiography has to be written without anthropocentrism, multispecies assemblages have to be encouraged in critical theory courses, emergence transversal subjects has to be mapped onto old subjectal cartographies, postglobal planetary thought has to be retheorised and overall philosophy should be reoriented towards ecosophy that would not necessarily be limited to the green activists but would connect and facilitate mental, social and environmental ecologies. The breakdown of barriers separating private and public engineered by the invasive virtual regime has imparted brand new semantic layers to our *oikos* (eco), therefore, the persistent demand to redefine the current virtual ecosphere is hard to ignore. Besides, the ever-looming mutating spectre of capitalism is an appropriating force that is constantly posing new hurdles on the path of humanities – sometimes going to the extent of absorbing its critiques and mutating into some deceptively harmless eyewash. For example, the managerial surveillance in physical office spaces has now modified into heavily demanding micromanagerial regulations whose flexibility and comfort are only on appearance. We all know how working hours have prolonged silently under the deception of domesticity.

These pressing demands have resulted in productive ventures as evident from the aforementioned novel trajectories – all having one thing in common – a desire for a New Earth. However, this desire should not be understood in utopian/dystopian value-loaded vocabulary; this desire is channelised towards a differential and ethical heterotopia. Such ventures have resulted in various pandemic special issues by several reputed journals like *Critical Inquiry* or *Philosophy Today* – studded with pathbreaking engagements by leading intellectuals including Slavoj Žižek, Bruno Latour, N. Katherine Hayles, Yuk Hui and Thomas Nail. What is important, then, is to understand the significance of memorialising a traumatic event like the pandemic through the pluralistic lenses of hermeneutics; connecting-commenting-critiquing various facets informing and informed by crucial social, economic, political and religious factors.

This special issue of *New Literaria* proudly features some of the most effective engagements with the pandemic, especially the current second wave of Covid, that successfully interrogates the different implications of memorialising the event vis-à-vis the current new-liberal capitalistic datascape of bioengineered affairs. Towards the end, we feel, providing a caveat is imperative because a special issue like this runs the risk particularising a universally afflicting event. Therefore, at the very outset it is important to note and understand the impossibility of recording the umpteen experiential nuances affecting the *pan-demos* and by no means does this special issue throw any claim to be exhaustively inclusive. It is its limit which makes it transgressive. It is this limited scope that projects our fragmented understanding of an event – so enormous in its magnitude.

We, as editors, hope that the engagements collected here – ranging from something as global as Saramago's apocalyptic vision to something as local as Narayan Ganguly's treatment of fear – would overwhelm the readers with a certain sentiment of mutuality – a feeling of being on the shared visceral-experiential plane with others. We thank the contributors for effectively interrogating not only the fictional sphere but also engaging with something as novel as the socio-gastronomic bonding resurfacing through covid-community kitchens or critiquing the divinization of endemic pathogens vis-à-vis politics of caste in Bengal. We also hope that this attempt at memorialising the pandemic through many unique aberrant heuristics would pave the path for many such experimental endeavours in near future.