

## EDITORIAL

This issue of the journal seeks to expand the changes announced in the editorial of the previous issue. It does this by focusing on the facts, not the theories. One article looks at the life of an Australian writer who lived in India and wrote outside the mainstream of Australian society. Another article explains the historical and political realities behind attitudes towards English in two ASEAN countries. The other article suggests a new way of thinking of literature in terms of a grounded research approach that treats the language sociologically and anthropologically.

What the articles have in common is that they highlight facts over theories. When we do this, we often see and hear things that have remained hidden. The creative writing excerpt in this issue seems to reinforce this idea as it considers how modern Australia may or may not offer a place for one of its iconic writers from the past. It does this by representing Lawson's attempts to understand the Australia of today in the ways he communicates with those he meets. This extract follows on from a review of the novella from which it is drawn in the previous issue of the journal.

In keeping with this focus on grounded experience, the review in this issue is based on the writer's personal connections with the poet being reviewed.

So there are links between several of the contributions that hopefully will be expanded in future. In this way, another form of discourse may develop; one that offers an alternative to the postmodern or poststructural ones that seem to have totally taken over western academic discourse.

There are literally hundreds of journals that offer outlets for those who want to write in the mainstream of western Theory. Surely, there must be room for alternative discourses that are based on reality, not hyperreality. Literature, cultures and societies are lived and shared experiences, not buzz words that serve as convenient containers for any hazy idea vaguely related to literature, culture and society. What we study and do must be useful in our lives in some tangible way; not just as exercises we do in order to gain academic promotion or to keep our jobs in universities.

Herman Hesse, the great novelist who wrote extensively on journeys to the east, has warned us against what he calls the Glass Bead Game in which elitist academics assert their value by doing the most ridiculous intellectual tricks. One instance is the use of pseudo-scientific links:

The analytical study of musical values had led to the reduction of musical events to physical and mathematical formulas. Soon afterwards philology borrowed this method and began to measure linguistic configurations as physics measures processes in nature...Thereafter more and more new relations, analogies and correspondences were discovered among the abstract formulas obtained in this way. (Hesse: 24)

The result is that the rules of the Game, which bears a striking resemblance to many postmodern and poststructural discourses, develops “the sign language and grammar of the Game” which constitute “a highly developed secret language” (Hesse: 6). The Game “was virtually equivalent to worship, although it deliberately eschewed developing any theology of its own” (Hesse: 32). However, for the Magister Ludi Joseph Knecht, the problem is to teach the game, not just to enjoy playing it in splendid isolation from the real world. He is accused of being a troublemaker when he insists on testing the truth or correctness of the game (Hesse: 110).

The more he questions the validity of the Game, the more he sees its dangers:

In brief, this Castilian culture of ours, sublime and aristocratic though it certainly is, and to which I am profoundly grateful, is for most of those associated with it, not an instrument they play on like a great organ, not active and directed toward goals, not consciously serving something greater or profounder than itself. Rather, it tends towards smugness and self-praise...(Hesse: 329).

These doubts are finally resolved when Knecht decides to leave the Game and to reenter the real world and teach others how to deal with the threats of war. This path appeals to Hesse as it is also followed in another of his novels, *Siddhartha* (1922). Hesse's message should serve as a warning to those who wish to remain in the games we have been playing in academia for the past few decades. As we spin our ingenious threads, the real world is in upheaval and our discourses have no relevance to that world. We must communicate whatever we have learned in order to save that world from destruction.

Hopefully, this journal remains out of the trap of the Glass Bead Game by emphasizing that our role is to educate others by sharing our real world experiences. We should not play games that only have significance to ourselves conceived of as a narrow elite arrogantly commenting on things of which we have no demonstrated experience. And we need to communicate in a language that is accessible, not opaque.

## References

Hesse, H. *The Glass Bead Game*. 1943. Trans. R. and C. Winston. London: Vintage, n.d.

Hesse, H. *Siddhartha*, 1922. Trans, J. Neugroschel, New York: Penguin, 2002.

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