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Contents

Spinning Stories: The Trickster-artists as Heroines in American Children's Literature

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Trickster-protagonists are frequent in Children's Literature; but they require special attention when they are aspiring feminine artists. In this paper I attempt to focus upon some of the significant trickster-female-artists in American Children's Literature who spin webs of stories to allure child-readers to literary entertainments, and the study attempts to explore their implications in the polemics of aesthetic discourse in Children's Literature. Charlotte, the spider in E. B. White's (1899–1985) *Charlotte's Web* (1952), is 'a trickster-artist' who writes advertising copies to save Wilbur's life. She is a typical example of the gendering of the artist as non-human-creature exhibiting anthropomorphic characteristics. Harriet, child-protagonist of Louise Fitzhugh's (1928–1974) *Harriet the Spy* (1964), is 'a trickster-writer'. Anna, the girl child in Patricia MacLachlan's (b.1938) *Sarah, Plain and Tall* (1985), who spins webs of stories to Caleb her brother out of their tragic loss of their mother and narrates this personal story to him for the umpteenth time, has an essential make of an 'artist-child-heroine'. Besides, Sarah, the child-like-artist-protagonist in the same novel, sings and paints. A brief gist

of their stories is expedient for those not yet initiated to these children's classics in America.

E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web* is an American children's classic about the friendship between a young pig named Wilbur and a spider named Charlotte who craftily saves the pig's life. It is an ideal work for children that deal with themes like friendship, affection, protection, adventure, miracle, life, death, trust, pleasure, treachery, pain, and the passing of time. Peter F. Neumeyer (1994) notes that the novel "has been a corner stone in the emotional development of millions of Americans under the age of fifty," for it exemplifies "a love that can cure fear, make death seem a part of life, and be strong without being possessive" (248; 256). Although *Charlotte's Web* is a classic in American children's literature and may be the best-loved children's book in America today, it didn't secure prestigious awards such as the Newbery Medal. Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* is the story of a pre-teen girl living in New York who imagines herself a spy. With her notebook in her hand, she undertakes her adventurous spy trips. Her keen observations of the life of a cross section of the American society are profoundly critical. With the advice that Ole Golly, Harriet's nurse, gives to Harriet at the end of the novel that at times "You have to lie" (275), *Harriet the Spy* threatens to subvert the very establishment of children's literature itself. Though it is a forerunner of the taboo-breaking realistic young adult fiction that started appearing in 1970s, the work has not been duly acknowledged with recognitions or awards. In fact, adults have expressed their apprehensions about this novel mainly because it seems to portray adults negatively and fail to apply censorship to Harriet's spying activities. Patricia MacLachlan's *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, a deceptively simple historical novel in less than sixty pages, was an

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immediate success in both the popular and academic tradition and it was ALA Notable Book, won recognition as Junior Literary Guild Selection and was the 1985 recipient of Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction. Its fame reached its summit as it won 1986 Newbery Medal. Set in the Midwestern United States during the late nineteenth century, *Sarah, Plain and Tall* tells the story of a widowed farmer and his two children Anna and Caleb whom he finds it difficult to look after, following the early death of his wife. Besides, he needs help to manage the farm. Therefore, he writes an advertisement in the newspaper for a mail-order-bride. The novel revolves around the activities of Sarah, the woman from Maine who responds to this advertisement and comes to stay with the family, initially experiencing a terrible homesickness.

Marjorie Garber (1998) considers *Charlotte's Web* "a foundational mid-[twentieth]century American text for the making of the hero" and terms Charlotte the artist-protagonist "a feminist" artist. However, Charlotte the female-spider-artist supersedes her femininity by her asexual reproductive activity. Robin Bernstein (2001) comments that the widespread perception of Harriet the protagonist of *Harriet the Spy* as a lesbian and liberated female child fails to convince readers, as Harriet "resists" such categorization (5). Lissa Paul (1989) observes that "[m]any of the marks of the feminist writer are visible in Harriet" (67). Yet we may argue, it is problematic to consider Harriet a lesbian or tomboy, and as Bernstein remarks she has a "polymorphous sexuality" (5). According to David L. Russell (1987), Sarah in *Sarah, Plain and Tall* "is portrayed as a sort of earth mother" and her femininity transcends the mundane level (68). Child-protagonists seem to resist canonical male artist-ideal through their

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attaining/retaining/transcending femininity to supplant and subvert the norm.

Charlotte helps Wilbur to get rid of the psychological obsessions and fears through loving friendship, non-sentimental behaviour, and linguistic skills. Charlotte is a mature mother figure and she has no obsessive emotional attachments to Wilbur. Consequently, Wilbur grows out of his psychological fears and Charlotte saves him from the physical threats to his existence. However, Wilbur does not tend to assert his masculinity to prove his liberation from Oedipal labyrinths but accommodates the aspects of feminine tenderness within his personality and innocently 'mothers' Charlotte's children. Many critics have noted that *Harriet the Spy* is a *Bildungsroman* and, more specially a *Künstlerroman* (Francis Molson 1974; Lissa Paul 1989; and Virginia L. Wolf 1991). In fact, Wolf's study points out that this novel is an "insightful portrait of the artist as a girl" (65). By creating a more perfect image of a female artist, *Harriet the Spy* is a forerunner to the feminist critical stand and even "anticipated the portrait of the female artist" (131). Whereas adult male writers of the artist-novels stress Oedipal relationships that enrich their artistic talents, Wolf again notes that in adult female-artist novels female artists deny the presence of "strong, nurturing adult women" and she continues to point out that *Harriet the Spy*, a female-artist-children's novel, is iconoclastic: "That Fitzhugh recognized the need for a woman as role model and mother in the life of a girl born to be an artist is remarkable" (67). Ole Golly is a literary/foster mother to Harriet. That *Harriet the Spy* breaks the theoretical norms in adult female-artist novels shows this children's fiction goes beyond the norms set by the feminist traditions. In *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, Anna's and Caleb's maturation is eased by Sarah's entering into

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their family life, a point more overt in the screenplay rather than in the novel. Sarah's motherliness eliminates any faint aspect of the Electra complex in Anna.

Maria Tatar (1999) finds an analogy between weaving or spinning and tale-telling in folk/fairy tales that are often orally narrated by women, for weaving has "the uncanny ability to make meaning out of inarticulate matter, to make silent material speak" (300). The artistic pleasure in children's literature can be compared to this essentially feminine activity of weaving in that children's suppressed and silent stories are woven into their texts. The nature of their woven art works: advertising, trickster writing, singing songs and yarning stories subvert the (male) adult standards of linear structure of grand narratives. The artists in children's fiction seem to speak out their personal stories instead of creating serious plots. In addition, everything that goes on in the minds of these artist-protagonists in these children's fiction reveals their subversive artistic thinking/creative process. Exploring the artistically-structured mind of the protagonists in *Charlotte's Web*, *Harriet the Spy*, and *Sarah, Plain and Tall* further brings to light the nature of the artist-heroines in American children's fiction.

Few studies have been made on the artist-heroines in children's literature. Lissa Paul (1989) calls Charlotte a "trickster writer" as the spider tells "lies" and "exaggerates" Wilbur's qualities (72). However, apart from such appreciative terms offered by a feminist critic, few scholars have considered Charlotte as an ideal artist. No doubt, as Janice Marie Alberghene (1980) concludes, children's literature more often than not presents a negative image of artists, offering no encouragement to children about becoming an artist. She implies that there occurs little glorification of economic prosperity and fame for an artist.

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What most artist novels for children depict is the artists' paradoxical aspects of being discipline and adventurously daring. Alberghene further argues that if ever a bold artist appear in such works, the novelist does not intend to facilitate the child reader's identification of herself with that artist, since that artist seldom poses as a success figure. Instead, the child reader is often made to identify herself with any other character that depends closely on the artist-character's personality. In this context, she analyzes *Charlotte's Web* (among many other novels) and contends that all what the reader appreciates in an artist to form a positive image of the artist is confined to the presentation of the artist as a disciplined and loyal person. Thus, *Charlotte's Web* encourages the child to identify herself with Wilbur the pig especially on its holistic growth from piglet to adulthood (pig), while the positive qualities of Charlotte the artist is limited to her loyalty, intelligence and imagination.

There are many artist-characters in *Harriet the Spy*. In the world of her game named Town, Harriet creates a writer named Jonathan Fishbein. A typical male artist, he isolates himself in a bar though the town in Harriet's imagination is in turmoil. Sport's father, as Wolf observes, is a stereotyped male artist too, "the artist as necessarily both selfish and lonely" (49). Harrison Withers, who loves his work and loves the company of the cats, is an artist with whom Harriet finds many identities. However, she cannot understand why Harrison's ideology of art leads him to the essential loneliness of the male artist who lives away from the society. Rightly, Hamida Bosmajian (1985) remarks on the child-protagonist's admiration for the male artist Harrison, "Harriet would 'wither' if she were to imitate him" (78). Fitzhugh also undercuts the traditional leniency toward the (male adult) writer for his exhibition

of "monstrous egotism" just because the male writer-character offers a sensational story (Wolf 66). Juxtaposed against these three male (adult) artists, we have Harriet the child-artist.

Through the creation of *Harriet the Spy* "an unusual female *Künstlerroman*" that depicts discerning portrayal of the artist as a [young] girl Fitzhugh formulates the subversive [feminine] artist's aesthetics in children's literature (Paul 1989, 70). Fitzhugh's idealization of a (feminist) children's writer/artist is embedded in Harriet's character. Paul also points out that many of the desirable traits of an ideal female-artist are obvious in *Harriet the Spy*. Harriet prefers a "small-scale form of writing" in private journals to classic fiction in the male tradition (67). According to Paul (1987), Harriet's notes are

> insignificant, minor, in the face of the epic, grandscale writings of Dostoyevsky or Dickens or Hemingway, stories that engage in full sweep of human endeavour – war, politics, science, philosophy, areas in which women and children have little experience. (152)

Paul (1989) also terms Harriet's writings "inside stories," subversively indulged in by female writers (71). Unlike traditional writers (represented in Harriet the Spy through Sport's father who is a writer) who are selfish, disorderly in conduct, isolated, careless, and self-indulgent, Harriet is "methodical and orderly" (67). Paul points out that critics such as Grace Stewart says that women embody "domesticity, selflessness, and the status quo," and so are fundamentally at odds with the male myth of the artist who is essentially selfish and concerned with everything but domestic order and creature comforts (qtd in Paul 68). Paul's study on Harriet is a tribute to the excellences of American Children's Literature that portrays exceptional female child-artists.

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Unlike the traditional artists in adult artist-novels that generally cling on to a literary/artist model, Harriet as a children's writer, has "no literary foremothers" (67). Comparing Harriet the child to the subversive writer Anna Wulf in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962), Paul (1987) identifies "linguistic repression" as an essential subversive trait of women writers (152). Citing Patricia Meyer's extensive study of gossip, Paul (1989) notes that Harriet employs gossip—the language of the linguistically suppressed group—"to gain verbal control over... superiors" (71). Thus, Harriet as a child-artist subverts the traditional adult artistic ideal by "defer[ring] meaning and... by accord[ing] value to non-patriarchal traditions" (71). Apart from subverting the traditional artistic ideal, *Harriet the Spy* subverts the canonic concept of the feminist *Künstlerroman*. Usually adult female artist-novelists depict their female-artists as failures; however, Paul points out that "Harriet wins, both as a writer and as a participant in society" (69). She concludes that Harriet "resolves the splits – between life and art, between truth and lying, and between gossip and fiction – that destroy many women writers" (72). Then, there are clear-cut distinctions between female and male artists.

The traditional male adult artist's visionary ideal is to achieve perfection in art. It may be argued that the children's writer subverts this high adult ideal. Spying on the Robinsons, Harriet discovers they take pleasure in possessing a work of art, a massive "wooden sculpture of a fat, petulant, rather unattractive baby" (Fitzhugh 157). The Robinsons crave for perfection in a work of art as well as ironically in their lives—for they do not have any children, yet consider themselves as the perfect couple—eulogize this massive structure of art. Harriet, the child-artist, disregards the concept of perfection in a work of art. What

Harriet writes about the Robinsons in her notebook is revealing:

> IF THEY HAD A BABY IT WOULD LAUGH IN ITS HEAD ALL THE TIME AT THEM. SO IT'S A GOOD THING THEY DON'T. ALSO IT MIGHT NOT BE PERFECT. THEN THEY MIGHT KILL IT. I'M GLAD I'M NOT PERFECT. (68)

J. D. Stahl, then concludes, "For Fitzhugh, as for Harriet, the idea of perfection in a child or a work of art was the height of absurdity" (159). While male artists pursue perfection, female child-artists seek something beyond it.

Although the male adult artistic ideal presents the artist as lonely and aloof from the society, children's literature undermines this image by providing protagonists who perform art and life as a community endeavour. In *Sarah, Plain and Tall* MacLachlan presents an artist who is actively involved in the events of the family. Fully immersed in life, Sarah does all the household works while the stepmothers usually encountered in fairy tales only persecute the stepchildren with, for example, menial work. Sarah is strong to plough the farm, she helps to fix the roof of the house, as she knows carpentry, and she learns to ride a horse. At the same time, she is an artist as she sings to entertain the children, and she draws pictures. Having come from Maine to the Mid-west prairie, Sarah misses the sea very much, the only source of unhappiness that persists in her mind. Nevertheless, as an artist, she is able to create a sea out of the pond in the farm and a "dune" out of the haystack. Anna, the child-artist, then dreams that the "fields had turned to a sea that gleamed like sun on glass. And Sarah was happy" (37). When the colours of the sea are missing from her drawings, Sarah rides to town and brings back three coloured pencils. Seeing them Caleb shouts, "Sarah has brought the sea!" (57). Then, it implies

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an artist can virtually control the elemental forces in order to bring in happiness for the audience/reader. Hence, as David L. Russell writes, the artist whom MacLachlan presents in her novels is an "intuitive" person, and a "seer" (119). MacLachlan thus professes an ideal somewhat congruent to what Susanne Langer, an American philosopher of art, defines as subversive art, "the creation of perceptible forms of expressive human feeling," which aims at obtaining the " insight [to an] understanding of the essential feeling of life" (qtd in Russell 117). The mission and vision of male and female adult artists differ greatly from those of child-artists.

Traditionally, male adult artists are oriented to writing a great work of art, a classic in literature. Children's writers often resists by writing very personal, casual and intimate life-experiences. For example, sequels to *Sarah, Plain and Tall* further highlight MacLachlan's subversiveness. In *Skylark* (1994) Anna grows to be an artist as she writes journals. Encouraging Anna, Sarah tells, "Sometimes, what people choose to write down on paper is more important than what they say" (11). Anna then thinks how true this statement is, "I wrote in my journal every night. And when I read what I had written, I could see myself there, clearer than when I looked in the mirror" (11-12). Later Anna presents to Sarah a book she has started to write about her, which reveals the artist-child's orientation to personal, small-scale writings:

> When my mother, Sarah, came she came by train. I didn't know I'd love her, but Caleb did. Papa didn't know, either, but he does love her. I have seen them kiss... And I have seen the way he looks at her and the way he touches her hair. (49)

Cassandra, the daughter of Sarah in the next sequel, More *Perfect than the Moon* (2004), aspires to be a writer. An

artist, according to Cassandra, should be "a watcher," "a listener" and "invisible" like a spy. Cassandra converts life experiences to 'fictional truths'. When she reads out from her notebook to Caleb, he protests. "That's not the truth!", to which she replies, "Yes it is... It is storytelling" (5). Observing Caleb falling in love, she writes:

> *Caleb has found a princess. They meet*
> *in secret because they must.*
> *They will marry soon and run away*
> *to live in wild Borneo, eating fruit and nuts*
> *from the bushes there. They will have two*
> *babies named Ondine and Tootie.* (8 emphasis original)

But Caleb protests, saying, "Nothing she writes is the truth" and Cassandra retorts, "It's *my truth*" (9 emphasis original). Through art, she transforms life experiences to fiction. Thus, the artists in MacLachlan's *Sarah, Plain and Tall* and its sequels also subvert the traditional artistic ideal by writing "personal"/"insignificant"/"minor"/small-scale" and "inside stories" like Harriet does in *Harriet the Spy*.

However, the child-artists in children's literature subvert the traditional male adult artist's ideal of possessing wealth. Through Charlotte, E. B. White presents his ideal of what art is and who an artist is. Charlotte is complacent about her unpopular existence. Janice Marie Alberghene (1985) explores what it means to be 'good writer' in children's books as "even skilled readers pay little conscious attention to Charlotte as a writer" (32). Alberghene is surprised to know that the critical commentaries on the novel seldom comment on Charlotte as an artist. According to Alberghene, the novel provides "opportunities to experience language from the inside out – from the perspective of storyteller or writer" (33). Ultimately, Wilbur attains immortality through the artistic intervention of Charlotte. While the novel may, as Richard

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P. Horwitz (1998) suggests, make the Americans "contemplate their mortality" by means of an "imaginative identification with Wilbur," it projects their innate desire to eliminate mortality (239). As the female "trickster writer" Charlotte represents White's concept of an artist-heroine. Explaining why she saved Wilbur's life, she concludes that she has been "trying to lift up [her] life a trifle" (White 164). Charlotte's reward as an artist is essentially spiritual/emotional/psychological. She attains neither fame nor money. She is a Christ-like figure who sacrifices all she has for the other, while humanity belittles her as "just a common grey spider" (81). When her tenure on this earth is over, she embraces an ignoble death, for "No one was with her when she died" (171). What strikes the reader here also includes the selflessness of the (female) artist. Alberghene (1985) comments: "*Charlotte's Web* is as distinctly American as the county fair its characters attend. Yet Charlotte does not conform to many of American society's widely held presuppositions about writers" (34). Implicitly, children's literature subverts adult artistic ideals.

Children's writers generally seem to go against the traditional adult artistic ideal of amassing wealth by implying that the entanglement with materialism distorts art. Wealth and art cannot be reconciled; art, in fact, is often satirical and critical of materialism. J. D. Stahl draws our attention to this by citing Fitzhugh's "portrait of the utterly self-absorbed and materialistic" Robinsons (159). Paul (1989) comments that unlike the other adult (male) writers pictured in *Harriet the Spy* who are stereotypes of the "patriarchal conventions" prevalent in writing, Harriet the aspiring child-artist has no intentions to amass wealth (68). Harriet confides to her friend Sport, "I hate money" (Fitzhugh 51). Harriet is, as Paul remarks, "fundamentally

at odds with the male myth of the artist who is essentially selfish and concerned with everything but domestic order and creature comforts" (68). In *Sarah, Plain and Tall* we cannot ignore that Sarah sacrifices the personal comforts of the coastal Maine to spend her time with Anna and Caleb in the Midwest. At the end of the novel, she metaphorically shares the sea with the Witting family.

Children's literature has a close affinity with yarning. Narrating a story is also called spinning a yarn, virtually one of the oldest forms of literary entertainment. Essentially an oral activity, yarning is open-ended and has no definite structure; it is reborn anew in every act of narration. It is personal, immediate, and can be very exciting. Often they are adventurous narrations of lies that interest the audience to listen again and again. Perry Nodelman (1985) remarks on the possibilities of repetitive narration of stories as a feature of the fairy tale structure that operates in the yarning of *Charlotte's Web* (110). He perceives a repetition of the same tale in two different ways of yarning: a story of innocence and a story of experience. According to him, the first two chapters of the novel are a story in itself in depicting innocence; the rest of the novel repeats the yarn from the perspective of experience. The spying of Harriet similarly offers her immense possibilities of yarning. Anna in *Sarah, Plain and Tall* spins yarns to her brother Caleb. He listens to these stories for the umpteenth number of time. The story of Sarah and the children is open-ended and invites sequels to continue the narration. Children's literature, then, tends to favour authentication patterned not on myth at all, but on folk tales, fairy tales and legends. These non-linear literary/oral structures are essentially 'open-ended'. Therefore, as Maria Nikolajeva comments, "the fairy tale hero or heroine... is decidedly the origin of contemporary character of

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children's novel[s]" (31). No doubt, fairy tales are unending cycles of yarning. Then, it implies that children's literature is a process of spinning unending tales to entertain both the young (and adult) readers.

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Breakdown of Emotional Communication: An Analysis of the Selected Plays of Edward Albee

Mrudula M. M.

Introduction

The word Communication means sharing of our ideas, emotions and desires etc. When we exchange our emotions or feelings; we feel relaxed. Human beings cannot exist without communication, as we are social beings. More over lack of communication alienates us from others. Sometimes we feel crazy, if we don't exchange a few words about our problems to others. In Literature this language and communication problems is frequent theme of many works. In every genre of Literature like poems, novels or in plays we can see the very similar problematical nature of language and communication and writers use diverse techniques to illustrate this theme.

The great American dramatist Edward Albee is one of the prominent figures in American Literature. Many of his works deal with the breakdown of emotional communication. Lack of communication between individuals was a great problem and this created many problems among the people of America. They lived in a kind of hallucination. Everybody was behind money and materialistic pleasures. Nobody had time to spend with

their family or other members of the society. Albee is trying to communicate this problem of "communication" in his contemporary society through his literary works. Many of his characters as in different plays like *The Zoo Story* (1959), *The American Dream* (1960), and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1961–62) are confined into themselves. They are not ready to convey their mind to others. Albee has dramatized the lack of communication and how it affects the personal lives of people in America, through different techniques and magnificent use of language.

> The problem of increasing callousness is a recurrent theme in Edward Albee's works notably *The Zoo Story*, *The American Dream*, and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* His plays are noted for their powerful language and reveal a fine sense of dramatic tension. (Bryfonski 13)

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Edward Albee is one of the most acclaimed, significant and controversial screenwriter and dramatists of the 20th century American drama. This enigmatic dramatist captured the imagination of the American public in the Sixties. He is both a realist and an absurdist. His plays are considered as a critical and satirical attack on the American society. He writes against the social and moral injustices combining elements from the American traditional social culture like his predecessors—Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill. Sometimes he follows the absurd tradition too; as given away by Samuel Beckett and Eugene Ionesco. But when he presents alienated individuals in his plays; he usually offers solutions to problems rather than assigning absurdist logic of unalterable determinism. He is trying to resolve the problems of individuals to a certain extent. He is not

leaving the problems without a solution. One can interpret the ways of life from his plays.

Edward Franklin Albee (1928–) was born in Washington and was adopted by the owner of a Vaudeville circuit (a style of multi-act theatrical entertainment which flourished in North America from the 1880s through the 1920s.) a rich man named Reed Albee. So, young Albee had a tendency towards drama. He was raised in luxury; but he did not have a happy childhood with a stifling stepmother. During his twenties he lived among the artists and Bohemians of New York's Greenwich Village and later identified his career as a 'dramatist' and become successful. Albee established himself as an avant-garde dramatist with great potential with his first play *The Zoo Story*. His succeeding woks *The Death of Bessie Smith* and *The American Dream* remained Off-Broadway, but contributed to his growing reputation as one of the leading American figures. With the production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* in Broadway Albee received international acclaim. "If one were to sum up Albee's contribution to the American stage, the immediate answer would surely have to be; his language," says Paolucci (15).

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Albee has brought to the theatre, an elegant mastery of language, a control of rhythm and tone which has never rivalled in America. Paolucci says that Albee has proved that he is a master of dialogue. He has revolutionized the language of American stage, extending verbal metaphor into the visual settings of his plays. He changed ironic, isolated meanings into a complex network of ironic sensations. But he maintained an allegorical simplicity (15).

Albee was an experimentalist and he was influenced by the Existentialist and the Absurdist drama. He converted

this influence into the American domestic drama and produced his own distinctive style in presentation and language. Emotional gap among the people was an important theme of the Absurd and Existentialist plays. He also made use of this theme. His characters lived in a muddled and isolated state. Many a times the reason for this is the emotional gap between people. Many of the characters use language to manipulate or embellish something in their lives; and not to expose themselves as in the play *The American Dream.*

The American Dream is a play which portrays the replacement of artificial values instead of real values in American society through the characters like MOMMY and DADDY. This MOMMY and DADDY adopted a son and he died as a result of the severe punishments by them for failing to fulfill their ideal of the American Dream. Wasserman in his essay "The Pitfalls of Drama: The Idea of Language in the plays of Edward Albee" says that "Albee himself described this play as a play of failed communication…" (Hunter 31).

For Albee, language is the medium or meeting ground which exists between the interior and the exterior worlds of the speaker and the listener (Wasserman 29). Language acts as a medium between the speaker and listener. Only when the listener understands what the speaker says the aim of communication has been fulfilled. So a listener's position also is important. Without an attention paying listener the significance of communication diminishes. For example as Albee has himself pointed out in several interviews, Mommy can tell Mrs. Barker, in *The American Dream* to take off her dress rather than her coat because no one in the room is paying any attention to what anyone else is saying (Wasserman 39) because of this Albee called this play a play about the failure of communication.

Albee's characters seem to be able to communicate each other but they often fail. *The Zoo Story*, a satire set in New York City revolves around two persons. One is a quiet person (Peter) who sits on the bench of a park reading something and the second one (Jerry) who comes to the park and tries to force the other to speak. Peter hesitates to speak Jerry. Jerry understands Peter's hesitation from his response. Peter is not interested to talk with Jerry. He is anxious to send away Jerry while preparing his pipe (16) and he wants to get back to his reading. When Jerry asks him whether he minds if they talked a bit, Peter answers: "Why….no, no" obviously minding (17). Jerry is quite aware that Peter is not willing to continue a conversation with him. Still he is persuading him to talk about his family, pets, house, salary, and etc. But his banter becomes a monologue.

The impracticality of communication among the characters is outstandingly articulated by the deliberate slow nature of conversation and the use of some images. Jerry's description of the dog and his decision to kill the animal makes Peter to react. But at that time Jerry says: "Don't react, Peter; just listen" (27). Although he wants to communicate with the other, he forgets the prerequisites of communication and he pays his life for his attempt to communicate. It once again shows Albee's portrayal of the emotional gap and lack of understanding among the people and how they are not ready to break the walls of isolation. This terrible pair Peter and Jerry appears talking at each other instead of 'with' each other.

Another feature of Albee's language is using unfinished and fragmented language. Many times his characters fall into broken speech. In *The Zoo Story* Jerry describes the dog in chopped up language. "Eyes…and…yes…and an open sore on its…right forepaw" (127). Grandma in the

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play *The American Dream* talks about her belongings in separate phrases: "Some old letters, a couple of regrets… Pekinese… blind at that…the television… My Sunday teeth…eighty-six years of living…some sounds… a few images, a little garble by now…" (143).

Many times incomplete sentences are used by the characters. Grandma in the play *The American Dream* is interrupted and made silent by the domineering character Mommy. Mommy always tries to interrupt others by her dictatorial speech. Other characters are talking in an incomplete way. Grandma and Daddy are not allowed to express their feelings. They were ruled by Mommy. Grandma is not allowed to make her opinions and nobody is interested in her and her boxes. When Mrs. Barker says:

> MRS. BARKER. There is too much woman hatred in this country, and that's a fact.
> GRANDMA. Oh I don't know [….]
> GRANDMA. In case anybody's interested….
> MOMMY. Be quiet Grandma. (145)

'Old' are always silenced by the young ones, but it is the old people who really understand life while others believe in the illusory aspect of life. Lack of genuine communication always leads to an illusory life. Moreover true and comprehending communication itself is an illusion in daily life.

It is one of the strategies of playwrights to reveal the insufficiency of language as a means for communication. Creation of misunderstanding situations in the plays are one of the techniques used by Albee to show the distance among the characters. His characters may make nonsensical and unrelated conversations due to misunderstanding. We know this "misunderstanding" is a great problem in our life. Sometimes our words are

misunderstood by others and it creates a chasm between our relations. It always makes life ugly. It may come from the lack of communication or the way of using language between people. In his play *The American Dream* Mrs. Barker comes to the apartment of Mommy and Daddy. But she is not aware of the purpose of her visit. Here we can see Mommy and Daddy are trying to misinterpret her arrival.

> MRS. BARKER. I know I'm here because you called us, but I'm such a busy girl […] I'm afraid you'll have to give me some help.
> MOMMY. Oh, no. No, you must be mistaken. I can't believe we asked you here to give you any help. With the way taxes are these days [...]
> DADDY. And if you need help… why, I should think you'd apply for a Fulbright Scholarship…
> MOMMY. And if not that… why, then a Guggenheim Fellowship. (122)

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Similarly in Albee's first full-length play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* which depicts two warring couples, the troubles of love and marriage in both particular and universal aspects and the problematic relationship of the Western life, also, we can see this kind of misunderstandings and misinterpretations. In this play George and Martha convinced another couple Nick and Honey that they have one child. But towards the end of the play Nick and Honey realize the truth from George and Martha's conversation that the boy whom George and Martha created is a non-existent one. When George realizes that Martha is fully involved in the case of their non-existent child he thinks that he must break that illusion and prompt Martha to face the reality. Then he develops another story that their son got killed in an accident. Martha is shocked and says he has no right to kill him. "You have no right… you have no right at all" But

George says, "I have the right Martha. We never spoke of it; that's all. I could kill him any time I wanted to. Martha asks him "But why? But why?" and George said "You broke the rule, baby. You mentioned him... You mentioned him to someone else." (307) He has the right because it was he, who invented the story of the son. Then only Nick and Honey realize that the child lived only in the illusion of the couple.

"Film hates words. Theatre loves words," Albee's remark in a televised interview is like so many of his remarks, both pithy and combative, a provocation to thought. But generally speaking his distinction is a shrewd and incisive one, and it is certainly the case that Albee's theatre loves words (Zinman 4). He uses all kinds of linguistic substance such as puns, definitions, and grammar in order to show his characters asserting and aggressive nature. He has the opinion that language is not only a medium to communicate, but also a significant thing in script writing for the theatre. To offer linguistic gratification to the readers/ audience he uses many techniques. One of them is to grab hold of on a word and candle it, seize up to the light to see what will be yield as a result. For example in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Martha is trying to flirt with Nick, a young biologist.

> MARTHA. "Good for him. Biology's even better. It is less... Abstruse."
> GEORGE. "Abstract"
> MARTHA. "ABSTRUSE. In the sense of recondite. (Sticks her tongue out at George) Don't you tell me words" (196)

Albee's plays, filled with marital battles and détentes are always fought on a linguistic field (Zinman 4). "Silence" can create an alienation effect. Even if we are in the midst of the people sometimes we feel lonely and isolated among

others if we don't have anybody to talk. If the other members in the group didn't utter a single word this isolation increases. Silence and pause, are some of the techniques used by dramatists to show the character's mentality. In the play, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* when George is humiliated by Martha disclosing the secrets about his novel to Nick and Honey, he gets angry and tries to strangle Martha. That time Nick grabs him and throws him on the floor. George drags himself into a chair. He is hurt, but it is more a profound humiliation than a physical injury (247).

> GEORGE. (They watch him … a pause….) All right … all right … very quiet now …we will all be very quiet.
> MARTHA. (Softly, with a slow shaking of her head) Murderer. Mur … der …er.
> NICK. (softly to Martha) O.K. now … that's enough.
> (A brief silence. They all move around a little, self consciously, like wrestlers flexing after a fall) (247)

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Here we can see the silence among the characters creates relevance. In the sense they all get enough time to think themselves. To analyze the situation of conflict silence is a way. So this also forms a kind of communication method. Here the silence and pauses convey something to the audience.

Verbal duelling is one other feature. Mathew C. Roudane in his *Understanding Edward Albee* mentions:

> Albee's verbal duels some of which seem analogous to musical arias, are now a well known part of American dramatic history. In both text and performance his technical virtuosity emanates from an ability to capture the values, personal politics, and often limited perceptions of his characters through language. (15)

In *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* we can see the verbal assault of George and Martha and a kind of war of words is presented through that.

Albee experimented with the absurdist technique of devaluing language (Roudane 48). To present this devaluation of language playwrights apply several unconventional techniques like monologues. The characters generally talk in monologues even if they appear to talk to another character. In *The American Dream*, the character Daddy seems to listen to mommy's monologue, and he seems to listen to her with such exclamations: "Have they!" (101). However, they do not talk to each other. It is just that Mommy talks and listens to herself. It resembles Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952) in which Vladimir and Estragon talk in monologues; but it seems that they are talking together. Albee himself described the play *The American Dream* as an attack on the artificial values in America, in the preface of the play. He stages this attack through language.

In his plays the language becomes an irritating puzzle. Some examples of this kind of puzzles we witness in his In *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Honey is not able to communicate her terror of having children. She takes pills to avoid pregnancy and Nick is not aware of this secret. Her inability to communicate this thing to Nick creates many puzzling situations in the play. When Nick asks whether George and Martha have any children George gives a puzzling answer: That's for me to know and you to find out" (39). Here Nick has to find out the truth. Only at the end of the play the riddle is resolved and this gives another dimension to the language. The final revelation that all fiction is true and all reality becomes fiction and it gives all of the previously used language its meaning. "The play then is a linguistic exercise, a teaching of language

founded on an initial act of exclusion and followed by an initiation or movement toward inclusion" (Wasserman 37).

Acerbic language also is used by him in his plays and in this play he uses language to hide the harsh reality of life. A mixture of the reality of illusion is one of the other features of his plays. Jerry in the play *The Zoo Story* is fully aware that language has the ability to mask the whole story. So, when he tells how his landlady abuses him, Peter is upset. Jerry replies: "Fact is better left to fiction" (26). He believes that judicious between reality and illusion is difficult. Grandma in *The American Dream* is the representative of Albee in his use of language as a wrap for reality. Actually she only is the real speaking character. But she is afraid whether they will send her out and the van man will take her.

As we know language, it's a powerful tool to communicate, sometimes to show our power over others it's a weapon. In many of Albee's plays we saw that those who can use language in an authoritative way control the other people. When we look on the selected plays for example Mommy in *The American Dream*, Martha in *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and Jerry in *The Zoo Story* use language to control the situation or the people who are around them. Jerry even enrages Peter and makes him to think of death. Mommy always praises Daddy for his masculinity but it is not true and she forces him to do what she likes. Moreover she controls Grandma also. Martha always humiliates George and makes verbal assaults on him.

As a playwright Albee is quite aware of the function of language as a means of communication, though his characters often fail to use proper communication. Language is always there as a thematic concern in his

works. The common feature of his seemingly different plays is the concern with language and the failures and limitations of it. Albee believed that language and communication derives its meaning from the meaning of the word which the speaker and the listener have in mind and the common meaning of the word for others. We can see that his plays always tend to examine this relationship of the meanings. His characters come from different speech communities or societies and they all present on the stage a new kind of vocabulary. They all try to create a new meaning of their own. And this very much offers a gulf between the characters which shows the communication problems among his characters.

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The Politics of Survival: A Critique of Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel*

Pournami M. S.

Colonialism is a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of a group of people by another. It involves a complete control over a dependent territory. It is often defined as the policy of acquiring and maintaining colonies, especially for exploitation. The term Colonialism is used to describe one's superiority, domination and influence upon a person or group of people.

Margaret Laurence is one of the major figures in Canadian literature. Laurence began writing short stories while living in Africa with her husband. Her early novels were influenced by her experience as a minority in Africa. They show a strong sense of Christian symbolism and ethical concern for being a white person in a colonial state. It was after her return to Canada that she wrote *The Stone Angel.* Set in a fictional small town called Manawaka, the novel is narrated retrospectively by Hagar Shipley, a ninety-year-old woman living in her eldest son's home in Vancouver. The novel looks at the entire life of a person, and it is influenced by Laurence's experience in Canada.

The Stone Angel is an impressive novel that will enrich every person who reads it with a closer understanding of life. Ninety year old Hagar Shipley is the protagonist of the novel. Imprisoned in her own mind, the protagonist is

unable to live her life to the true sense. The major themes in the novel are colonialism, old age, nostalgia, memory, alienation and suffering. From an ordinary point of view, the novel simply narrates the plight of a woman who is old and neglected. But on close analysis one can see that the condition of the mother is as bad as that of the colonized natives. She is deprived of her freedom, faces a conflict in identity and struggles for existence. The article thus reveals the politics of survival of Hagar Shipley, the protagonist of Margaret Laurence's *The Stone Angel*.

We have seen that a colonized nation is unable to manage and run itself properly and thus it needs the wisdom and expertise of the colonizer. Similarly, the weak and sick Hagar is totally dependent on her son Marvin and his wife Doris. Hagar's old age gives them an opportunity to dominate and she is thus reduced into a helpless state as that of a colonized nation. It is like a colonizer imposing power over the native. Hagar Shipley's struggle for independence is revealed through the vivid recollections of her past.

Hagar is constantly faced with obstacles which she must fight to overcome. Under suppression and dominance Hagar is struggling to figure out who she really is. In colonialism, we see that the voices of the natives are silenced by dominant ideologies. Similarly, the mother is deprived of her rights and if she protests, she will be deprived of her necessities. The youth is influenced by the ideology of liberty, freedom and equality, and believes in change which is in conflict with the rigid traditional values. Here, old age becomes the root of a problem. The gap between the generation widens and Hagar finds life difficult with the generation next. This is in close resemblance to the cultural conflict experienced by the colonizer and the colonized. Can traditional culture be

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adapted to suit new contexts? Hagar Shipley constantly faces the identity crisis when the superimposed culture of her benefactors becomes intolerable. Should she shed her true self and cast an identity to satisfy her protectors? While the colonial master had rejected and destroyed native culture and superimposed the European one, decolonialism seeks a retrieval of the forgotten rhythms of life.

Identity crisis is a period of uncertainty and confusion in which a person's sense of identity becomes insecure mainly due to a change in their expected role in the society. Those who experience an identity crisis will exhibit a confusion of roles not knowing who they are, where they belong or where they want to go. Just like a native struggling to please a colonizer, Hagar is forced to cast an identity to satisfy Marvin and Doris. Her true identity exists only in her thoughts and in her recollections of the past. A colonized nation does not envisage the natives as equals though it claims to represent them. The natives thus seek a place of familiarity, a location of safety and freedom to escape the feeling of not belonging. We thus see that Hagar is in a dilemma of developing a self identity where she undergoes inward and outward struggles.

Colonialism leads to the alienation of the native in his own land. This is a traumatic experience that erodes the individual's identity. Alienation is a state of being an outsider. It is a feeling of not belonging. In a colonized country, the resistance towards the colonizer gradually turns into acceptance. This happens either when the natives get tuned into a life which is dominated by the invader or when they decide to accept suppression as their fate. In the novel, the protagonist also experiences similar situation. Suppressing her feelings had become instinctive,

living in a world of appearances rather than serving her inner most desires had become Hagar's way of life. Hagar feels alienated in her colonized homeland.

Hagar admits her sense of estrangement when she remarks "back to Marvin and Doris' house" (156). Hagar Shipley searches for a new identity by leaving her house and slipping away to a cottage she remembers from summers ago. The cottage comforts her with a feeling of being back in her homeland. Hagar comments, "But this is my house" with a breath of relief. "I never realized until this moment how cut off I am" (72) says Hagar. This portrays her as a lonely old woman struggling to fit in her colonized home.

Marginality is the space or site of resistance. The colonized are treated as inferiors and they offer resistance towards the colonizer. Marginalisation is the social process of becoming or being made marginal. Neol Bissoondath in *A Casual Brutality* states:

> …as they exploited us, so we exploited each other. As they raped our land, so we raped our land. As they took, so we took. We had absorbed the attitudes of the colonizer, and mimicked the worst in him. We learnt none of his virtues. (72)

Subaltern studies thus provided a new perspective on the history of a colonized rather than from the view point of the colonizers. Narrated in the first person, Hagar's story portrays her frustration at her loss of independence with double intensity. The subaltern uses local knowledge and struggles to create spaces of opposition and alternative futures. Hagar refuses to go to the nursing home slipping into the serene wilderness. Telling her story in first person narrative, Hagar switches in time as her failing memory randomly darts back and forth. From these glimpses of her

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past, she frantically grasps whatever that can remind her of her own self—her childhood, marriage, motherhood, and now, her old age.

The Stone Angel can be compared to a popular Malayalam movie *Manassinakare* directed by Sathyan Anthikad. Sheela, a popular actor plays the role of Kochuthresia. Kochuthresia is in close resemblance to Hagar Shipley. The movie discusses the socially relevant problems of old age. The question of identity pops up when Kochuthresia is forced to live under the supervision of her sons and daughters-in-law. This situation reminds us of how Marvin and Doris make life difficult for Hagar. They constantly make her experience a feeling of not belonging. In search of her true self, Kochuthresia constantly slips away from her house. In the novel we find Hagar plotting her escape into the cottage at shadow point to free herself from the chains of dominance. In her new "house" she relishes the awaited moments of liberty with a stranger named Murray Ferney Lees. This character is very similar to Roy, the role played by the actor Jayaram in the film. Both the novel and the film unfold from the perspective of a woman who is old and unhappy. It conveys the theme of old age, suppression, dominance, alienation and identity crisis. Both the film and the novel highlight the feeling of isolation experienced by a mother in a family. This state is very similar to the oppressed state of a colonized.

In the novel *The Stone Angel* Hagar Shipley is seen fighting against her own death. Many people die every day with a sense of defeat. "Do Not Go Gentle Into That Goodnight" by Dylan Thomas is a poem about fighting against death. Many people reach a point in their lives where they feel it is useless to fight against a force that is destined to claim them. Those who accept death too early

die spiritually before they die physically. They grieve a loss that is yet to come. "Rage, rage against the dying of the light" demonstrates perfectly the attitude Dylan Thomas has towards death. In the novel, Marvin and Doris wish to put Hagar in a nursing home because they feel she is too old to take care of herself. Hagar, feeling differently, takes matters into her own hands and flees to a house in shadow point. Hagar is fighting against the death she feels will claim her if she is placed in a nursing home. By running away, Hagar is standing up for her right to be able to live her own life the way she feels. Hagar is making one last effort to reclaim her life and in doing so, is refusing to "go gentle into that goodnight". Thus we can see that both Margaret Laurence and Dylan Thomas are set out to encourage others to fight against death and to live their lives to the fullest. The colonized should not surrender to their spiritual death even when the colonizers make life difficult for them. Hagar Shipley is a woman who fights for her independence straight through her existence.

The *Collins English Dictionary* defines colonialism as "the policy and practice of a power in extending control over weaker people or areas." Laurence writes about the nature of freedom through Hagar's struggle for her own independence and coming to terms with her own past. Here, it is old age that tags Hagar as weak and helpless and therefore prone to oppression and subjugation by stronger sections of the society. The theme is really about survival, the human need to survive until the moment of death with some kind of dignity and sense of personal value. *The Stone Angel* is about all of these things. It is about the many mental and emotional barriers to freedom which one must overcome in life.

Life is one precious thing that everybody owns. However hostile the conditions may be, it is difficult for

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mankind to accept mortality. In a colonized nation, natives do not protest for the fear of death. Most of the time, accepting dominance is a helpless attempt to preserve life. This makes the struggle for survival less painful than surrendering to death. Through her journey, Hagar goes through the five different stages leading towards death- denial, anger, bargaining, depression and finally acceptance. It is during the last days of her life that she comes to terms with her true emotions. Hagar says,

> I perceive the tears, my own they must be although they have sprung so unbidden I feel they are like this incontinent wetness of the infirm. Trickling they taunt down my face. They are no tears of mine, in front of her. I dismiss them, blaspheme against them—let them be gone. But I have not spoken and they are there. (142)

We can also analyse the three themes of mother, motherland and mother tongue in *The Stone Angel*. The mother stands for roots and origin. Motherland and mother tongue is a source of identification. The colonizers impose their culture, language and ways of life into the colonized land. Thus for the natives, the home becomes an alien land and the concept of the 'original home' exists only in the imagination of a colonized individual. Ninety- year-old Hagar Shipley experiences a feeling of isolation and rootlessness in the presence of Marvin and Doris in her own home. Thus she slips away into a cottage she remembers from summers ago and there she feels a sense of belonging. It is on her journey to the cottage that her present life blurs with remembrances from her past. Away from home, Hagar experiences solace and happiness thereby questioning ones roots and identity.

Post-colonial literatures open up the story of resistance, transformation and survival. 'Nostalgia' or longing for an imaginary land is one of the most important features of

post-colonial writings. When Marvin and Doris decides to send Hagar Shipley into an old age home, she leaves home and finds comfort in a cottage she remembers from her past. This is an attempt to resist against the power dictators without surrendering to their dominant ideologies. Thus resistance is not just an act of protest but a genuine search for identity. Stephen Slemon in his essay "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World" explains Resistance as follows:

> The first concept of resistance is most clearly put forward by Selwyn Cudjoe in his *Resistance and Caribbean Literature.* For Cudjoe and Harlow, Resistance is an act, or a set of acts that is designed to rid a people of its oppressors and it so thoroughly infuses the experience of living under oppression that it becomes an almost autonomous aesthetic principle… Resistance literature can thus be seen as a category of literary writing which emerges as an integral part of an organized struggle or resistance for national liberation. (77–78)

Through Hagar Shipley, Margaret Laurence paints a real emotional journey of life. Throughout her life, she never realized what she had become until she was on her deathbed. Living in death's shadow she is incapable of showing joy of any kind. The main purpose of postcolonial literature is to raise a 'national consciousness'. Similarly, the main purpose of this article is to make the youth aware of the sentiments of the old and the neglected. It also provides an insight into the emotions of the weaker sections of the society. It is an eye-opener to all those who have deliberately ignored the sentiments of the old.

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The Apocalyptic Imagination and the Global Space

Raphael Joseph

Introduction

National spaces delineate the demarcations on the map of our world and turns the world map into patches of different colours knit together in a sea of blue. On the one hand national boundaries are asserting themselves, while on the other, these boundaries also seem to exhibit the characteristics of porosity and permeability. As a result of this dialectic, we can see that a new consciousness of spatial unity is emerging along with the rise of modernity and continuing to postmodernity. This paper would attempt to explore some of the questions that emerge out of this new spatial order. It seeks to explore questions relating to the markers used to understand the scalar perspective beyond the national. Relevant explorations in the area will address questions relating to the manner in which humans as social beings conceive of the magnitude and importance of these scales.

One can be exiled from a nation, but one cannot flee from the earth; it is still the final frontier of human habitation in physical terms. Perhaps it is the global scale that is connected at a deeper level to all the other scales. Thoreau expresses this inevitable intertwining and interpenetration of the personal/regional, national and the global when he wrote, "Shall I not have intelligence with

the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mould myself?" (90). Events at local or urban or regional or national scales can have direct global significance and *vice versa*. Also the idea of the whole of humanity occupying the globe in peace and harmony might be utopian, but visual and artistic representations of such a 'community of humanity' are evident throughout the modern world.

Wording the World, Earth and Globe

Before we proceed with the nature and concepts of global spaces and scale it is of interest to define and delineate the 'global'. Global has to be defined and at the same is to be differentiated from other similar terms, showing the overlapping and separation of meaning from other terms. 'Globe', 'earth' and 'world' are words which have similar meanings but different connotations. In this paper these words are at times used interchangeably depending on the situation and context.

Earth is the physical planet in the solar system with the flora and fauna and material resources and is inhabited by humans. The severity and importance of the ecological and environmental problems that pose humanity today necessitated the incorporation of earth as a spatial category in this paper. Also 'earth' just does not connote the planet but human existence *vis-à-vis* other planets and the cosmos. It also implies the mere physical (material) existence of humans consuming, adapting and interacting with other living beings and the non-material things. The conception of earth as an inert mass having conglomeration of molecules or the mere physicality of earth is to a very large extent irrelevant in humanities and social sciences. In fact a contradictory view of earth as a planet without any life form is the dystopic vision of many science fiction movies and novels. This can also be read

perhaps as a latent or unconscious fear of the collective consciousness of humanity. It is earth as a system that is in constant change, shaping and reshaping humanity; at times a haven and at times a violent force which is of concern here. "Planet Earth is an interactive system" (15), says Cliff D. Ollier. For centuries earth was seen as a planet with infinite resources that yielded itself for human needs. Earth as a system that interacts with humans, having a symbiotic relation came into prominence as ecological issues started raising their heads.

World in contrast is a much more diffuse term with some physical or material aspects attributed to it. World can mean the earth, the spatial (physical or mental or both) realm of existence of a single human being (as in 'my world') or the whole of humanity (as in 'world affairs' or shared world). World also connotes a self-contained system that has boundaries defined not necessarily in physical terms. For example, the animal world and human world are different though both humans and animals inhabit the same planet; the 'world' of culture and arts are alien to animals. World can also have other associations like dramatic world, psychological world or the world of crime particularly when the word is used to refer to a realm different from other realms. World in literature has a special significance because a writer creates a world, as in the Joycean world or the magical realist world of Günter Grass. Such fictional worlds may not correlate to the real world spatially, but such worlds are often more revelatory of the 'real' world in matters of politics or culture than factual descriptions. The power of literature to an extent derives from this world shared by the reader and the writer. To be in the world is to have a connection with a realm in some ways; just occupying a space will not mean that a person inhabits that world. Yi-Fu Tuan writes,

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> The word 'world', whose root meaning is 'man' (*wer*), shows how intimate is the bond between a person and his circumambient reality. Not to have a world is to be merely a body in space, an object in an environment. (940)

In this paper world is used as a phenomenon or condition that is the sum total of human experiences at a given time.

Of all the three words, 'global' is the word which is more common today and which has more relevance in contemporary social life. The word global in simple terminology just means 'pertaining to the whole world' or 'worldwide' or 'international', but it is in the contemporary context of globalization and global warming that the word has achieved a wide array of meanings which are problematised in human sciences and social theory. So rather than defining or clarifying the meaning of the word global directly I will try to delineate the meaning of globalization and by extension clarify the 'global'. World can be used in both 'my world' and 'our world' or 'world economy', but global specifically refers to the globe, earth or the whole of humanity, as is repeatedly implied in globalization or global crisis or global warming. The mental aspects associated with the word 'world' is completely absent in the global and 'world' refers interchangeably to mental and global aspects. Here I use 'global' spaces because the concern is with the scale of our planet (but not just earth) and the social interaction of the whole of humanity or the interactions at global scale. Worldwide would be a word closer to global than world, as world is theorized in phenomenology and allied fields in terms of its psychological content and subjective experiences. Globalization became a subject of serious academic engagement in the late twentieth century and is a phenomenon that ideologically covered the whole of the

globe. Thus global space is here primarily used in the sense that it is used in globalization studies. The changes in communication and transportation technologies have reduced the distance between places in the globe and the shrinking of space, at least metaphorically, the reason why many processes are 'global' in today's world. Globalization is defined as a "process of complex interconnections between societies, cultures, institutions, and individuals that takes place worldwide" (Coelho 380).

Relevance of Global Scale

As noted above, ecological crisis at the planetary level, economics and politics at the scale of worldwide, and processes that have global repercussions have made global scale an important term of reference in today's academic discussions. For centuries people and goods have been travelling from one place of the earth to other parts, but it is during modernism along with colonialism that this gained prominence. In twentieth century along with the rise of newer communication technologies there is a tremendous growth in the speed with which people and goods can be transferred to various parts of the globe. This immediately resulted in mass migration and sharing of far off cultures, in a sense homogenizing spaces and cultures, which is roughly termed as cultural globalization.

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Another aspect that catapulted global space into the arena is the speed with which information is being communicated today. By the beginning of twentieth century, with the invention of telegraph, telephone, radio and the standardization of time, information, inventions and news were no longer displaced in time, but were instantaneously shared. With the spread of television and the rapid growth of internet technologies by the latter half of twentieth century, information could be sent so fast

across space without wire that events and incidents at local scale were having wide-ranging consequences. Internet is a global net that connects people instantly erasing the limits imposed by Newtonian and Cartesian coordinates of time and space. In certain instances the global scale's impact on the local or vice versa is so important that it tries to overshadow the national and the urban or regional scales. The global having direct impact on the local or vice versa is generally termed as 'glocal' and globalization and its effects is one of the examples. Thus 'glocalization' is explained in terms of its relation to the local by Erik Swyngedouw as is evident here.

> Erik Swyngedouw identified what he dubbed "glocalization:" political economic forces driving globalization that are simultaneously making both the global scale and also subnational metropolitan regions more important scales in the geography of economic change, whereas the national scale is becoming less important. (McMaster and Sheppard 16)

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Climate change can also be considered as one of the cases where global is impacting on the local. Global warming, a global phenomenon, is generally understood as the increase in the temperature of the earth. It is generally accepted that earth's average temperature changes over large periods of time according to the fluctuations in the concentration of greenhouse gases and there is evidence that this is happening now. But the contemporary problem is that there is a strong possibility that this is happening because of the emission of industrial greenhouse gases suggesting human agency as the primary cause (McColl 377). There is strong evidence that global warming is the result of human activity at a large scale that accrued over two centuries of fossil fuel use. But it has to be acknowledged that global warming is a phenomenon at

global scale and is affecting the whole of humanity. Conversely it is having specific local implications also. In some regions it is observed that 'local cooling' is the result of the emission of greenhouse gases (Pittock, 2009; Rapp, 2008).

To grapple with these rapidly changing events at global scale, academia is also reshaping the conceptual apparatus that deals with the global. From mid fifties of the last century we can see a wide array of theories that work at the global scale emerging in the west: Planetary thinking, Gaia Theory, World Systems Analysis and Network Theory.

Theories of Global Space

In this section I would like to explore some of the theories that dealt with global space without recourse to higher or lower scales of spaces. As noted in the earlier section, global space and global consciousness have a history that had been decisive in determining the history of the world.

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Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Analysis is the first comprehensive framework that tried to give empirical evidence to this global history. The materialist strains in Wallerstein's thought was intended to expose the capitalist origins of world economy by tracing it to medieval Europe when capitalism emerged as a 'world' wide phenomenon[1]. Wallerstein does not consider the world system as a unit of analysis prior to the late fifteenth century owing to the fact that capitalism did not exist in its modern form before that. What is of theoretical importance is that World Systems Analysis analyses the economic transactions within the European nations under modern capitalism and traces its

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[1] Wallerstein claims that "It is a "world" system, not because it encompasses the whole world, but because it is larger than any juridically-defined political unit. And it is a "world-economy" because the basic linkage between the parts of the system is economic…" (*Modern World-System* 15).

development to the modern period covering colonial and late capitalist periods. Historically there had been global movements of people, goods and ideas perhaps from the dawn of history. But as an empirically analyzable system at global scale it was the emergence of capitalism that Wallerstein considers as a vantage point. He writes,

> A defining feature of a world-economy is that it is *not* bounded by a unitary political structure. Rather, there are many political units inside the world-economy, loosely tied together in our modern world-system. And a world-economy contains many cultures and groups— practicing many religions, speaking many languages, differing in their everyday patterns. This does not mean that they do not evolve some common cultural patterns, what we shall be calling a geoculture. It does mean that neither political nor cultural homogeneity is to be expected or found in a world-economy. What unifies the structure most is the division of labor which is constituted within it. (*World-Systems* 23)

The passage given above sums up his approach and shows how he reduced the variables of analysis to economics or specifically to division of labour. This mode of analysis is relevant to explain the spatial relations of contemporary world (including networks and internet and communication technologies) and to historically trace the origins of contemporary capitalism. As in this analysis the interactions of cultures, societies and ideas are reduced to mere economic transactions and even political formations are defined in terms of economy.

Theoretical approaches to the global in the sense of 'planetary' originate from the work of Martin Heidegger. Heidegger disagreed with the way technology was changing being and thinking which resulted in his

emphasis on planetary thinking.[2] The roots of planetary thinking, a concern for the planet as a whole and as a self-contained system with limited resources, can be traced back to ancient religious texts or to cultures that lived with a deep ecological connection with the earth and cosmos. It was in twentieth century that the first weapon was designed that could destroy everything in the planet and also, was a planetary threat. So it is natural that planetary thinking gained currency during this period of human history. If we read the later Heidegger we can discern the effects of German history on Heidegger's thought that changed his concepts about technology. Perhaps planetary thinking offers a way to think of the planet philosophically as a whole, blurring the boundaries between East and West, as Heidegger conceived it. As J. L. Mehta writes, "planetary thinking [seeks] a new beginning of thought... beyond Orient and Occident, and [is] for the first time truly world-historical" (qtd. in Ma 91). Going back to Greek thought in antiquity and the fruits of modern science, Heidegger argues that technological progression and regression originated in the West. This, in a way decentres the spatial centre of planetary thinking and debunks the cultural and philosophical superiority of the West (Zimmerman 251) and forces us to think in a way that would be planetary rather than in terms of Western and Eastern binaries.

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The global effects of human intervention on environmental patterns were observed in twentieth century by scientists and thinkers. Arne Naess, Lynn Margulis, James Hutton, T. H. Huxley, Rachel Carson and James Lovelock are some of the pioneers in this area. Their

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[2] Planetary thought as delineated by Heidegger is more complex and has inseparable connection with language, being and thought at a philosophical level. His disagreement with technology and a move towards more ecologically and planetary conscious mode of thinking is self-evident in his later writings.

research tried to show the harm that uncontrolled use and exploitation of natural resources had done to earth's ecology. James Lovelock's 'Gaia Theory' is relevant here because of the global scope of the theory that he propounded. Gaia Theory considers earth as a single spatial unit capable of self-regulating itself. Lovelock defines the theory as,

> A view of the Earth that sees it as a self-regulating system made up from the totality of organisms, the surface rocks, the ocean and the atmosphere tightly coupled as an evolving system. The theory sees this system as having a goal—the regulation of surface conditions so as always to be as favourable as possible for contemporary life. (208)

The interaction between humans and the eco-system that comprises the living and the non-living world of the earth is theorized as being in a symbiotic relationship. Earth is seen as an organism which organizes and conducts itself as if earth was alive (Primavesi 5). Mindless exploitation, pollution and deforestation seriously damaged the environmental equilibrium of the earth and Gaia theorists contend that to self-regulate itself, earth-system would make tremendous changes to our ecosystem. This can have unpredictable impact on human and animal lives on earth. Some scientists question the scientific validity of Gaia theory owing to the fact that such macro-scale events with innumerable variables cannot be analysed with our present day scientific theories.

What is fascinating about the theory is that earth-space is seen as an interconnected spatial and geographical unit; events at micro-scales can have global impacts and *vice versa*. Gaia theory draws its inspiration from butterfly effect and chaos theory which similarly conjoin events at various scales and underline their inherent interconnectedness.

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Globalization theories also deal with the macro-scale of globe, though such analysis does not bring the environmental crisis to the forefront of the debates. The uniqueness of Gaia theory compared to globalization theories is that its subjects of analysis are the earth and its living systems and ecology, along with the political and economic processes construed as a single entity.

World Literature

The modernist principle that inspired Kant to see cosmopolitanism as a possible actuality in the modern world also inspired another modern German, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, to think of 'world literature' as an emerging trend in literature transcending national literatures. It was Goethe who coined the term *Weltliteratur* meaning world literature, to highlight the fact that modernity has brought national literature to 'unmeaning' and "the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach" (Damrosch 1). World literature was often referred to as comparative literature owing to the fact that scholars tried to contrast and compare literatures of different nationalities. Goethe's call for a world literature was debated during his own life time and even now this topic is seriously debated in academia, especially in postcolonial and comparative literature circles (Prendergast viii). Marx and Engels and Nietzsche during nineteenth century to Franco Moretti and Gayatri Spivak in contemporary times have taken debates in world literature to new heights.

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Conceptually world literature was poised against the debilitating effects of national literature that Goethe observed in his lifetime. He found comfort in the company of literatures from across different nationalities, which was documented by his disciple Johann Peter Eckermann in

Conversations with Goethe in the Last Years of His Life (1839). World literature, when it was conceived, was not an attempt to write the literature of 'the world', nor was it an attempt to agglomerate the histories, languages and cultures of different nationalities into one single narrative.[3] The Goethean paradigm was to read the literatures from various nationalities and find basic similarities rather than disagreements between them. Damrosch writes how Goethe considered Kalidasa's *Shakuntala* as holding "the world itself in a nutshell and was seminal for literatures abroad" (Damrosch, *World Literature* 15). So it is apparent that from its inception world literature endeavoured to understand literary works as crossing the seeming borders of language and nationality and appreciated the basic tenets that united humanity. Goethe's discussions with Eckermann touches on subjects as varied as "Chinese, French, Greek, Serbian, and Persian literature in world circulation through translation, emphasizing the authors' similarities and affinities rather than their disjunctions and asymmetries" (Damrosch, *World Literature* 16). Marx, an avid reader of world literature, influenced by his favourite poet Goethe envisioned that socialism and communism would eventually bypass capitalist mode of production and would welcome the emergence of world literature transcending the national barriers: "National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures there arises a world literature" (136–37).

The global grounds under which Goethe and Marx could envision world literature is worth considering here. Colonial expansion, interest of Western scholars in non-

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[3] James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) is the only novel that tried at such a world narrative. It is found that Joyce employed more than sixty languages from various continents to create the Babelian labyrinth of the novel.

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western literatures, arts and cultures and the availability of these texts in translations in English, French and German languages created conditions for humanist thinkers like Goethe and Marx to imagine a literature that would transcend the spatial constraints of nation. Contrary to this flow of texts from non-West to West, there were also travels of literatures from West to the East. Tagore was invited to give a lecture on Comparative literature by Indian National Council of Education in February 1907 in Calcutta. True to his ideas of nationalism which he expounded in *Nationalism* (2009), Tagore calls the essay *vishwa sahithya* or world literature echoing Goethe's *weltliteratur.* Tagore criticizes England for having not given adequate thought and scholarship to Indian literature and thought, stating that the greed of British colonial enterprise ultimately draws boundaries between Indians and British citizens.

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> If you compare England with Germany and France you will find that she has produced the smallest numbers of scholars who have studied Indian literature and philosophy with any amount of sympathetic insight or thoroughness. This attitude of apathy and contempt is natural where the relationship is abnormal and founded upon national selfishness and pride. (qtd. in Tiwari 43)

By the beginning of twentieth century global production, circulation and consumption of knowledge changed radically compared to Goethe's time and this also decided the fate of world literature. Twentieth century saw movement of goods and people to the extent that was not seen in history before. Along with it knowledge and literatures also travelled across borders. Communication and transportation also accelerated the spread of foreign literature making them easily available to readers. Comparative literature became a legitimate academic

subject and in turn fuelled more translations of literary works from various languages to English. British colonialism also made English a global language. Masterpieces of English literature were translated to non-European languages and were even read in English by non-Europeans. Most of the major publishers and printing presses were in Europe but during the colonial period literature moved from the colonial metropolises to the peripheries. At the same time scholars and specialized academics were engaging themselves with ancient texts of the non-Western worlds. Translations of *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, Chinese classics and the works of Max Müller are some examples of this trend.

The whole situation changed after the world wars, as globalization and newer modes of communication and transportation technologies came into existence. Literature that was not available before became easily available in the former colonies and peripheries. Postcolonial writers started writing in English and their writings were widely successful in the once-colonial-countries. Scholars, academics and writers moved with ease across different nations, recording their diaspora-experiences, incorporating complex transnational mythological and historical materials. David Damrosch writes,

> Dramatic imbalances persist today in translation between more and less powerful countries, but literature now circulates in multiple directions, and writers even in very small countries can aspire to reach a global readership. (*What is World* 106)

The success of Indian writers like Salman Rushdie or Arundhati Roy can be seen as direct result of such cross-cultural transfer of knowledge. Globalised economy gave multinational publishing industry the opportunity to cater books for worldwide readership. This may have affected

the quality, aesthetics and idea of literature in the conventional or modernist sense. But the mass production of 'world literature' for world-wide audience has surely replaced high-modernists from the pedestals of literary canon.

Information explosion that we witness today started in the 1990's and is a factor that has impacted the state of world literature today. Goethe's dream of *weltliteratur* is a reality now as literature is not tied to the physicality and materiality of the book form but to the availability of it online (either in online databases or in online bookshops). Anyone with a computer and internet connection can today access seemingly obscure national literatures. If they are not available online they can be ordered and bought from online bookshops. Icelandic sagas or *Popol-vuh* are not esoteric texts anymore, but are available to anyone in the world just a few clicks away.

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The best spokesperson for comparative/world literature, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak articulates her concerns regarding the situation of world literature in an age replete with the control of internet grids over the globe and globalization or "the imposition of the same system of exchange everywhere" (72). She invokes planetarity as the antidote to globalized world literature. The one-sidedness of globalization acts against the grain of humanness, which is to acknowledge the other. Spivak argues for a move away from the hegemonic form of comparative literature propounded by U.S universities. Here are her views for a new Comparative Literature:

> …the new Comparative Literature will touch the older minorities: African, Asian, Hispanic. It will take in its sweep the new postcoloniality of the post-Soviet sector and the special place of Islam in today's breaking world. Not everything for everyone, all at once. But a

Comparative Literature format—historical and linguistic—possible, for any slice chosen from any of these places, the background filled in by new reference tools on Franco Moretti's model. (84)

Critique of Global Space

Historically globalization can be seen as a phase which has had profound impact on different societies across the globe. Global culture claims to be homogenizing in its reach, but how far are they epistemologically close to the particular local cultures? Experientially global culture is near and dear, but who reaps the benefits of the trading of global culture? How much of it is re-circulated? It is mostly the anti-capitalist/anti-globalization thinking that provokes these questions and there are various theories that address these issues.

Another critique is from nationalist ideologues who want to preserve their own national culture from the homogenizing global culture. Indigenous cultures and nationalisms are pitted at times against cosmopolitanism or internationalism which questions even the possibility of a global community or global space as a reality. The same can be sensed when we look through the lens of religion to understand globalization. When religion subsumes under it cultural codes and mores then the reach of globalization to materialize becomes difficult. Malcolm Waters writes echoing the ideas of Vytautas Kavolis:

claims to rampant secular globalization represent a peculiarly Western version of culture in which religion is conceived to be an increasingly subordinate subset of it. Rather, under Islam for example, culture (understood as political and social values and material tastes) is enclosed by and is subordinate to religion. To the

extent, then, that religion determines the moral-cultural sphere and to the extent that religions offer differential moral codes we can identify separated civilizational structures that constrain individual action. (180)

From Modernism to Postmodernism

Modernism characterized rational thought and instrumental reason and postmodernism characterized any thought that is conscious of the limits of reason. In spatial terms postmodernism opens a plethora of complementing, conflicting and contrasting notions of space and place. Global was always subservient to national in modernism. East/West, core/periphery, West and the rest are typical to modernist thought, but always predicated on Eurocentric or Western thought. Analysis shows that even the colonial enterprise during the age of empire was an assertion of the national over the global or the whole of humanity.

Enlightenment thought along with its cosmopolitan virtues was ironically working against a global consciousness by portraying the 'other' as savage. If cosmopolitanism or a global consciousness has to emerge, it cannot be put into practice by bulldozing local cultures and traditions. Forced homogenization and destruction of cultural heterogeneity is the result when national or regional (European) consciousness rakes through the native cultures.

The same situation can be seen in a play written by Brian Friel, *Translations* (1980). The play is a cross-section of the arrival of British soldiers for mapping in the late nineteenth century Irish village, Baile Beag. British cartographer Captain Lancey and orthographer Yolland are in the village to map Ireland for military purposes. Translating the Irish language and place names to English

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is also another purpose. Both these are done under the pretext of civilizing the Irish, and the inhabitants of the village genuinely believe that British are bringing them civilization. Yolland is a naïve lover of everything Irish and wants to settle in Ireland without seeing through the contrivances of British colonialism. Contradictorily, for Maire who falls in love with Yolland, everything British is good and desirable and wants to move to England to live and settle. What is most striking about the play is that colonialism always encroached upon other cultures in the name of bringing light and knowledge, but it was the national interests which were actually executed, thus going against the grain of cosmopolitanism. The universalism of humanity that is put forward by colonial powers is true as long as it recognizes the differences in culture also. As Fine points out:

> Cosmopolitan social theory understands social relations through a universalistic conception of humanity and by means of universalistic analytical tools and methodological procedures. Its simple but by no means trivial claim is that, despite all our differences, humankind is effectively one and must be understood as such. (xvii)

Mapping always went along with naming and thus owning the place for the colonialists. It is Gandhi, from the colonial periphery that evoked a better sense of cosmopolitanism without theorizing about it. He maintains,

> I do not want my house to be walked in from all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any. (qtd. in Bande 24)

There are numerous sci-fi films and novels that dealt with the problems humanity faced in the wake of global warming and ecological crisis. They paint a dystopian vision of the future of humanity. It is science fiction genre that represents the global space as a unit most effectively than any other narrative genre. There are poems and paintings also which take global as their subject matter. But the visual and narrative powers of the genre of science fiction has made 'global' into an image which is easily recognizable. Hollywood film industry and American publishing industry produce most of the works in this area. Alien attacks, nuclear holocaust, meteor strike and ecological crisis leading to annihilation of earth are themes that recur in most of the narratives. These themes have become so pervasive that Fredric Jameson quips that it "is easier to imagine a total catastrophe which ends all life on earth than it is to imagine a real change in capitalist relations—as if, even after a global cataclysm, capitalism will somehow continue" (qtd. in Zizek 334). The pessimistic and apocalyptic vision of the end of humanity is imprinted on the collective psyche more thoroughly by the mass media than the will to even imagine the end of capitalism.

Ecologically conscious narratives have always tried to pit dystopian visions of future with retribalization and the pastoral. As if the end of the earth as we see it today by a global catastrophe can only lead to premodern styles of holistic existence. Such a vision envisages the stepping down of global scale of humanity to that of local or regional scales. Films like *2012*, *Waterworld* or *The Book of Eli* suggest such a future for humanity after the catastrophe at global scale. Only a few survivors are left on the planet and they head towards possible land which remains on

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earth akin to Noah's ark, to start anew the life on the planet. Ursula K. Heise draws this point clearly:

> Apocalyptic narrative, with its portrayal of an entire planet on the brink of ecological collapse and human populations threatened in their very survival, has been one of the most influential forms of risk communication in the modern environmental movement, especially since it has often implicitly or explicitly relied on pastoral as the template for alternative scenarios. (122)

Conclusion

Space at global scale is perhaps what affects the whole of humanity today. Environmental crisis, globalization and internet technologies have undermined other scales by posing global challenges that affects the whole of humanity. Global is no more an enigma, nor is it not within the grasp of our collective minds and space-time relations are in dynamic alterity. Global is at least theoretically amenable to us and maybe it is time that Goethe's *weltliteratur* or Tagore's *vishwa sahithya* is already a reality, transformed and transmogrified under the forces of globalization into mass-products of culture industry. The dystopic visions of sci-fi movies and novels almost always paint earth and the 'blue marble' as a 'black marble'. Technological innovations or a new global thinking will decide the future of the planet and perhaps even the future of humanity.

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The Impact of Social Media among Teenagers with Reference to their English Language Usage and Promotion of Language Skills Today

Viju M. J.

Introduction

The current generation of students entering higher education is digital natives who have been raised to techno-centric world where omnipresent technologies play an integral role. The growth of new technologies and web technologies have transformed the teaching and learning of modern languages and subjects as the doors have been opened to innovative and stimulating ways of ICTs (Information and Communications Technologies) to make teaching and learning more varied and engaging today. Empowered by technology, the current generation of students yearns for new means for self-expression and information sharing through media convergence such as by the use of social media and other means of ICT.

Today we can say that we live in an age of media convergence. According to Sashi Kumar, chairman of Asian College of Journalism:

> Media convergence is the phenomenon involving the interconnection of information and communications technologies, computer network, and media content. It

> brings together the "three C's"—computing, communication, and content. (6)

As Turkle (2008) said that the web-based communication technologies have collided during the past decade resulting in a meteoric paradigm shift that has permanently altered human discourse. At the nucleus of this transformation is social net-working technologies such as Facebook and Twitter, which are blurring the lines between our professional, personal, and academic lives.

Social Media and its influence among teenagers

Social media is a new driver of the convergent media sector. The term "social media" refers to technologies, platforms, and services that enable individuals to engage in communication from one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many. While the Internet has always allowed individuals to participate in media not only as consumers but also as producers (prosumers). Social media is exemplified by the rise of online communication services that include the social network Face book, the micro blogging service Twitter, the video-sharing website YouTube, blog software such as Blogger and Word Press, and many others. The American media scholar Howard Rheingold (2000) has identified three core characteristics of social media are the following:

> First, social media make it possible for everyone in the network to be simultaneously producer, distributor, and consumer of content. Second, social media's power comes from the connections between its users. Third, social media allows users to coordinate activities between themselves on scales and at speeds that were not previously possible.

According to Palfrey and Gasser (2010) digital natives perceive the world differently with looser concepts of privacy, friendship, information ownership,

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communications, creativity, risk and threat, and productivity than previous generations. Further Buckingham (2007) argues that because technology has become a "significant dimension" of most young people's lives, educators need to move beyond customary views of these media as simply curriculum-delivery devices, teaching aids, or "neutral" tools for learning (viii) in order to find ways of engaging with them more critically and creatively (13). As Fogg, Phillips, Baird, and Fogg (2011) mentioned:

> The proliferation of digital, social and mobile technologies has created a culture in which youth participate more in creating and sharing content, profoundly changing the way students communicate, interact, and learn. In many cases students spend as much (or more) time online in an informal learning environment—interacting with peers and receiving feedback—than they do with their teachers in the traditional classroom. (3)

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A Brief Statistical Analysis of Usage of Social Media by Youth

Nicole A. Buzzetto-More (2012) in the article "Social Networking in Undergraduate Education" says that educators seek ways to bridge the perceived technological chasm between tutor and tutee. The extent to which this chasm actually exists and the roles of social networking technologies as part of a possible solution remain under exploration. Morejon (2010) has added about the statistical use of social networking technologies. The numbers, while growing exponentially, are unquestionably impressive. YouTube is the second largest search engine on the Web; 3.5 billion pieces of content are shared each week on Facebook, Twitter supports over 65 million tweets per day.

Further, Kazeniac (2010) says that more than 67% of the global online population regularly visits a social network site, and social networking sites now collectively account for one in every eleven minutes people spend online.

Thus during the last two decades the world, in general and India, in particular has witnessed far remarkable changes in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The advancement in ICT led to the emergence of Social Networking Sites (SNS). Manjunatha (2013) says the usage of SNS has been so widespread that they have caught the attention of academics worldwide. Further, the usage of Social Networking Sites (SNS) among the people of India is evidently increasing, particularly among the Indian college students. The students in our classrooms are millennial learners (digital natives); they constantly rely on technology for communication and social interaction outside of the classroom. Besides, Bernadette D'Silva (2011) says in her paper that Social media is basically used for two major purposes by teenagers in India: Networking Applications and Staying Connected.

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i. Networking Applications: The major reason behind increase in usage of social media websites is its unique application features. These applications include profile viewing, downloading, gaming and chatting.

ii. Staying Connected: Another important reason for joining theses websites is to stay updated in relation with getting knowledge on different arenas on the website. These websites help the user to stay in connection with their long distance friends and relatives.

The users also get in touch with the business and professional associates which helps them to build their career.

The world is taken ahead with the help of ICT, which has the strongest impact in Education sector too. Researchers say that 80% of teen internet users are using social media websites frequently to keep in touch with each other. So the most needed question is how these social media can be effectively used to foster learning skills of teens, especially in English.

The Impact of Social Media in English Language Usage

Language is a matter of behaviour as claimed by B. F. Skiner in *Verbal Behaviour* (1957). He also stated that 'language is learnt from the environment'. It is very clear that present generation live more in the virtual world of social media rather than the real world. They interact more with technology and electronic gadgets than their previous generation. We can prove that present generations spend most of the time in social media, which is a virtual environment. It is found that this environment plays a vital role in their language and behaviour too, whether it is positive or negative is the matter of debate.

Today we can say that English is the language of the internet. Social media has made tremendous changes in the way English is spoken and written today. "People who engage with social media are literally creating new words and attributing new meanings to existing words". (www.englishtown.com, web.). For example the word "selfie" is not found in the latest edition of *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary* (8th edition), but Oxford Dictionary announced it as the international word of the year 2013 as their press release says:

> Oxford Dictionaries announces 'selfie' as their international word of the year 2013. Language research conducted by Oxford Dictionaries editors reveals that the frequency of the word 'selfie' in the English language has increased by 17,000% since this time last year. (www.blog.oxford dictionaries.com, web)

If we analyze the growth of English today, one of the major reasons for the growth of English language is its flexibility. It lends and borrows words and usages from various cultures and languages. Today social media has played tremendous role for the growth of English language. Some typical examples of social media culture in English language are the following as put forwarded by David and Selvan (2014) in their article:

i.   There are some short words (abbreviations) commonly used by present generation through social media are the usages like: LOL (laugh out loudly), ROFL (Rolling on the floor and laughing), OMG (Oh! My God), TTYL (Talk to you later), TC (Take care), b4 (before), Cu (see you) and so on. It is considered that these short forms are used to save time and space while writing or typing, but it is a false notion because this usage of language is seen even while speaking and in academic writings (Examinations) too. This behavioural change towards language is caused by the social media environment (9).

ii. Social media has its impact even in the parts of speech too. The dictionaries say 'friend' is a noun and 'befriend' is a verb. But now a days, 'friend' is used as a verb, such as 'friend', 'unfriend', 'friending', 'unfriending', friended, 'unfriended' etc. (10).

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iii. Moreover, the users do not wish to spend much time in reading/writing long passages. So they use "I'll Google it", instead of "I will search it in Google website' or

iv. "I'll tweet it" for "I will pass on this message through twitter" (10).

v. The long and artistic use of language is of the earlier generations. The present generation always wishes to jump right to the point. If previous generation people were asked to write about a fan, they write for pages creatively, but present generation learners will say the fan as "Blades for pleasure"- though short, still creative and unique (10).

The Influence and Use of Social Media in English Language Teaching (ELT)

Regarding the teaching and learning of English, it is learnt and taught more for the purpose of learning English literature till the last decade of the twentieth century. But in the present era, the prime purpose of teaching English has shifted to more communication oriented, i.e., making the receiver of the message understand what the sender wishes to convey. We know language is alive and changing every day. In order to be successful, the 'present users' of language must co up with the challenges that are taking place in the language during the age of social media.

Again David and Selvan (2014) says that Social media is a platform where the learners feel that they use a trendy language: they can write anything on their own; their ideas and thoughts are recognized and appreciated by others; they are living in a virtual society; they are updated with the happenings of the world; they make their dreams true in this social world, which they could not afford in reality.

They are indirectly forced to use English language to compete with other users. Typing in mother tongue is comparatively more difficult than typing in English. So they use Monglish in typing. For example "Sugano" instead of "How are you". Hence, it is evident that social media helps in keeping the users of English language updated with new words and usages (11).

Here we can suggest how students should be taught different ways to use social media which can help them to enhance their knowledge in Language and subjects.

i. Students should be engaged in doing practical work like writing blogs in English.

ii. English Language Teachers should make use of on online environment of the students and they should give awareness about the positive aspects of social media.

iii. Through latest applications like what's App, educational institutes should try to gauge the students in more productive work to enhance e-reading and communicative skills in English.

iv. There is an increasingly high relationship between reading and speaking skills. There is no question that people who develop large reading vocabularies, tend to develop vocabulary knowledge that provides easy and fluent communication.

v. The importance of word knowledge, which facilitates speaking skills, has been a major resource in the development of reading skills.

vi. As social media is largely used for socializing purpose, the communication

Among students will be useful for increasing their communicative skills in English.

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Most of the contents in social media are in English and the reading of the same maybe promoted to develop communicative skills of students at college level. But students must make use of social media for academic or communicative purpose than entertainment. Therefore fostering improvement in word knowledge through wide reading has the potential for fostering improvement in speaking skills.

Conclusion

Thanuskodi says in his article "Gender differences in social media usage among college students: a comparative study" that Social media instead of sending messages should be used for educational purpose. Students should be taught different ways to use social media which can help them to enhance their knowledge. Teachers should control online environment of the students which can help them to gather information, to socialize and to build a personality. Students should be made aware about the positive aspects of social media. They should be taught that it is one of the very powerful mediums by which they can get connected to the professionals (2). Anecdotal evidences suggest that today university students are rarely interested in reading for pleasure, instead they only read only to pass examinations. The declining interest in reading among UG students in Kerala is a challenge to our society, as it affects the educational standard and quality of graduates, who passed out of our colleges. We can see our students are more socially inclined with friends through social media, reading dailies and rarely getting information on their academic work except when necessary. Many students prefer to spend most of their time with their internet or mobile phone chatting, or in the cyber cafes browsing, playing games, chatting with friends, instead of using the internet for academic purposes. So it is the need

of the hour to tap the IT skills of students to widen their academic activities.

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An Artist in the Making

Bindu Ann Philip

Among the various literary expressions, the latest and the most dominant form in the twentieth century is the novel. Elastic and irregular, the novel is concerned directly with life, with men and women, their joys and sorrows. As a novel deals with life, one naturally expects from the novelist, the impression life made upon him. Thus, the emergence of the novel as a major literary form is mainly responsible for the increased importance given to realism in all forms of literary art. The novel clearly envisages the snappy human lives and meets the needs of the modern man more boldly than poetry or drama. It reflects both the constructive and the disintegrating phases of contemporary society.

It is commonly agreed that the novel is the most acceptable way of embodying experiences and ideas in the context of our time. It is not only the single literary form to compete for popularity with the television and the radio, but also the only one in which, a great deal of distinguished work is being done the world over.

The history of the novel is difficult to trace, because of the innumerable novelists on the way. But there does exist a cogent string of continuity between the oldest and the latest forms of the novel. The growth of the form reveals a kind of dissatisfaction with the story, merely as a story. It is even difficult to fix up the types of stories. The easiest to

distinguish are the realistic and the historical novels. There are comic novels too, like the *Pickwick Papers* by Charles Dickens (1812–70), sociological novels like *It Is Never Too Late to Mend* by Charles Reade (1814–84) and philosophical novels like *Diana of the Crossways* by George Meredith (1828–1909).

The novel form has undergone a transformation in quality, quantity and complexity over the years. Anthony Trollope (1815–82) tells the story in a straightforward manner giving importance to the plot but for Laurence Sterne (1713–68) the form is more important than the plot. Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) uses the novel as a vehicle for ideas and conversations. George Orwell (1903–50) makes the novel form the satirical study of a particular political system. There are also out-of-the-ordinary novels like James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

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Since the days of Sir Philip Sidney (1554–86) and John Lyly (1554–1606), the novel has trod on a long path and undergone a great change. Samuel Richardson (1689–1761) designed his novel *Pamela* as a bunch of letters, while Henry Fielding's (1707–54) novels wove together a string of episodes. Sir Walter Scott (1771–1823) nurtured the cult of historical romances in English. Jane Austen's (1775–1817) novels give a picturesque and affectionate account of English middle-class life. Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823) and Horace Walpole (1717–97) introduced the novel of terror in the Gothic tradition.

William Thackeray (1811–63), with his pictures of English life, is a contrast to Charles Dickens whose novels contain humour and sentiment along with a teeming variety of living characters. Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–94) deals with stories of adventure; Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) gives a tragic vision of life in his Wessex novels; H.

G. Wells (1866–1946) excels in scientific romances. James Joyce (1882–1941) revels in the stream-of-consciousness form; Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) adds the beauty of the sea to his novels; Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) makes the detective novel the craze of the day and the name of Sherlock Holmes, a household word in England. Thus, the novel came of age and gained acceptance as an established form of art. *The History of English Novel* records:

> Its medium is prose, not verse; as to content, it is a portrayal of life, in the shape of a story, wholly or in the main fictitious; as to its way of portraying life, though the pretence of exact reporting of indiscriminate detail is generally regarded as a mistaken kind of realism, and much latitude is allowed to plot and surprise, everything recounted is required to be credible, or at least to have a definite and consistent relation to the facts of existence. (Baker 1: 11)

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Even today new experiments are being added to the potentialities of the novel form, because it is the widest read in the world. It is an accepted truth regarding novel-reading and novel-writing that the well-made novel is the one in which the subject and the form coincide and are indistinguishable. In a good novel the matter is all used up in the form, and the form expresses the whole matter. This integral association between the matter and the form is hard to achieve in a novel, but if achieved, it makes the novel great. The masterpieces among novels have achieved this harmony in a marvellous manner.

Needless to mention, India with its uniquely glorious and glamorous, literary and literacy heritage, is the home of stories where storytelling has been an art from time immemorial. The Indian-English fiction is a successfully established art by now, and it is still developing with

justifiable confidence and pride. Novelists continue to dominate the literary scene in India. The Indo-English novelists until the thirties wrote for a readership largely Indian. The image of India as projected by four generations of Anglo-Indian novelists is far from realistic. They displayed India as a land of darkness, steeped in ignorance and superstition. The Indo-Anglian writers took it as a challenge to correct the stigma and they did succeed in a way. The triad or the 'Trimurti' of the Indo-English fiction—Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan and Raja Rao— wished to give an insider's view of India to the outside world.

The abundant contributions of Nirad C. Chaudhuri, V. S. Naipaul, Manohar Malgaonkar, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Khushwant Singh, C. L. Nahal and Arun Joshi are commendable. Women novelists also abound in India—Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Nayantara Sahgal, Arundhati Roy and so on. They use the medium of English according to their individual genius and temperament, and add lustre and freshness to the novel form.

The more recent Indo-English fiction has been trying to give expression to the Indian experience of the modern predicament, of which the fiction of Arun Joshi is the most representative. He is, beyond doubt, one of the most significant novelists today. His reputation has won serious critical attention since the publication of his first novel in 1968. His novels are singularized by existentialist problems and their resultant anger, agony and psychic quest. He has very dexterously, handled some thought-provoking themes like rootlessness, detachment and the need for better alternatives in an ostentatious world. He focuses on self-realization, highlighting the glorious cultural heritage of India and its imperishable moral values. Arun Joshi has

also made some valuable contribution to the short-story form.

The short story in comparison with the novel, has acquired an important place in modern times. It has a claim to the oldest simple narrations, because man's story-telling instinct might have given rise to some crude form of the short story in every country. Though the short story has many features similar to the novel it is different from the novel in the handling of its material. It is also different from the simple and unadorned narration of an incident. The short story is remarkable for its brevity, in general, though there are stories that exceed the limit of the short story. The spread of the magazines is the chief cause for its growth. In a fast developing culture, people find little time to devote to aesthetic enjoyment and the present-day reader finds hardly any time for novel-reading. So, the short story satisfies him. There are stories of varying lengths, ranging from stories of half a page to stories as long as a novelette.

Edgar Allan Poe may be regarded as the maker of the modern short story. He is followed by a number of writers in America and England. Nathaniel Hawthorne, Washington Irving, Sir Walter Scott, H. G. Wells, Oscar Wilde, Anton Chekhov, Ernest Hemingway and William Saroyam are a few among the most eminent of modern story writers.

In *A History of Indian English Literature*, M. K. Naik describes the short stories written in Indian English as "mostly a by-product of the novel workshop" (247). It is sure that most of the Indian novelists from Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, and R. K. Narayan to Khushwant Singh, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Chaman Nehal, Anita Desai and Ruth Prawar Jhabvala have tried

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writing short stories. These authors have not taken to the short story merely to take time off from a more serious preoccupation of writing a novel but because they found the form relevant to the modern man. Arun Joshi is also well-aware of the importance and the function of the short story as an effective literary form. In *The Sunday Statesman* on 27 February 1983, Joshi expresses his view:

> Each has its own place. In my case it is the theme which determines whether it would be a short story or a novel. For example, I wrote a short story called "Gherao" which was about some students gheraoing a principal. Thematically I would not like to handle a novel about the academic world which I don't know about; so a short story. ("A Winner's Secret" 71)

Joshi's short stories are used as powerful weapons against social malpractices. The strength of the stories is the deep insight they give regarding human reality and character. They are also remarkable for their beautiful way of presentation, description and expression. The stories are rooted in Indian soil and in order to keep it natural, Joshi uses unhesitatingly Hindi and Urdu words, without bothering to translate them into English. The stories capture the reader's attention because they dovetail form with substance. The seriousness of content, the uniqueness of precision and the freshness of his language, make Joshi a leading short-story writer in contemporary Indian English Literature.

It was unthinkable for an Indian writer to hope to become a novelist in the pre-Rushdie era, when Indian fiction in English had not consolidated a reputation in the West. The chances of success at home were also indigent. A withdrawn individual, who did little to promote his books, and who refrained from entering literary circles, Arun Joshi found even more obstacles on his way to

becoming a writer. He was essentially an industrialist who cultivated his love for literature, only in his spare time. Thus, it is easy to understand why he cynically rejoiced over the fact that not even his neighbours knew that he wrote books. In spite of his neighbours' ignorance, he gradually became a novelist of outstanding repute in the restricted circle of Indian scholars and critics. He was acclaimed for the depth in his novels in which French existentialism coexisted and fused with meditations reminiscent of the Bhagavad Gita. A bridge between two contrasting worlds and cultures, his life influenced his writing which stepped up an ascending line that eventually led him to receive the Sahitya Akademy Award, India's most prestigious literary recognition.

Son of a famous botanist and eminent academician, Joshi was born in 1939 in Varanasi where he lived until he was seven. He spent the rest of his childhood in Lahore, and then moved back to the Indian Punjab during the traumatic period of the partition in 1947. A brilliant student, he was awarded a scholarship to the U.S. where he obtained a degree in Engineering and Industrial Management from the University of Kansas. This was soon followed by a Master's degree from MIT, Massachusetts. Joshi's interest and passions like that of Billy Biswas, his most famous fictional character, were aroused not by the field his University studies had prepared him for, but rather by a totally unrelated one: psychiatry. Thanks in part to the help of a psychiatrist uncle, he began a job in a mental hospital where he worked with chronic schizophrenics, an experience which left a deep impression on him, and which he also used in creating Biswas in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*.

After completing his education, Joshi came back to India and got a job on the management staff of an Indian

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company, before trying the adventure of establishing small companies of his own, producing diesel engines, machine tools, foundry products and automotive parts. Incidentally, it may be noted that Sindi Oberoi, the protagonist of his debut novel, *The Foreigner*, brings back to life many of the experiences encountered in his youth. Alongside his role as an industrial manager, Joshi, however, became the administrator of a philanthropic institution, coordinating research and training, regarding the human side of industry, from workers to upper-echelon staff. This dynamic, career-minded industrialist was, at the same time, an outstanding novelist who turned to creative writing as a hobby. And this ability, to switch from one world to another diametrically-opposed one, is a peculiar trait that Joshi shared with many of his protagonists, reaching the status of leitmotif in Som Bhaskar's predicament in *The Last Labyrinth*. In the 1993 dry season before the arrival of the monsoons, Joshi passed away unexpectedly, owing to complications following an attack of asthma, an affliction he had suffered throughout his life. Curiously enough two of his main characters, Sindi Oberoi in *The Foreigner* and Ratan Rathor in *The Apprentice* also suffer from asthma. Joshi is survived by his wife, Rukmani, whom he married in 1964, and three children—two daughters and a son.

Joshi's literary career began only after his return to India with the publication of *The Foreigner* in 1968, the most noticeably autobiographical novel. At that time young Indian writers had not dreamt of fame, but the assistance of Khushwant Singh, the renowned journalist and novelist, was decisive in promoting the fortunes of this new name. Despite the open ending, the pessimistic tale in *The Foreigner* offers its characters no chance of redemption. But the author's affable skills and his acute

sensitivity in focussing on imaginary crossroads between existential motifs and ethical choices became noteworthy and popular.

Joshi's second novel *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971) established his position in the literary scene. Critical reviews gave him a benevolent reception and scholars in India started making him the focus of new areas of research. His fascinating style, no doubt, was reminiscent of Joseph Conrad.

The Apprentice (1974), the third and the favourite novel of Joshi, exposes his highly introspective nature. This confessional tale displays a single male point of view. The father-son relationship, reverberating intensely throughout Joshi's literary productions, occupies a central position here. Nevertheless, the author makes a considerable effort to mask it behind two men who appear to be quite accidental acquaintances. Despite the exclusively male point of view, the work was not only welcomed by the male readers but also appreciated by feminist critics.

After a brief interval, Joshi wrote *The Last Labyrinth* (1980), which is considered by some scholars to be his major achievement. The novel, which earned the prestigious Sahitya Akademy Award, develops as a painstaking search probing into the deep recesses of the human soul. The young industrial manager constantly wavering on the verge between the rational and the irrational, love and hate, living and dying, sacrifice and fancy, the wealth of Bombay and the holiness of Benaras was a live example of the human predicament. In 1975, a collection of his short stories was published under the title *The Survivor: A Collection of Short Stories*. Joshi's last work *The City and the River* (1990) published a decade after *The Last Labyrinth*, is proof of the author's search for a new

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literary path, perhaps enlightened by the highly successful Indian author, Salman Rushdie.

To quote from *The Sunday Statesman* again:

> I did read Camus and Sartre... I liked *The Outsider.* I might have been influenced by them. Sartre, I did not understand clearly or like. As for existential philosophers like Kierkegaard I have never understood anything except odd statements. (71)

Influenced by Mahatma Gandhi and the Bhagavad Gita, he believes that individual actions have an effect on oneself and on others as well. He learns from life that one has to commit oneself at some point and entrust great value to the right way of living.

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Jack Kerouac's Spontaneous Poetry: The Mesmerizing Voice of the Beats

Sanil Raj J.

The Beat Poets were a group of friends living in New York City in the decade that immediately followed Second World War and they, through their collaborations and experiments with poetry rhythm and by their questioning of the status quo of poetry, throughout altered the relationship between popular culture and poetry. They excelled in their creative talents from the late 1940s to the early 1960s as their thematic and cultural explorations of the sexuality and social class finally resulted in the formation of the hippie movement. Their writings were noted for the profuse use of free verse, stream of consciousness techniques and collage styles and they also incorporated the rhythms of jazz music and the invocations of the Eastern religions and Buddhists chants. They accepted and stood for the contradictions of contemporary lives and thus created an accessible and active poetry. Their influence is experienced even today in popular culture through the artistic world of coffee houses, poetry slams and also through the oral realm of poetry.

The title "Beat" was a quite accidental coinage; during a 1948 discussion between the poets Jack Kerouac and John Clellon Holmes, both of them talked about the weariness and alienation of the contemporary time, and Kerouac put it as the "Beatness of the beats." During this

period, Holmes used the term twice, in his fictionalized biography called *Go* and in a *New York Times Magazine* article, "The Beat Generation." (Watson 3) The name acquired wide attention and the term beatnik became synonymous with an intellectual style of youth rebellion. Even before that the notion of "beat" was commoditized by popular culture and 'beatlike' characters were often seen in movies and television shows such as Dobie Gillis and the media of that period also were filled with such characters though they hadn't much in common with the Beat Poets' idiosyncrasies.

Almost a decade before the beginning of the beatnik, there coalesced a group of outcast students from Columbia University's English department in the coffee shops of New York City, who often challenged and at the same time encouraged each other which in turn took their creative pieces to new and unpredictable directions. Walt Whitman and William Carlos Williams tended to be their role models and the emphasis was on free thinking and spontaneous writing. They were also inspired by the Black Mountain School of Poets and they celebrated the themes of personal experience and perception, and their very existence on this earth became the active drive that their poems have made. The writers most central to the Beats were Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs. Over the years, their group included Herbert Hunckle, Neal Cassady, Gregory Corso, Gary Snyder, LeRoi Jones, Diane Di Prima, Carl Solomon, Peter Orlovsky, Carolyn Cassady, Michael McClure, and Lucien Carr. Many other poets also embraced the Beat ideologies and shaped a rebellious youth culture, of which its echoes are still felt today.

Beat texts have predicated their aesthetics in the Romantic ideology—the features include attributing an

elevated value to the individual, and the focus was on the subjective and not the objective, the irrational rather than the rational, innocence than the experience, nature rather than the city and their expressive poetics was that art should focus on the heart, and not the head. The ideal way of affecting the readers' emotions is to speak directly from one's own heart and Gregory Corso claims, "I am the subject of my poetry" (Stephenson 47). Ginsberg has often acknowledged his indebtedness to Blake and Whitman, Kerouac his admiration for Melville and Corso, his debt to Shelley, but at the same time the champions and pioneers and the critics as such of the movement have sought to suppress the persistent romanticism, the former to enhance the movement's assertions on ingenuity and the latter in a notion to disregard it as an incomparable fall into barbarianism. It is also a naïve revival of the American Transcendentalism.

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Jack Kerouac occupies almost a mythical position in American Literature and his own name and his novel *On the Road* are capable of invoking people who have never read him as both the names are synonymous with freedom. Though his poetry appears to be obscure compared to his novel, it is powerful and has tremendous influence upon his fellow Beat writers. When his first poems were published in *Mexico City Blues* (1959), Allen Ginsberg declared him as "a major, perhaps seminal, poet … and mayhap thru his imprint on Dylan and myself among others, a poetic influence over the entire planet" (Introduction vi).

On the Road is considered to be Kerouac's typical Beat novel and the events depicted there occurred in 1947. By 1951, he almost completed the first draft of the vast novel. In May 1952, he edited it and reduced its size to around 530 pages, but even then it needed a major editing:

> By the mid-1950s he was not only compressing the plot, suppressing libelous passages and excising homosexual episodes at the behest of the novel's eventual publisher, Viking Press, he was also allowing his editor Malcolm Cowley to make his own changes without consultation. (Osborne 188)

Thus, when the novel was finally published in 1957, it came to be a combined product of many hands. The novel caught immediate attention and public appraisal and it ensured him an unchallengeable position that will never insist him to edit his own work. But, other than *Visions of Cody,* no other prominent novels appeared in his name later.

Kerouac's *Mexico City Blues* is a perfect example for his firm affinity towards the Jazz music. In the title page of the poem itself he expresses his interest to be considered as a jazz poet and all the 242 choruses are embellished with rich music and improvisational quality. Each poem appears to be an independent unit, but a serious reader can identify the undercurrent of a central theme that holds all the poems together. They contain references to a vast range of experiences: "I was the first crazy person / I'd known" (Chorus 88), "F. Scott Fitzgerald … Who burned his Wife Down" (Chorus 30) and from religion, the 199th chorus. The poems as a whole encompasses private set of references, a typical character trait of the Beat poets and the writers associated with this group looked outward for experience and immediately recorded personal responses to everything. In order to have a clear understanding of the poem, the reader is supposed to know the background details of the poet, places and confusing events. The more a reader knows about the author, the fuller the understanding of the poem tends to be, as the background

information showers more light on the obscure places names and events.

It took only three weeks in August 1955 for Kerouac to compose *Mexico City Blues* and most of the time he was under the influence of the intoxicating drugs marijuana and morphine during his stay in Mexico City. The poet followed the philosophy of "spontaneous composition," that is writing down his own personal experiences and impressions devoid of prejudiced reflections.

> The only structural rule Kerouac set for him was that each chorus had to fit on a single page in his notebook but he occasionally side-stepped this restriction merely by picking up where the page length had stopped him in the next chorus, virtually midsentence or mididea. (Jones, 141)

Certain portions of the book comprises of the musings of his neighbour Bill Graver, a drug addict whom he got acquainted to in New York, but as a whole it is a creative exercise in self-analysis undertaken by an exceptionally talented man. The poet utilizes the scope of Jazz music throughout his composition and frequently it affects his rendering of words. Often the poet engages in nonsensical words/wordless jazz and it functions as a respite for the poet from the strength of the problems he discusses throughout. It is a provisional break from the particular musicality of the poem and thus he hides his temporary withdrawal from the issues under discussion. The poem is an attempt to find a solution to one of the burning issues that haunts him—the untimely death of his brother. Such an issue takes him to a domain of absolute confusion and he has his own doubts about his Catholic faith, his addiction to liquor, and his turbulent relationship with his mother and also with all his associates.

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Mexico City Blues is an amalgamation of his pathos and worries during his childhood days and what offers him brief relief is his faith in Buddhism. James T. Jones observes that the religious motif bridges his autobiography to the leitmotif of the poem: "Kerouac's exploration of the concept of anatta, the possibility of annihilating self" (33). The 211th chorus is an account of "The wheel of the quivering meat conception" (Charters 53). It expels in the void not only human beings but also a series of animals. The poem ends in a sombre note:

> To huge Galaxy Lightyear Bowell
> Illuminating the sky of one mind-
>> Poor! I wish I was free
>> of that slaving meat wheel
>> and safe in heaven dead (53)

The choruses seem fragmented and appear as separate bodies and they move in a stream of consciousness manner and they attain a sort of uniformity only when looked at from Kerouac's personal point of view. For him, these poems were a means to convey "personal conflicts into poetic tension [through] combination of lyric and narrative, cumulation and repetition, language spinning and ideas, in a metaphorically musical structure" (Jones 165). The whole poem appears to be a fragmented whole in the tradition of Psalms with much confidence, but at the same time it encompasses self-doubt, joy, and its subject matter includes both serious and profane things.

This collection of poems was written during Kerouac's stay in Mexico City in the summer of 1955, and it includes a tribute to the "legendary bebop saxophonist Charlie Parker" (Charters 9) one of Kerouac's early secret heroes, who died in the spring of the same year. 239th Chorus is a modern elegy by the bereaved Kerouac to the departed soul of Charlie Parker. Kerouac finds him as a divine

figure like Buddha. Parker could enjoy the ordinary jokes and could laugh merrily at the sight of a juggler on the TV screen. He experienced "weeks of strain and distress" and was considered as a "Perfect Musician." The poet finds him quite calm and relaxed:

> And his expression on his face
> Was calm, beautiful, and profound
> As the image of the Buddha
> Represented in the East, the lidded eyes,
> The expression that says "All is Well"
> - This was what Charlie Parker
> Said when he played, All is well. (Charters 54)

Charlie Parker was such a charismatic person and he possessed the mental calm of a refreshing morning. But he was compelled to act according to the interests of others and thus,

> - Charlie burst
> His lungs to reach the speed
> Of what the speedsters wanted
> And what they wanted
> Was his Eternal Slowdown. (54)

The poet admits him as a "great musician and great creator of forms" and his verses find expression in "mores and what have you."

Chorus 241 is a continuation of the 239th chorus. Charlie Parker possesses tremendous story telling techniques and the poet loves to listen to it either from Parker's own lips or a recorded version. He was such a cheerful man that he could narrate the story irrespective of being at work or not. The poet is at a loss as he failed to pay proper attention to Parker's rendering of the stories. In a mood of utter frustration, he laments:

> Charlie Parker, pray for me —

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> Pray for me and everybody
> In the Nirvanas of your brain
> Where you hide, indulgent and huge. (55)

The poem ends with a plea, the poet requests Parker to "lay the bane" off him and everybody.

The precepts of Buddhism failed to deliver solace to Kerouac's ailing heart and he exemplifies this notion in Chorus 190. His mind is totally empty and void and it longs for satiety, but what he longs for still remains a mystery. It is like a ship, lost in the deep oceans and unaware of its further move. He says,

> What I have attained in Buddhism
> 	is nothing.
> What I wish to attain,
> 	is nothing. (Ciuraru 124)

The poet makes his part clear. Being an ardent adorer of Buddhism for some time, he constantly pursued the path of Dharma, but unfortunately the result was not at all supportive. He declares, "I achieved nothing." As he lacks any specific objective in life, "everything" and "nothing" doesn't make any difference to him. He is not at all worried, as "everything is nothing" and in terms of number, he is "worried nil." In his pursuit of Dharma, he attained nothing and thus he finds himself a winner.

> And so I succeeded the goal,
> Which was, pure happy
> 	nothing.
> No matter how you cut it
> 	it's empty delightful boloney. (124)

Initially Kerouac insisted that the title "beat" stood for the poor, down and out, deadbeat, on the bum, sad, sleeping in subways and only in his secondary vision had he an

exalted definition, that is the "beat" was representative of the "beatific." John Holmes was also of the same view:

> Beat means not so much weariness, as rawness of the nerves; not so much 'filled up to here', as being emptied out. It describes a state of mind from which all unessentials have been stripped, leaving it receptive to everything around it, but impatient with trivial obstructions. To be beat is to be at the bottom of your personality, looking up; to be existential in the Kierkegaard, rather than the Jean-Paul Sartre sense. (78)

Looking from such a perspective, Kerouac's coinage encompasses several levels of meaning; to be Beat is to be defeated, beaten, dead beat and exhausted by the demands of society.

Kerouac's poems reveal mesmerizing beauty at one instance and at the same time they appear void and empty and the tone attains a note of melancholy. "He appears in his poems as religious seeker, as sexual debauchee, as little boy, as happy friend, as musical composer, as penitent sinner, as unrepentant sinner" (Kimmelman 258). Nothing went unnoticed in his creative eyes and he wrote about everything that came to his attention. His ideology is that "better be a poet / Or lay down dead" (An Francisco Blues: 150). He is hailed as the pioneer of spontaneous composition and according to Ginsberg, it was "the notion of writing and not looking back, not revising, but exhausting the mind by an outpouring of all the relevant associations" (93). Kerouac's is a major voice in American Beat poetry and his life itself is revealed in his art in a stream of consciousness manner.

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Techno-fascism to Eco-feminism: Nature, Women and Hope in *Avatar*

Bibin Joseph

Eco-feminism is a social and political movement which points to the existence of considerable common ground between environmentalism and feminism, with some currents linking deep ecology and feminism. Ecofeminists argue that important experiential, theoretical, and linguistic parallels exist between the oppression and subordination of women and nature. This happens through the transformation of differences into culturally constructed conceptual binaries and ideological hierarchies that allow a systematic justification of domination by subjects classed into higher-ranking categories over objects classed into lower-ranking categories (e.g., man over woman, culture over nature). Eco-feminists argue that the capitalist and patriarchal systems that predominate throughout the world manipulate and corrupt every available notion regarding women and nature. The domination and exploitation of women, of poorly resourced peoples and of nature sits at the core of the ecofeminist analysis.

Avatar is primarily an action-adventure journey of self-discovery, in the context of imperialism and deep ecology. The plot of the film takes us to a future conflict. In 2154, the RDA Corporation is mining a valuable mineral called unobtanium on Pandora, a densely forested habitable

moon orbiting the gas giant Polyphemus in the Alpha Centauri star system. Pandora, whose atmosphere is poisonous to humans, is inhabited by the Na'vi, 10-foot (3.0 m)-tall, blue-skinned, sapient humanoids who live in harmony with nature and worship a mother goddess called Eywa. The conflict between the humans and the Na'vi finally leads to a war in which the Na'vi is supported by Jake Sully, Grace and in the end by the entire nature. With the exceptions of Jake, Norm, Max and several other scientists, all humans are expelled from Pandora. After that Jake is transferred entirely into his avatar with the aid of the Tree.

The film reflects the real situation outside by portraying the exploitation of the world/universe by the male dominated discourses. The ruthless exploitation of natural resources, increasing deforestation, colonization of natives, destruction of animal life– all these earthly tendencies are repeated in Pandora by the same patriarchal structures.

The narrator, Jake Sully, was one among the several passengers who were waking up after six years of cryo sleep on the way to Pandora. Once they moved out of their chambers the staff warns them that since they were in cryo for the past five years they will feel weak and hungry. This symbolizes the seductive nature of science which in the modern world is disabled and hence lacking permanent and sustainable solutions. The Colonel Quaritch warned them that: "Out there, beyond the fence, every living thing that crawls, flies or squats in the mud wants to kill you and eat your eyes for jujubes" (*Avatar*, since the paper quotes a lot of dialogues from the film, source will be mentioned only for the citations from other sources). This throws light into the utilitarian and intolerant colonial attitude of the

colonel where he considers every being on Pandora as enemies. He even observes that "they are very hard to kill".

Parker Selfridge, base commander and representative for the Resources Development Administration (RDA) reveals that they are there only for mining the mineral 'unobtanium", a potent source of energy that sells for twenty millions a kilo and can bring cheap power back to dying earth. He calls the Na'vi people savages as they are not obeying them and are not ready to be silent when their planet is ploughed by the sky people. This attitude can be considered as resourcism which is an idea that nature consists of economic resources to be exploited by man. The resources are later treated as objects which in turn become commodities to be traded. This can be considered as a corner stone of the foundation of patriarchy, capitalism and war culture. Eco-feminism rejects this objectified patriarchal view of the entire nature.

Trudy Chacon is a retired marine pilot who mentions her helicopter as her baby. She is very much aware that "we are not the only thing flying out or the biggest". Colonel Quaritch is bothered about the low gravity on Pandora as that will make him soft, which he never wishes to be, and which is never expected from him by his employers. He represents the intolerant and militant attitude of the mankind towards fellow beings (both human and non-human). Unlike the Na'vi' people (who consider death as a transformation of energy to another form) he is so much worried about death as his dialogue to Jake reveals: "Pandora will shit you out dead with zero warning". He considers the other beings and the Na'vi as enemies and wants to destroy all those beings if they are not ready to obey them. He even wanted to know "how to force their cooperation or hammer them hard if they won't".

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Neytiri (a Na'vi woman) appears to be a contrast to the women on earth. She is fearless, active and appears to be unpolluted and hence not weakened by any earthly ideologies or beliefs. She could fight when situation demanded. Her timely intervention saved Jake from the viperwolves. The way she reacted to the 'seeds of Eywa' (deciding not to shoot the arrow at Jake) reveals her respect for her planet and nature. She was able to interpret this as a message from Eywa. When she threw off the torch into the water Jake realized the beauty of the world around. This sequence indicates that the techniques offered by science often serve only to blur the vision.

When Jake followed her and asked her to teach him she replied that "sky people cannot learn. You do not see". Her reply reveals her eco-centric attitude and is a clear and correct observation about humanity who learns less from the past disasters and continues destroying nature.

The king was irritated by Jake's alien smell and Neytiri informed him that her father was thinking whether Jake should be killed. In that moment the queen appeared and said that she will "look at this alien" to take more decisions. The queen (Neytiri's mother, Mo'at) did not show any hurry. She was the one responsible for interpreting the will of Eywa (mother earth) to the entire tribe. Unlike the male warriors she appeared cool and confident to collect more information about Jake. Mo'at tasted a bit of his blood and informed Jake that his wish to learn from them doesn't attract them any more as they have found it impossible to teach the sky people. Her words suggest that the human mind is polluted with poisoned thoughts. It also indicates that a few good thoughts can make little change in human beings, since only a major shift in the perspective can only save the earth and thus the humanity. A careful evaluation of this

sequence suggests that a civilization/culture can be judged from the position of women in it. The Na'vi women enjoy a high status in the society. Mo'at can not only raise her voice but also take decisions including whether Jake should be killed, sent away or allowed to stay back. She behaves in a sensible manner and expressed readiness to understand more about him. Mo'at even observed that they needed "to learn more about him", and thus saved Jake from the rude and violent reaction of the warriors. She even appointed her own daughter to teach him the Na'vi ways. When Neytiri protested Mo'at even took a stern stand and said: "it is decided. My daughter will teach you our ways". Neytiri takes Jake to his sleeping-pouch on the tree. This sequence, showing people sleeping in the open without fear, strike right at the root of our celebrated notions regarding culture where such a safety is unthinkable. This also points to the status and safety women enjoys in the Na'vi community. The image of Mo'at resembles the idea of 'Eco-maternalism'.

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> In many native American cultures the connection to Mother Earth in matrilineal tribes went hand-in-hand with respect for women as mothers and the mothering principles of giving and nurturing in human and other than human lives.

The Na'vi life which is natural or which shares the pace of nature is incomprehensible according to human standards. The RDA offered them "medicine, education, roads" etc. but the Na'vi's doesn't need them. The unsatisfied/ voracious human culture fails to understand them. The observation of Parker Selfridge (head of the team): "their damn village happens to be resting on the richest unobtanium deposit" reveals the attitude towards village. For him the villages are to be "damned" and this observation of Selfridge reminds us of the colonial attitude

towards the villages of Asia and Africa. The colonel advised Jake to "find out what the blue monkeys want". The inhabitants of earth failed to understand the eco-centric life and attitude of the Na'vi people. Selfridge even observes with pretentions of civility that "killing the indigenous looks bad, but there's one thing that shareholders hate more than bad press, and that's a bad quarterly statement". The annual share offered to the shareholders is more important to them than the destruction of Pandora and its inhabitants. They are ready to do anything for profit. The same has happened during Colonization in tribal contexts across the world. Wangari Maathai in her 2006 autobiography *Unbowed: A Memoir* writes:

> Before the Europeans arrived, the peoples of Kenya did not look at trees and see timber, or at elephants and see commercial ivory stock, or at cheetahs and see beautiful skins for sale. But when Kenya was colonized and we encountered Europeans, with their knowledge, technology, understanding, religion, and culture—all of it new—we converted our values into a cash economy like theirs. Everything was now perceived as having monetary value. As we were to learn, if you can sell it, you can forget about protecting it.

Jake, who attempted to bond (tsaheylu) with the direhorse (used by the Na'vi tribe), addressed it 'boy' and was corrected by Neytiri that it (Pale) is female. This point to the way language is masculine, and the politics of using masculine words in a generalized manner. The training includes establishing a bond by connecting Jakes neural queue to its antenna. In the Na'vi life even the hair is not dead, but active and relevant in establishing the bond with the direhorse, Ikran, and with the tentacles of the 'Tree of Souls'. Neytiri not only asked him to establish the bond with the direhorse but also to "feel her heartbeat, her

breath, and her strong legs. The direhorse (as well as Ikran, the bird) is guided not through commands and punishment but by merely thinking what is to be done. This communication between the human and the non-human beings outwits even most hi-tech systems on earth, and reveals the complex systems working throughout the universe.

Neytiri told Jake about Ikran (a flying mountain banshee) that it will fly with only one hunter in the whole life, to become a taronyu (hunter) "you [Jake] must choose your [his] own Ikran and he [the bird] must choose you [him]". Neytiri used 'he' to indicate both Jake and Ikran and suggests the equal status given to the human and non-human beings in Pandora.

Neytiri explained to Jake about the Na'vi forest connection. She tells Jake that all energy is borrowed and one day we have to give it back. Jake could even see the forest through Neytiri's eyes. This recalls certain notions of the Gaia hypothesis.

The Gaia hypothesis, also known as Gaia theory or Gaia principle, proposes that all organisms and their inorganic surroundings on Earth are closely integrated to form a single and self-regulating complex system, maintaining the conditions for life on the planet.

The natural and spontaneous love/romance between Jake and Neytiri throws light into the extent of democracy and freedom practiced and enjoyed by the Na'vi people. Jake reveals to her that he has "already chosen" but that woman also must choose him. She too loves him. He waited for her opinion and this explains the status enjoyed by women in that 'uncultured' and 'uneducated' community of the "blue monkeys" (according to Selfridge). Neytiri replied "she already has".

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Grace attempted to explain them the interconnections of Pandora ecology in concrete and scientific terms. She said that:

> I am talking about something real; something measurable in the biology of the forest…there is some kind of electrochemical communication between the roots of the trees, like the synapses between the neurons. And each tree has ten-to-the-fourth connections to the trees around it. And there are ten-to-the-twelfth trees on Pandora… It has more connections than the human brain…It's a network. It's a global network, and the Na'vi can access it. They can upload and download data. Memories.

This information actually challenges and outwits all the scientific and technical achievement of the RDA who has travelled all the way to Pandora to plunder and exploit it. But the RDA officials including Selfridge turned a deaf ear against Grace's words. Grace realized that "the wealth of this world is not in the ground. It is all around us. The Na'vi knows that, and they are fighting to defend it". She reminded Selfridge: "if you want to share this world around them, you need to understand them". Selfridge and Quaritch planned to repeat what the civilized and educated world did to the tribals and marginalized groups in the past and even in the present.

During the attack Trudy changed her mind and turned back from the destruction saying: "I didn't sign up for this shit". The Hometree was toppled by a series of explosions and heavy artillery. It was a heart breaking experience for the Omaticaya. But for Quaritch it was a "good work". Jake, Grace and Norm were placed under arrest for treason (by people who destroy Mother Nature). Grace's reaction when the plugs were pulled off ("you murderer") is a judgment on the entire humanity.

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Jake who returned to his avatar body, decided to take things to a different level. He summoned his Ikran, found Toruk, jumped onto the back of the toruk, and landed into the middle of the Omaticayan ceremony. The Omaticayan spirituality considered Eywa as their mother, had Mo'at as the interpreter of messages from Eywa and as the leader of the prayer ceremony, and was open enough to include women in their ceremony. These features suggest that the Omaticayan belief appears to be a contrast to the patriarchal discourses on earth. The Omaticayan prayer ceremony reveals how all the members were connected to the Tree of Souls and thus to Eywa and were praying for Grace, unlike the human encroachers who are selfish to the core. The ritual fails though before death Grace tells Jake she is with her and Eywa is real. It was a moment of realization for Grace.

Jake spoke to the Omaticaya as Toruk Macto that it was time to send a message to the sky people that Pandora belongs to the Na'vi and the sky people cannot take whatever they want. He asked the Omaticaya to ask the other tribes to join with them and fight as one. The warning by Colonel Quaritch to his soldiers seems to be an echo of the slogans of several colonial and neo-colonial expeditions. Now the context has changed from an international to an interplanetary one. The words of the Colonel appear as if they were attacked by some enemies and they are the victims. He not only wanted to attack and destroy the Tree of Souls and the mountain strong hold, but also wanted to "blast a crater in their [Na'vi] racial memory so deep that they won't come within 1000 clicks of this place ever again".

The final battle was intense, decisive and with much casualties on both sides. The fight on the ground hammered the Na'vi warriors down. But suddenly a

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battalion of Titanotheres, Pandora's heavily armoured dinosaur-like animals, arrives and engages the Earth's forces. The animals quickly crumbled the infantry and the soldiers in AMP suits. Neytiri realized that Eywa has heard Jake's prayer. Inspite of the defeat Quaritch wanted to destroy the Tree of Souls and ordered continue the operation. He was defended by a Thanator that carried Neytiri on its back. This scene underscores the oneness of nature and the way the ferocious animal was fighting for the Na'vi (and for Pandora) with a Na'vi (Neytiri) on its back. The Thanator was killed by Quaritch, but before killing Neytiri, Jake arrived and started a heavy fight with him. When he was about to be killed, Neytiri intervened and helped Jake on with the mask. This sequence offers fight scenes where the hero and heroine fight together, help each other, and saves each other in crucial moments.

The RDA forces lost the battle, the military base was under the control of the Na'vi, and the humans were lead into a shuttle to be shipped back to Earth. The movie says "the aliens went back to their dying world. Only a few were chosen to stay. The time of great sorrow was ending" (as the humans are shipped back).

The movie offers a new perspective and a new approach to universe as a solution to the chaotic situation on the confused earth. It argues in favour of a matriarchal society or at least for a society which takes a sensible, sustainable and tolerant approach to its women and to mother earth. The villainous-male groups are resisted by women, and by people who can communicate with women and with 'Mother Nature'. The film ends with the eviction of the human-villains from Pandora and retains a hope that nature can survive in spite of the colonial-patriarchal-oppressive discourses extending beyond planets and galaxies.

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Enhancing Communication Skills of Engineering Students Using ICT Tools

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Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has influenced every phase of our life and it is very difficult to find an area which has not been utilising the possibilities of technology. Online learning is one of the recent trends in education. A gadget with internet connection makes possible online education and this development helped learners to pursue a degree being at home. Areas of online courses vary from history to latest technology. One can do interdisciplinary courses or multiple courses at a time. Online education allows anyone with internet access to learn and earn credits without much expenditure. When we trace the history of online learning, the growth is in the second half of the twentieth century. In the late 1970s and 1980s, higher education institutions in the US and Europe began delivering instructional content to distance learners over cable and satellite TV. From the mid 1990s onwards, internet became the most common method of delivering lessons. E-mail was the most popular method to communicate during that time; the data were shared by attaching files in the form of text, image, audio or video. It was revolutionary move made possible by technology.

Nowadays professional courses make use of technology evidently and every occupation demands a basic

knowledge in technology. This association between technology and education can be used effectively to improve English language competency also. Nowadays, communication skill is considered to be one of the most important employability skills. The MNCs (Multi National Companies) and IT companies offer placement to candidates who have good communication skills and command over language. Along with subject knowledge, presentation skill is also an integral factor to compete in these interviews. As there will be regular meetings and seminars, good interaction among colleagues is indispensable. 'Learn, unlearn, relearn' is the motto of many firms. After selection procedure, employees have to undergo training and there they may have to unlearn what they learnt earlier and have to relearn a new idea. In all these situations communication skill is the essential factor. Moreover employees will be from across the globe and English language is the common aspect to connect them. Many of the students fail to achieve their career goals because of their inability to communicate fluently in English.

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In ancient India there were "Gurukul" or "Ashrams" and the scholars were supposed to stay there, for education. As the time keeps change, the methods of education also changed. Gurukuls or Ashrams altered to schools and colleges. Instead of staying with instructors till the completion of education, learners joined for particular courses which have been scheduled for a limited period. In this modern age of computer and internet the way of education again got modified to online education. Online learning is more about learner's convenience. Traditional methods of learning will never fade away; still online education is growing fast. Earlier the learning process was as per the convenience of the instructor and it was he who

decided and mastered the learning process. Technology provided more flexibility for learners and they could follow a learning style as per their choice. In technology assisted learning, the teacher is a mentor more than a guide and the prime focus is on the learner. This marked a shift from teacher centred to learner centred approach.

The terms e-learning, m-learning, distance learning are used interchangeably. E-learning is internet based or web based learning or learning process which makes use of electronic applications. M-learning is mobile assisted learning, nowadays everyone is using smart phones and there are plenty of applications which help learning procedure. After getting job also, for appraisal many are doing higher education and mostly they opt distance education programmes. In these situations, internet plays an incredible role. Online education can be of two types; synchronous and asynchronous. It becomes synchronous when the teacher and the student have direct and simultaneous contact. In this way the teacher may meet the students in a chat forum for a discussion or the teacher delivers lecture at a scheduled time while students watch it simultaneously at a webcam. In asynchronous method the instructor and learner do not meet in time or space. Asynchronous learning opens up enormous possibilities by releasing education from the constraints of time as well as place. It makes possible education anywhere and at any time.

Social networking and educational networking are the two terms associated with ICT. Social Networking is a platform to build social networks or social relations among people who share their ideas, experiences, interests or activities. A social networking site provides each user their space through individual account. Educational networking is the use of social networking technologies for education

purposes. The term educational networking crosses the negative connotations associated with the term social networking. The wide popularity and acceptance of social networking sites can be used for educational purpose. Most of the sites are user friendly and information can be shared at one click. If the instructor is forming a group in a social networking and uploading learning materials, all the group members can utilize it simultaneously. Learning content can be in the format of text, audio or video and it can be handled more conveniently than hard copies. One area where faculty adoption is almost universal is in the use of video for classes. They make use of YouTube, EduTube.org or TeacherTube.co to download. These videos give more clarity on the topic and the explanation procedure becomes easier for the instructor. The normal classroom method can be refined with including technology assisted learning strategies.

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Blended Learning (BL) is a type of online learning. It combines face to face classroom learning with computer mediated activities to form an integrated instructional approach. The aim is to join the best aspects of both online and face to face learning. Students will be benefitted of two different teaching and learning experiences in BL. The components of BL may vary depending on the content, needs of the learners and preferences of the instructor. Online tools can be used to communicate, collaborate and extend classroom time. In the traditional education system teaching and learning were formal and fixed inside the classroom. Technology has developed immensely and pupils are familiar with gadgets and internet. This made easier to bring technology to the teaching process. BL is considered as a powerful tool for educational transformation and it has enhanced face to face learning by mixing with relevant ICT tools. For

tertiary level students such as in engineering college, technology based education will be more suitable as they are familiar with gadgets and recent applications and can adapt the style easily.

The common issues come across among engineering students are; English language or communication skill is not given importance in the curriculum and in most of the institutions, the allotted paper for Humanities and communication is handled by faculties who do not have language teaching background. Generally, both students and teachers give importance to content (facts or reasons) than presentation. The linguistic aspects are untouched area and there may not be any conscious effort to improve communication level. Until they go for interview students may not realise the importance of language proficiency and presentation skill. Even those who have completed schooling in English medium commit errors as they don't have much exposure to use language while doing technical courses. Social media also influence language usage as we will be using short forms and incomplete sentences to communicate.

Nowadays most of the people have account in Facebook, Whatsapp and in other social networking sites and the general tendency is to use informal English for communication through these sites. The main criticism about social networking is regarding the language used in it. Even professionals and highly educated people use colloquial language for interaction. They use short forms like 'wt,' 'hw,' 'u,' 'hm' and much more regionalised versions. Even regional form of English like 'manglish' (Malayalam typed in English)is popular. In the real sense social networking sites can be used as a platform to develop language and literary skills. But nobody worries about whether they are using formal or informal language. The

only factor is whether the language used conveys the idea and the receiver is able to comprehend or not. Development of media even paved way to form 'social media language.' In this, short forms, misspelled words are acceptable, unless it does not interrupt the idea.

Most of the users are unaware of the fact that these social networking sites can be used for educational and research purposes. There are hundreds of chat forums where the active members are participating in discussions on various topics. Though initially it may be difficult to use official English, slowly one can attain fluency in language. Communication in formal English through these chat forums will help to develop language competency. People with similar interest can form a chat group or can be a member in any established discussion forums. Even for preparing competitive exams learners are utilising online forums. Personal interaction through chat forums will give an opportunity to improve language and to share individual thought or opinion. Moreover they can realise where they stand regarding language proficiency and in what all areas they may have to improve.

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Websites like www.plattscsd.org, grammer.yourdictionary.com, www.english online.org.cn, www.speaktoday.com, British council learning software, www.bbc.co.uk/learning/ and English Grammar 4 U onlinewww.edontheweb.com, www.harcourtschool. com. have games and other interesting activities to teach English language and grammar. These sites will offer a new experience to children. They will find it more attractive than printed books with written assignments and question answer method. Mainly the contents of the websites include grammar and vocabulary exercises and games, audio and video interactive learning programmes, speaking activities, spelling games, games for idioms and sounds. By

regular practice learner can develop respective language skills. These sites can be used for language learning.

As an extension to this activity, learners can be introduced to online courses. There are hundreds of free online learning websites which offers multi-disciplinary courses. Streams of the courses include arts, literature, history, science, medicine, general awareness and various other relevant topics. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) is an online course aimed at large participation through web. As there is a discussion forum they can share experiences with people from different part of the world. Sites like WizIQ, Coursera and edx are some online learning platforms. All the three sites offer free courses in different subjects.

Application of the theories of Connectivism and Social Constructivism can be seen here. Both the theories are put forwarded by Lev Vygotsky and focus on the context in which learning happen. According to these theories interaction among each other is very important and learning will occur naturally through social discussion. Language is best learnt while using it. Computer supported collaborative learning is based on the theory of Social Constructivism. Connectivism emulates the idea that knowledge exists in the world rather than in the head of an individual. These two theories highlight the importance to be connected with other. Regular interaction with others will help to imbibe language quickly. Both online and offline measures can be used to fulfil this need.

Sharing experiences with others and among themselves through online forums will make them confident to join online programme. They can go through all courses and can select one, as per their taste. The course structure in

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the online learning websites is almost similar. Course duration is short period of time. All the courses are of length of one week to eight weeks. The course material contains audio and video lessons and printed notes. Learners can download the materials and go through it as per their convenience. Video lessons are adequate to substitute the presence of an instructor. The materials given for all the courses are up-to-date and reviewed by an expert team. This ensures the authenticity of notes.

At the end of each session there are quiz and assignments. For learners there is an option to redo their quiz and assignments. The only criterion is that one has to finish and submit assignments before deadline. Learners will get immediate feedback of their work. At the end of the course students has to attend a final test to get qualified. The final exam does not have the option to reappear. In the final test there will be objective and descriptive questions. This includes all the topics so far discussed. This will help to analyse the total understanding of the course. As the instructor's physical presence is absent for clarification, it is learner's duty to understand the content. For this one should be competent enough to handle English. To comprehend and grasp the new course, along with basic subject knowledge, language proficiency is also necessary. Successful completion of online courses will raise their self-esteem.

Along with online activities, classroom time also can be used effectively to enhance communication skill. The instructor can arrange mock sessions to interact among each other. Students should be encouraged to participate in classroom activities; for this, activities like seminar, group discussion and debate can be conducted regularly. Inside the classroom the medium of communication has to be English as this will enable to overcome the fear of

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using English language. Placement cell can arrange awareness programmes and career development course to make the learners more focused. The instructor has to play the role of a mentor and guide them to achieve career goals. Many engineering colleges have realised the importance of communication skills and they are setting up language labs to improve the students' linguistic competency. In the laboratory students can listen and watch audio and video and they can experience the language more accurately. Online courses and technology can be considered as additional features to enhance classroom teaching in the learning process.

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Is there someone called a South Indian Male?: A Survey[*]

Syam Sudhakar

There is no universal masculinity, but masculinities. This paper is a retrospect of the idea of how the notion of masculinity is constructed by the socio-political and cultural context. The paper negates the idea of universality of a singular masculinity by deframing the notion of a monolithic masculinity and projecting the idea of multiple masculinities. The notions of masculinities change from culture to culture, society to society—and thus each context's understanding of masculinity is different. The paper extends with a survey across different places in South India to unravel different forms of masculinities in South India.

The term masculinity has of recent come to refer to the social behaviours, roles, understanding, and perceptions of and for men in a given society at any one time. It establishes its position in the society not by emphasizing biological sex but focusing on the diversity and the multi-dynamics of identities among different men's groups. Though an individual's experience of gender should be considered as an integral part of identity, the masculinity is developed by itself as a product of various institutions

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which have their roots in the culture and society and its day to day interactions and discourses (Kimmel 200).

There is a popular belief that biological sex confirms an individual's gender identity. Biological sex implies the identification of 'sex' with reference to the biological apparatus—the body, the genitals, the chromosomal order, chemicals and genes. The term gender is more dynamic and multi-faceted in its nature as its meanings are attached to the culture and the society. Sex refers to whether the being is a male, female or transgender. But, gender extends this meaning to masculinity, femininity and being transgendered. The term biological sex thus shows the anatomical variations between genders, and thus its importance is miniscule in connection with gender. Since gender is socially constructed and works within fixed social and cultural contexts, its variations will be enormous.

If the differences in identities between the two genders are considered, the variations between men and women would be more different than the differences between several groups of men and also that of women. But, it would be a fallacy to ignore these differences in the same gender. In a society, there will be a number of groups who have the same gendered identity but who are different in their social and cultural performances. If this is taken into consideration, the essentialist notion of locating a universal masculinity will be questioned. The singular term masculinity cannot be used to express this situation in a society, thus, the plural form masculinities must be used. Recently, theorists have explored the differences of sexuality, class, race, religion, age and ethnicity which determine gender identity. The variations in each of these aspects will lead to major differences in gender identity. Historically this has occurred across cultures over time. So we cannot locate masculinity as a singular formation or

locating its universal aspect—which all the men of the world perform. If the culture is liable to change, if the meaning, behaviours, language inside a social spectrum is liable to change according to the course of time, then how could only masculinity be a monolithic entity? Therefore, there is a need to pluralize the term to find its multi-dimensional, multi-facial and dynamic essence.

The nature and politics of each gender is determined by taking the other identities into consideration. So, the location of the hegemonic masculinity in the power structures of a society will be superior only when the subordinated masculinities as well as the subordinated feminine identities are considered. No masculinity can maintain the same level in the power structure throughout the course of time, space and context. Therefore, it is clear that the notion of masculinity has not only a pluralistic identity, but it is relational to its context. Thus it is assumed that the differences and inequality in gender are constructed through our day to day life performances, which take place in a broader framework called culture.

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How a man happens to be a man is a good instance to show how a gender is constructed with regard to its relationships. When a boy in his late teens or early twenties realizes the burden that his gender carries, he tends to detach emotionally from his family. This detachment helps him to break himself from his boyhood to become a man as the society demands of him. The boy will be a perfect man when he satisfies the demands of the family and the society. This separation and independence and also the rejection of his boyhood force him to become a successful 'father'. So, he begins to acquire power and thereby dominates 'others' around him. The heteronormative society speaks to his psyche to keep his

identity away from femininity and thereby he creates a hegemonic masculine identity.

To know more about hegemonic gender practices and how institutions create and manipulate the gender identities in a society, a number of places in South India were visited and personal interviews conducted with general members of the public belonging to various strata of the society, as part of the research. The main aim is to find how aggressive, violent and dominative the South Indian man is. Our visit to some BPO's like Accenture Services (Sholinganallur), Perot Systems (Ambattur), TCS Eserve (Mount Road), Southerland Global Services (Vellachery) and Sitel India Ltd (Mylapore) gave us an accurate picture of the role shift of gender in a society. The earlier notion of man as the breadwinner of the family and woman as the docile housewife has been changed. The survey reveals that nearly 70 to 75 % of the total employees in BPOs are women. This is a proof that a considerable number of women in metros have come out from their marginalized status and have become a part of the mainstream society. Since the pay scale in BPOs are comparatively better, these women are economically independent and thereby achieve the status of breadwinners of the family. Thus in most of the middle class families in the cities, both the husband and the wife are employed and possess equal positions. If the domination of man over woman started from the time when he became the breadwinner of the family, this is the right time to state that today man is not the lone controller of the family and society.

A visit to the conflict places of Kannur and Thalipparambu helped in inquiring into the association of violence with the masculine gender. A few personal interviews were conducted with the common people there.

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The main focus was to know why men engage in violence more than women. Is the heroic and adventurous nature of men accepted by the society? Does the society really appreciate such actions? Is it a biological aspect that men can/should be more 'adventurous' and 'tough' than women? Or is it the product of a socially and culturally constructed idea that the heroism of a man should be measured through the so called celebrations of the tough engagements of body and actions? If so, then what is the contribution of the popular media and popular myths to emphasize and manipulate the role of masculine structures in a particular society?

The issue was subtle because when the idea of visiting such conflict areas was brought forth, the evidence of the self-serving, egoistic and uncaring notions of masculinity was expected. In the peripheral level, the preconceived notion that the masculine nature was aggressive and violent was found to be right, but in the deeper level traces of selfless generosity even to the point of sacrifice was evident to be the ideology of men there. Gender Studies has a long tradition of problematising issues by considering the binary oppositions or the other side. So gender study was focused on the issues of how one gender is different from its 'other'. In such studies, masculine identities were always portrayed as strong, violent, invulnerable, and occupying a better position in the hierarchical order. But it was understood and acknowledged from the survery that gender is basically a socially constructed idea. This study tends to counter the so-called socio-biological evocations about the aggressive nature of masculine bodies, and through these interrogations, they give new dimensions to the existing ideas of masculinity.

A considerable number of advertisements were analyzed to arrive at how they project the ideas of violence,

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aggression, suppression, physical and mental strength of masculinity through popular media. Through the conventional myths and legends, there is a popular belief that men belong to the above-mentioned category and no soft feelings can be attributed to the very idea of masculinity. In contemporary times, the masculine representations that the visual media promote are other major reasons for this inaccurate belief. The six-pack Bollywood heroes like Amir Khan, Akshay Kumar, Salman Khan and other 'masculine' heroes can be identified as instruments of advertisement companies who indirectly spread or construct the ideology of how a man should be or should behave. The slogans that appear on T-shirts and caps, like 'No Fear' were generally identified as tough and strong maleness, but it can also be identified as the images of isolation, loneliness and alienation.

    To study more about the notions of masculinity in the popular minds, a labourer named Gunashekaran who came out of a local bar in Triplicane, Chennai, was interviewed. He said he had three children, and his wife didn't approve of him coming home drunk. He tried many times to stop consuming alcohol, but could not. He said that after all the tough labour, he wanted to liberate his body and only alcohol could do it. He claimed that after consuming alcohol, he felt like his 'morality had doubled'. When asked whether he beat his wife, the man laughed and confessed that he tries to control his anger but sometimes he cannot. The association of alcohol/drugs consumption and masculinity should be problematised. If a man feels that he is 'really a man' after consuming the chemicals/intoxicating drinks, then do these intoxicating elements create or accelerate the tension called masculinity? Mr. Gunashekaran's wife also takes alcohol occasionally during the Pongal festival and other times, but

Gunashekaran cannot recollect even one instance of her being violent.

Mr. Somashekar, an auto-driver in Bangalore, said that some of his 'irresistible' domestic violence is due to the consumption of liquor. But during the mandalam season, he stops all his drinking habits and is a 'good man'. He is a devotee of Lord Ayyappa of Sabarimala, and rejects all his pleasures during the 41 days of penance in the month of December. When asked why he could denounce the external pleasure during that season alone, Somashekar said that he believed that it is the grace of god. During that season, he finds an inner pleasure in negating not only liquor, but also sexual relations with his wife. Why do men find pleasure in negating women is another major issue to be discussed. The T-shirt slogans like 'Trust No Woman', 'I Hate Girls' extend this idea into the context of the metropolitan world from a village auto driver who finds pleasure in refraining from his wife for spiritual reasons.

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The research led to the enquiry of the suicide attempts of four labourers, appeared as "Four Labourers Drink Poison" in *Times of India*—Vijay Kumar, Balroji Rao, Chandrashekar and Paramesh, working at a godown of a private transport company in Bangalore. The reason was that their company was not paying their salary on time. They were told that the salary would be delayed by another month and they were threatened that they would be transferred to North Karnataka. This incident can be cited as a good instance of how rural men in India are still pressurised. The whole burden of their families has to be borne by the labourers' salaries, and if they fail to provide security to their families, they would be surely blamed. In certain times as these, responsibilities become burdens and there is no other way before them other than suicide. This may not be true in the case of the upper middle class in

India where both the husband and wife are breadwinners of the family, but among the lower classes, the situation of men is worse than the case cited here.

The conclusion drawn from the above mentioned studies and field trips is that certain behaviours cannot be attributed to a particular sex, i.e., the biological man or woman, but could be attributed to the gender oriented social being. Since the different institutional contexts determine or manipulate the 'gender being', there is no specific identity called masculine or feminine. The nature of gender changes according to the context or situation. If that is the case, the reshuffling of the context would help to unsettle the hetero-normative practices of the gender. If the concept of gender is not based on a sex based behaviour, but an ideology of the being, we can alter it by introducing the individual to a different context or space.

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