FCT

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XXV International Conference
on

A Requiem for Theory!
Eschatological Ruminations

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Conference Venue
Don Bosco Institute, Guwahati

Thematic Introduction
Program Schedule
List of Participants
Bio Notes of Keynote & Plenary Speakers
Abstracts of Papers
FCT Conference@25: A Retrospective Glance

Celebrating Three Decades of Forum on Contemporary Theory

Aloka Patel

The [Im]possibility of Theory: Critiquing *Pedro Paramo*

The application of a theory for interpretation of a literary work anticipates an absolutist and primordial state of a text and its meaning. As an alternative to such a critical practice this paper attempts to read Juan Rulfo, the Mexican novelist's *Pedro Paramo* (1955) as a complex narrative that destabilizes any possibility of reading the text from a singular theoretical perspective. The novel, as a collection of 70 "fragments" is designed in a manner that dismantles the possibility of holding the text as a structured whole from within. And yet paradoxically, the text also exists within its frame of the novel. The strategic but liminal position occupied by the characters and narrators in the novel mark the thin line that exists in the encounters between the real and the illusory as they defy spatial and temporal boundaries to slide in and out of earthly existence and purgatory, of past and present. The novel, thereby, as a structure that keeps falling apart with the reader's impulse to re-gather the scattered fragments into a meaningful whole, questions the limits of theoretical paradigms and the permeability of those limits. A novel where the text and the protagonist are united in a single identity, *Pedro Paramo*, paradoxically dramatizes the complexities of human relationships, of historical realities, of eschatological hypocrisies in order to critique the reader's fetish for stable meanings as blinkered, and ironically absolutist and authoritative.

Amritanand Nayak

Arts and Ideas: A Take on 'Post Theory' Position

Representation of 'reality', outer and inner, has been an inseparable part of human culture and civilization since the beginning. In the initial phases ideas and theories remain implicit, and intertwined with works and practices so as to suggest purity, perfection of the latter. But slowly and steadily, ideas and theories grow to the surface, become dominantly visible and audible, and seem to orient the practices. In times closer to us, since the 19th century, practices seem to have been initiated to justify ideas and theories which become overwhelming. Practices become secondary, derivative and hence less intellectually stimulating. This leads to a surfeit of theorizing per se, thus creating a sense of déjà vu, a kind of fatigue born of obsession with theory. Artists (practitioners) and theorists (critics, philosophers) are trying to overcome this crisis in different ways, and to bring back a semblance of normalcy. At the same time a section of them is raising alarms that art (practice) is dead because theory has come to an end, is dead! (Danto) But on closer scrutiny these ideas of 'post theory', 'post art' prove to be needlessly farfetched, and panicky or celebratory. Support for such 'posts' does not come from pragmatic experiences, and critical sources. Ideas of alternative realities, infinite perspectives, and endless proliferation of alternatives prevent such an eventuality. One should not forget that while ideas suffer from the highest rate of mortality, the 'idea of idea' enjoys the highest degree of endurance, being coterminous with humanity. Ideas /theories vary, weaken, die but the very 'idea of idea' persists. Playing on Huxley we may say that 'every idea/theory is eventually a bore', giving rise to newer and newer ideas. This prompts us to say: 'Theory is dead, long live theory', and remember 'Raktabija' of Indian mythology. Hence 'Theorrhoea' comes to an end, not theory, or art. The paper tries to make this point by referring to some art works from ancient cave paintings to Garau's sculptures