



EDITORIAL

Dear *JALDA* reader,

Applied literature, like any concept in today's world, can be approached from many perspectives. Our Journal's tendency towards it has been a consequence of what we, as students of English language and literature, have experienced throughout our academic life. Literature has been a phenomenon standing at the centre of all our attention and academic activity with everything else driven to the margin. Literature has been a precious object, whose understanding deserves years of endeavour to acquire the competence approved by experts in the field, to get familiar with theories formulated by smart thinkers and intellectuals to make texts more meaningful, to be true devotees to distribute literature and publicize its love; literature looks like a sacred institution for modern times and modern people and literature departments are the fortresses to protect and enhance this institution. The height of our achievement in this domain is when we add a new reading or understanding of a great work to the already accumulated piles of knowledge about it. We are the new arbiters of the meaning of the work.

Meaning is a key issue in this discussion. Meaning has almost always been the main concern in literature even in its meaninglessness. One of the reasons may be the role we attribute to language in literature. Language is the material literature is made of in the same way that marble can be the material of a statue in sculpture. The marble and its shape in the work is what was intended by the artist, and it is a reflection and projection of his/her experience of life. What the receiver of art usually does is try to grasp the artist's experience realized and conveyed through the intentionally shaped marble. In the same vein, language in literature is the artistic realization of the author's experience of an aspect of life and the reader's role is grasp that experience by focusing on the language. The language in the literary work does not say anything else in the sense that a book on history, geography, psychology or sociology does. The language in a book on history, for instance, is both literature and information. It is literature because it has elements that can persuade the reader to take the book and read it for pleasure, although the book is informative as well. A novel, however, is literature because it does not lie and it does not tell the truth; it is language as aesthetic experience. The consequence is usually reading the literary text for aesthetic excellence. Even the death of the author and birth of several literary theories challenging traditional understanding of literature have not reduced the significance of literature in the eye of its lovers and students. They may travel all over the world to collect the elements of different sorts and types to account at last for the literary work they are reading! The work is the centre of the world and everything in it should come down in an implosive manner to contribute to the understanding of the text. This is what we would like to call literature.

Applied Literature, however, does not have literature at its centre. Literature in this domain is a tool to solve problems and achieve goals. Using literature to teach and learn languages, the application of literature to language education, is a very handy example. *Health Humanities* (by Crawford, et al. and reviewed by A. Ramazani in our Journal's previous issue) comprises chapters on how literature can be used for

health purposes. Medical Humanities is introduced as “the engagement of medicine with the humanities and arts, social sciences, health policy, medical education, patient experience and the public at large.” A shift is observable here from pure objective scientific endeavour based on the segregation of seemingly unrelated fields to the integration of them for more practical purposes.

The role attributed to the public at large in these equations demands careful consideration. In traditional literary studies, as stated above, the textuality of literature is central. But in Applied Literature the text is no longer our precious object. Some reader-oriented literary theories have shifted our attention radically from the text to the reader. In these theories, the literary critic is no longer the sole source of justification and interpretation of literature. Determining the literariness of the text and its interpretation lies with the reader. This might eventually lead to the well-beingness of the reader, which, once achieved, fulfills the applied literature critic’s wish! Thus, those with inclination towards the reader in literary studies may have an affinity with applied literature critics that move towards the public at large. What is literature for, after all? The study of literature alongside other cultural products should be integrated into people’s lives so that their effects can be evaluated in the context of their everyday life.

Our Journal invites researchers working on the interrelationship between language, literature and everyday life. Language and literature education should be an activity interwoven with life. Knowledge is not supposed to be confined to the chapters of a single textbook. The researcher, the teacher and the learner should acquire knowledge that would make education a meaningful and useful activity. And this may need a revision of our already held definition of education and our attitude towards the real world.

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