



Department of English, Satyawati College (Evening), University of Delhi

CALL FOR PAPERS

NATIONAL CONFERENCE

On

Being and Becoming: Articulating Alterity across Mediums

12th April 2022

Hybrid Mode (Offline and Online)

All the lives that surround us are in us.”

— Susan Griffin

How does one articulate and comprehend the notions and processes of alterity? It has been often perceived as ‘the state of being other or different’, as embodying ‘diversity and otherness’. Similar to Susan Griffin’s thought, alterity has sometimes been read via Georg Simmel’s image of the *Stranger*, as someone who is “fixed within a particular spatial group, or within a group whose boundaries are similar to spatial boundaries. But his position in this group is determined, essentially, by the fact that he has not belonged to it from the beginning, that he imports qualities into it, which do not and cannot stem from the group itself” (*Notions of Otherness* Mark Axelrod-Sokolov 2019).

Others have seen in the concept of alterity varied radical possibilities. Either combining it with Narratology to examine it as both a process of “identity negotiation, but also as a departure point for understanding the process by which cultures come into dialogue” (*Alterity and Narrative* Kathleen Glenister-Roberts 2012). Or studying alterity with reference to Hindu thought to reflect on “*dharma* (moral religious duty), *varna* (class, caste), *jati* (subcaste) and issues of purity and pollution” (*The Other in South Asian Religion, Literature and Film: Perspectives on Otherism and Otherness* Diana Dimitrova 2014). And in its conceptual connections with marginality, alterity reiterates what Graham Huggan wrote in *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2002) that “the embrace of marginality is, above all, an oppositional discursive strategy that flies in the face of hierarchical social structures and hegemonic cultural codes”.

The canvas of alterity is wide, vivid and fluid. It defies a simple definition because it contains concepts like difference and otherness within itself. Difference and otherness must be unpacked to begin understanding Alterity and the cluster of meanings associated with otherness. Within this purview, one also begins to think of the range of philosophical conceptualisations regarding the 'being' and its 'becoming': from the Heideggerian *being-in-the-world*, to the Derridean *play of absence/presence* and Foucauldian notion of *history of the present*. The journey continues into the study of 'medium' and 'mediation', questions and possibilities of mis/representations and processes and practices of articulations/silences while creating a narrative.

The definitions for difference and otherness emphasize the conditions or qualities of separateness, dissimilarity and distinction, especially from an expected norm. While an expectation for norms, sameness or mimesis seemingly opposes alterity or otherness through imitation or copy, yet such an opposition is not necessarily the case. Michael Taussig in his 2018 work titled *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* writes of the "recharging and retooling of the mimetic faculty" through mass media and cinema, and notes that "in imitating, we will find distance from the imitated and hence gain some release from the suffocating hold of "constructionism" no less than the dreadfully passive view of nature that it upholds". Taussig distinguishes and nuances the term, which demonstrates the various contexts in which theorizing about alterity produces difference and complicates the relationship between the self and the other.

Access to the tools of print capitalism has enabled a re-articulation of the cultures of reading, interpreting and comprehending our identity-markers as plastic/created, rather than inherently biological. A cynical world-view of the recent events in the pandemic world have also led some thinkers like Henry Giroux to talk of "pandemic pedagogy" in his book *Race, Politics, and Pandemic Pedagogy* (2021). He contends that we are actually moving towards an increasingly fascist world which is only reproducing the hegemonic world order and systems which perpetuate rather than challenge the margins and the manifestations of marginality. This leads to the denial, stigmatization, rejection, stereotyping and undesirability of the marginalized rather than an acceptance of it/them, working "subconsciously as an affective mode of self-sabotage". Similarly, Slavoj Žižek's *Pandemic!: COVID-19 Shakes the World* (2020) dwells on the imposed ideas of isolation and "proper corporeal distance", with the eyes being our only pathways to engage and understand the other. Therefore, what we find is that the idea of *distance* can be understood either literally, in terms of geographic distance, or as a sense of ideological distance which leads to a mystification as well as an untranslatability for the *other*, eventually creating alienation in myriad forms.

A wide-ranging concept like alterity necessarily requires a cross-disciplinary approach or at least a multi-disciplinary consciousness. In it lies the necessities of recognising and accepting plurality as an irrevocable fact of our social, historical and cultural lives, forcing us to acknowledge the binaries, the languages of division and its implicit power hierarchies like the centre-periphery, minor-major, canonical-popular, among others. This forces us also to acknowledge the continuum between the semantic and discursive definitions of these seemingly oppositional terms.

Papers on the following themes are invited from research scholars and faculty, which can reveal and explore the many connotations and manifestations of alterity as we read and perceive it across media and texts.

- Alterity and the issues of hybrid/hyphenated identities (Asian-American, African-American)
- Alterity and the paradox of breaking and sustaining binaries/identities

- Alterity as explored via travel writings
- The philosophical and literary discourses on alterity
- Alterity as represented by acentric/decentered modes of narration
- Alterity in/as performance, with reference to music, art, vernacular/folk/popular modes of protest
- World cinema and its engagement with the sexual, social, cultural, linguistic Other
- Visual and/or textual representations of Alterity and Affect, notions of Angst, Empathy, Doubt
- Cultural expressions of Marginality – Films, Advertisements, pamphlets, other discursive representation
- The market value of Marginality, Cultural Alterity and the ‘Other’
- Autobiographies as restorative to Otherness; individuals torn between variegated world-views.
- Alterity and the varied acts of translation
- Migrant and Refugee narratives. Going beyond the agency of the diasporic margins.
- Digital and technological marginalizations. Dividing the world on technocratic and economic terms.
- Alterity and the manifestations of utopian, dystopian and science fiction in contemporary Cinema, Literature, TV, Art, Computer Games
- Emergence of fan-based communities and user generated content to embrace/reiterate practices of Alterity

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

- We are trying to hold the Seminar in an Offline mode. But in case of any contingency, it can be shifted to the Hybrid Mode.
- Email a single PDF/Word document with **350-word abstract** and a **100-word bio-note** to **englishdepartment.stwt@gmail.com**
- Last date for submission of Abstracts: **27th March 2022**
- Intimation regarding selection of Abstract will be sent **before/by 1st April 2022**
- Selected participants will be required to make payment towards their registration **within three days** of the intimation of your selection:

Research Scholars: 500/-
Faculty: 1000/-

CONFERENCE COMMITTEE:

Head of the Department and Convenor: Antaryami Naik, Associate Professor

Dr. Ruby Roy, Dr. Savita Yadav, Disha Pokhriyal, Tarika, Vijay Kumar