EDITORIAL

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The onslaught of COVID-19 pandemic—affecting millions around the world directly as an infectious disease and indirectly by taking away their livelihood and/or displacing them in countries like India—has benumbingly flooded us with the deluge of news and data of ever-rising fatalities to the extent that our minds have begun to resist forming a credible vocabulary for conceptualizing and articulating the current crisis. The dogged uncertainty of future as the aftershock of this global health emergency will be looming over our social and economic systems for a considerable period of time to come. Parallel to this ongoing calamity, many cities in India are dealing with natural disasters such as cyclones, forest fires, floods, and recurrent earthquakes. This last Issue of Volume 3 of LLIDS is getting published, albeit behind the schedule, amidst this mayhem, and for this we appreciate the support that we have received from our colleagues and friends—some of whom were hampered by their circumstances but rose to the challenge to extend their helping hand. Even as the crisis keeps all the members, as well as the extended family of LLIDS, isolated in their respective homes, this Issue marks the completion of our three years of publication, and for that our heartfelt gratitude to all and everyone: editorial board members, authors, peer reviewers, interns as well as readers.

It may have come to the notice of our readers that Volume 3 (Fall 2019–Summer 2020) of LLIDS has attempted a dialogue on both the affirmations and expunctions of Cartesian rational subject within the history of modern Western thought—the ways in which human subject is constituted and deconstructed—with a special focus on contemporary debates of postmodern and posthumanist discourse. The previous three Issues, in this series, focused on interrogation and mapping of human subject's erasure within postmodernism, problematic of the duality of body-mind within posthuman thought, and the sense of ethical ground underlying posthuman praxis, respectively.

The rationale behind this attempt was to put to test one of the self-proclaimed goals of modern philosophy, of finding epistemic certainty in its dealings with the recalcitrant material reality of the world by investing hope in its understanding of 'being human.' Uncertainty, however, remains the only certainty against which rational subject designs his epistemologies, but finds it impossible to either remain in

control of the material world or to make sense of human existence within it. One scaffolding epistemology, bearing the illusions of certainty in rational subject's engagement with the material reality, forms itself as the anthropocentric metanarrative of humanism: a pivotal instance of establishing 'human' as a self-contained, self-knowing rational measure of specifically anthropocentric perception of reality. This all-encompassing metanarrative of anthropocentric humanism—since the establishment of Cartesian 'human' subject as the foundational principle within the Enlightenment discourse—though, largely finds itself out of favour within the postmodern thought that displays an "incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard xxiv). Postmodernity's incredulity towards the Enlightenment's metanarratives of humanism—the given cast to shape the material world—presents itself in twofold manner: while on one hand it begins to question a series of existing narratives, on the other hand however, this project of questioning the existing narratives, itself models another type of (meta)narrative that, somewhat paradoxically, reinforces similar set of values as the previous framework within the extant framework of postmodern thought.

The postmodern (meta)narrative of 'questioning,' within these given conditions, begins with a censure of modernist understanding of 'human'—"what makes us human?"—and brings liberal humanist tradition under intense pressure, eventually to the point of dissolution. As a corollary to this 'questioning' comes a sense of displacement, leading to the erasure, of the human subject as postmodern discursive practices opt for alternate definitions of being 'human.' These alternate approaches—consequent to the representation of the erased 'subject' as an inclusive, hybrid, variegated, and technologized category—are not only radically subversive to the prevailing modernist practices but also bring new modes of actualizing the subject as the 'posthuman' within the collective imaginiare. Within this imaginiare, even the reinterpreted history of social and natural sciences is "summed up as the elimination of the concept of the subject" (Touraine 1), where the problem of subjectivity looms over every attendant question on 'human posthumanism' in significant ways.

The philosophical and cultural shift from humanism to posthumanism, thus, includes within itself the disciplinary, socio-political, and ethical aspects attendant to this historical transition where, in its liberal scope, posthumanism prima-facie rejects the dominance of the Enlightenment humanism and substitutes it with hybridity, variation, and becoming. Collapse of the Enlightenment's humanist metanarrative—its worldview and especially final causality—allows

techno-science to configure a spectrum of undefined telos where radical uncertainty is at play. Within this uncertainty, concerns of body, memory, consciousness, and the metaphysics of birth and death branch out into the fantasies of disembodied, autonomous, and agentic entities leading to immanent and ongoing mutations in the representations of the posthuman. Despite the divergences between their perspectives though, the theoretical and practical struggles for posthumanist standpoint find themselves within latent humanist coordinates as their axes for reflection even as they toil to go beyond. Therefore, a dominant strain of representation in popular culture engages with the posthuman dramatization of the Enlightenment's dream of unlimited human perfectibility (Yaszek and Ellis) that, within the posthuman universe, is achieved as an engineered product—both fictional and real. Herein, genetic modifications, reproductive mechanisms, and virtual reality reveal biological and cultural anxieties, ruminations on the possibilities of existence, and spatial and temporal positioning of civilisation as a whole that remain curiously similar to the discursive deliberations that were part of the Enlightenment's framework of humanism.

Latency of humanist discourse can be witnessed, within the historical breadth of twentieth century that redefined the terrain of scholarly discussions, in the 'body-turn' that, paradoxically, became a pertinent part of posthumanist academic discourse. Couching its vocabulary within evolutionary continuum, the vector of posthumanist thought posits 'human body' as a corporeal limitation that must be overcome. Unlike the 'body-turn' in cultural studies or feminist studies that foregrounded the concept of body, posthumanism brings in fresh dialogue in terms of new ways of looking and engaging with the historically given understanding of 'human body.' Apart from representation of cyborg, android, Artificial Intelligence in fictive sphere, real-life 'cyborgs' (like Kevin Warwick, Neil Harbisson, Moon Ribas) too redefine the scope of body as a ground of identity in 21st century. It thus became symptomatic of posthumanism to declare the 'human' body as obsolete, requiring techno-enhancement for larger benefit, even as it concedes that all questions of subjectivity, affectivity, and mortality inextricably hinge upon the corporeal dimension of being 'human.'

The arc of the present Issue continues with chartering the anxieties and possibilities of posthuman subjectivities within popular culture's constructions of the posthuman—the universe of popular science fictions, films, television series, web series, and comic books—

largely through the modes of coupling humans to digital techno-science: cyborgs, Artificial Intelligence (AI), cybernetic enhancement, bio-technological innovations, and simulations. Taking a closer look at the second half of twentieth century, where the cultural representations take significant turn to subsume the trajectory of technological and scientific 'advances' within itself, it tries to study emerging areas within posthuman discourse that have sought to change the horizons of possibilities thereby attempting to rethink the future of the human world. Within these possibilities, human subject remains de-centred within the popular imagination, to be replaced by another species of posthumans who are sometimes presented as superior to human subject and sometimes as deviated aberrations to them.

This Issue brings together varied dialogues on the subject. Agnieszka Jeżyk brings out a subtle discussion of the representation of the human to animal and animal to human metamorphosis in Polish horror films. In her reading of Polish cinematography, aesthetics of horror genre is argued to be symptomatic of anxieties of past and present which underpin political, historical, and ideological questions in collective consciousness. Focusing on the trope of transformation, the essay engages in reflecting on the problematic of the boundary between human and non-human. K.M. Ferebee's essay presents a point of departure from the typical posthumanist framework in its critique of posthumanism on account of its inability to imagine plural subjectivity. The essay reads the character of Tok'ra as a plural being who challenges the naturalized, singular, human(ist) body and argues that the dominant representation of plural subjectivity has been in terms of loss (of subjectivity) and violation (of body). Ferebee's significant intervention lies in reorienting the optic with which plural ontology is perceived towards a way of thinking where it may be read in terms of assimilation and surplus of subjectivity. Last paper of this section by Marie Claire Brunelli discusses Heidegger's concept of "world picture" as the authentic connection between the self and the world, where subiectum is the basis of reference for everything. But, the continuous engagement with digital technology has shaped a para-self which, according to Brian Rotman, is splintered and plural. The relation formed by this virtual presence is understood as inauthentic in the face of the power of literature which is the authentic expression of the relational existence of man.

In the Special Submissions section, Yannis Kanarakis's reading of British aestheticism, market economy of the late nineteenth century

comes to be seen as a decisive factor in determining the aesthetic sensibility found in Walter Pater's criticism, Algernon Swinburne's poetry, and Oscar wilde's aphorisms and epigrams. By drawing upon the Marxist notion of reification, especially the one inflected by Jameson, the essay shows that capitalist logic of efficient production which gave rise to autonomous, fragmentary character of economy is very much the literary idiom as well as model of aesthetic production. In the next paper, Dominic Thompson undertakes a study of David Wong's *John Dies at the End* as a post-millennial horror fiction to analyse it in terms of metahorror genre. The essay contextualizes the self-reflexivity of metahorror vis-à-vis traditional tropes and stylistic of horror genre across literature, film, and video game. It maintains that self-awareness of a genre amounts to self-awareness of fiction in terms of its construction and enactment. In this regard, Thompson argues, Wong's novel is allowing a space for reimagining the schema of horror genre itself.

We hope to create a more engaging dialogue on this Issue through your questions and comments and, in these testing times, we extend strength and courage to all our readers and contributors.

Works Cited

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