Research Journal of English Language and Literature (RJELAL)
A Peer Reviewed (Refereed) International Journal
Impact Factor 6.8992 (ICI) http://www.rjelal.com;
Email:editorrjelal@gmail.com; ISSN:2395-2636 (P); 2321-3108(O)

Vol.9. S1. 2021 (Special Issue)

Vol.9. Issue.S1. 2021

INTERNATIONAL STANDARD SERIAL NUMBER INDIA
2395-2636 (Print):2321-3108 (online)

Hypothesizing Sites: The Emergence of Postcolonial Literatures

Dr. Shalini Yadav
Professor
Compucom Institute of Technology and Management, Jaipur
Email Id- shalini.yadav067@gmail.com

Abstract

Defining post-colonialism is a herculean task therefore it refers to an arena of study that has gone through extreme analysis whilst staying inexplicable, permeable, wide-ranging, and questioned. Postcolonialism with its increasing co-modification as a marketable academic field has equally gained the currency due to critiques of postcolonial discourse. Paradoxically the field of postcolonial study has prospered with its accumulated cultural capital ignoring the conceptual inadequacies. There is an effort made to examine what are postcolonial literatures, advances of postcolonial literatures and some of the major deliberations produced by the emergence of postcolonial approaches to literary studies.

Key words: post-colonialism; cultural; discourse; emergence; literatures

Semantically the term 'postcolonial' may appear to propose an apprehension only with the national culture after the departure of the imperial power. It has occasionally been employed in some earlier work in the area to distinguish between the periods before and after independence as colonial period' and 'post-colonial period', for example, in fabricating national literary histories, or in advocating comparative studies between phases in those histories. The term 'post-colonial' is used to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonisation to the present day. Post-colonial literatures have been established through numerous phases, which can be seen to communicate to phases both of national or regional perception and of the project of proclaiming distinction from the imperial centre. During the imperial period a literate elite whose primary identification is with the colonising power inevitably, of course, produces writing in the language of the imperial centre. Thus 'representatives' of the imperial power frequently produced the first texts, produced in the colonies in the new language. These kinds of texts can never practice the foundation for an ethnic culture nor can they be incorporated in any way with the culture, which already exists in the countries conquered. Despite their detailed reportage of landscape, custom and language, they inevitably privilege the centre, emphasising the 'home' over the 'native', the 'metropolitan' over the 'provincial' or 'colonial', and so forth. Right to independence at a deep level just assists to conceal the imperial discourse within which they are crafted.

The subsequent phase of creation within the progressing discussion of the post-colonial is the literature created 'under imperial licence' by 'natives' or 'outcasts', for example whatever poetry and prose was created in the nineteenth century by the English educated Indian upper class, or African 'missionary literature'. The producers indicate by the very fact of writing in the language of the dominant culture that they have temporarily or everlastingly recorded an exclusive and privileged

class gifted with the language, education, and ease necessary to generate such works.

It is a characteristic of these early post-colonial texts that the potential for agitation in their themes cannot be fully understood. Though they contract with such influential substance as the cruelty of the condemn system such as in Tucker's *Rashleigh*, the historical strength of the displaced and maligned native cultures such as in Mofolo's *Chaka*, or the subsistence of a rich cultural legacy order and more extensive than that of Europe they are prevented from fully exploring their anti-imperial potential. Both the available discourse and the material conditions of production of literature in these early post-colonial societies restrain this possibility. The institution of 'Literature' in the colony is under the direct control of the imperial ruling class who alone license the acceptable form and permit the publication and distribution of the resulting work. So, such texts come into being within the restraints of a discussion and the institutional exercise of a patronage system, which confines and weakens their proclamation of a different viewpoint. The growth of liberated literatures depended upon the abrogation of this restraining power and the appropriation of language and writing for new and distinguishing practices. This type of appropriation is evidently the most substantial quality in the emergence of contemporary post-colonial literatures.

Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have been satirized as the 'holy trinity' and the 'three celebrity critics' of postcolonial studies, due to their influence (Sharrad, 47; Huggan, 4). Their dominance to an illustrative status-open to challenge-partly results from the new subject area having to quickly consolidate, throughout the 1980s and 1990s. A sign of arrival within the academy is presented in the emergence of the journal *Postcolonial Studies* in 1998.

Tiffin is more specific when she highlights a profound 'amnesia' concerning work produced prior to 1978, under the auspices of Commonwealth literary studies, which proceeded in ways quite distinct from those set by the 'new hegemony' (156-160). Tiffin believes the "entry of a post-structuralist approach" which is particularly associated with Bhabha and Spivak's work, was responsible for "the dismissal of much earlier foundational work as untheorized and thus non-existent' (159). Ella Shohat also identifies an occlusion of earlier frameworks, pointing out that "[t]he 'postcolonial' did not emerge to find an empty space in the language of political-cultural analysis" (100), To the contrary, Shohat argues that.: "its wide adaptation during the late eighties was coincident with and dependent on the eclipse of an older paradigm, that of the 'Third World'" (100).

Commonwealth and Third World literary studies, took place across a divergent global terrain but with similar outcomes in mind. The motivating force driving both was a desire to draw attention to texts produced outside of the traditional English literary sphere. This constituted a demand for the recognition and recovery of literatures, which, were endangered due to giant Western canon. Both described on the motion of anti-colonialism and the high tide of decolonization in the 1960s. Whilst it is true that struggle for Independence had already been won in much of Latin America during the 1820s, and that neo-colonialism continues in many guises, a powerful global shift occurred with the rise of many new nations from the ashes of European Empires. The pluralizing codes of the commonwealth and Third World literary movements, specifies one contribution to the complex and on-going processes described by Ngugi Wa thiong'o as 'decolonizing the mind,' and Dipesh Chakrabarty as 'Provincialising Europe'.

Therefore, selective memory worked for functional authentication, where the distinct trajectories of earlier inquiries are rejected, absorbed and forgotten. The emergence of postcolonial studies from the publication of Said's *Orientalism* (1978) by registering the expansion of 'Commonwealth Literatures' and Third World Literatures is countered till date. There is a variety of critical work, loosely grouped under these banners prominent in the 1960s and 1970s, that engages with the early questions of post-colonialism, before the term had acquired functional authentication.

Variously accused of naive, outdated, totaling or essentialist methods by the postcolonial studies of the 1980s, they serve as an essentialist example of how a discipline cuts new ground. The argument is that the range of perspectives on conceptual boundaries and methodological approaches, typified by Commonwealth and Third World literary studies, demonstrates considerable overlap but also reveals distinct trends emanating from different institutional locations. This comparison serves to illustrate that some of the contemporary debates within postcolonial literary studies, on dominance, resistance and incorporation, on the mismatch between subaltern histories and diasporic cosmopolitanism, on authenticity and hybridity, are clearly prefigured in the intellectual heritage of the discipline.

The commonalities between Commonwealth and Third World literary studies can be found in their shared motivations to 'decolonize the canon,' shaped in a period of 'global' optimism and dissent. However, there are also clear differences between the two areas, most obviously signaled by the geo-political boundaries evoked in their titles. The Commonwealth grouping implies the new 'family of literatures' based on the imperial geography crafted by the British Empire. Literary criticism often focused on how to resist and/or accommodate the highly ambiguous legacies of colonialism; in particular, the English-language education system which provides a vehicle for literary and cultural exchange within and between ex-colonies but may also continue to instill notions of inferiority and derivativeness. Challenging the spectra of 'backwardness,' a notion which still hunt the social-studies 'development' paradigm, is also of import to the Third World grouping.

One distinctive strand of postcolonial analysis, attributable to the terms set by the Commonwealth literary paradigm, draws on the way authors themselves have defined the complexities of what it is to 'Write back' from within a (post) colonial context. Here, the views and strategies, developed by several creative writers, like Chinua Achebe, Margaret Atwood, Wilson Harris, Subramani and so on, are a crucial part of the dialogue. Colonial writers became active agent of decolonization such as in George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960), a book of interrelated essays.

This provides an early indication of the trend amongst later theorists to use experience as the basis for discussions of subversive postcolonial subjectivity -in its many manifestations as 'subaltern,' 'nomadic;' or 'diasporic,' 'cosmopolitan,' 'indigenous'. The broader point is that unlike much of the work produced in the decade of theory-making, which often focused on precisely the 'Western' canon to illuminate processes of orientalism, those critics who came to postcolonial studies through the Commonwealth route were more likely to remain "primarily committed to the [non-Western] literary text", "perspective and cultural context" (Tiffin, 161). This implies the idea of writing back to some extent while diverting the focus of the writing to an ex-colonial nation rather than the old imperial metropolitan centre.

Bhabha made many key postcolonial concepts on ambivalence, hybridity, mimicry, subversion, alienation, displacement and exile popular in the 1980s. Jameson created a division between First and Third World writing, readers and socio cultural locations, in order to argue that the differing conditions of the separate worlds produce distinct textual strategies and aesthetics. He observes a "radical split between the public and the private" in the First World, produced by the cultural workings of advance capital; a bifurcation that he argues is absent in the Third World whose public and private are intertwined. Jameson states:

All Third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I win can national allegories… Third-World texts, even those which are seemingly private and invested with a properly libidinal dynamic -necessarily project a political dimension in the form of national allegory: the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public Third-world culture and society. (69)

Jameson affirms the primary features of Third World literary production, as communal,

political and allegorical, "by way of a sweeping hypothesis" (1991: 510; 1986: 69). Ahmad's well known response to Jameson's sweeping hypothesis provides a strident critique of the three world's theory (95-122). He identifies a transposition, in Jameson's essay, of an earlier concept concerning the distinction between pre-industrial and industrial societies onto the difference between First and Third Worlds (Ahmad, 109). Working against the grain of Jameson's logic, Ahmad suggests that if the Third World is constituted by colonialism then a split between public and private may be more pressing in the Third World that the First particularly for the urban intelligentsia who are, in the main, the producers of English-language literature (107). In this observation he prefigures the position taken by Partha Chatterjee who claims, in contrast to Jameson, that it is precisely in the 'so-caned Third World' that the identities of public and private are irrevocably split by the legacies of colonialism (6).

Ahmad also argues that the economic rationale for the three-worlds division has no empirical basis in fact, commenting on the success of Asian Pacific Rim economies, pointing out India's 'first -world' capitalist credentials, and noting that the Indian bourgeoisie is fully at home with "global American postmodernist culture" (101) Furthermore, he observes that many first-world texts display the political characteristics of 'allegorization and organicity' that Jameson sees as emblematic of an embattled Third World situation (122). The examples employed -the urban intelligentsia in the post-colony and feminist and Black American literatures demonstrate the multiplicity of 'imagined communities' that may exist within, beyond and in-between nation-states and the larger First/third world division. So, rather than accept the impermeable divide of the three world theory, Ahmad offers "a radically different premise: namely, the proposition that we live not in three worlds but one" - where all sides of the' global divide' are constituted by, and in relation to, experiences of impermeable capitalism, socialism, nationalism (103), the emphasis on cultural complexity and the proposition that we live in 'one world,' but a world that is multiply affected by differential power-relations, signals a key area of debate in the post-colonialism of the 1980s and 1990s.

The recognition of cultural complexity' is also apparent in work that supplants the Anglo/Commonwealth tradition. In *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (1989) for example, widely considered a formal starting point for post-colonial studies proper, the Commonwealth phase is described as 'outdated' and the 'product of a disguised humanist reincorporation' (Ashcroft et al., 180). This work takes a broad view, using the term post-colonial 'to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day", thus maintaining a space for comparisons between 'settler invader' and so-called Third World social contexts (Ashcroft et al 2). *The Empire Writes Back* also continues to situate the post-colonial literary text and write as actively engaged in processes of cultural decolonization. It engages with the questions Rushdie raised about the essentialising tendencies of 'nationalist' paradigms for literary studies, proposing instead that "the strength of post-colonial theory may well lie in its inherently comparative methodology and the hybridized and syncretic view of the modern world which this implies" (Ashcroft et at. 36-7). The shift is made complete in *The Location of Culture* (1994). Here Bhabha argues "postcolonial criticism is concerned with unequal and uneven forces […] within the modern world order" but "attempts to revise those nationalist or 'nativist' pedagogies that set up the relation of Third World and First World in a binary structure of opposition" (171-173). While drawing on *The Empire Writes Back's* sense of the long-term effects of a colonial past as they produce contemporary diaspora and its attention to 'culturally different voices changing language and genre standard, this work is more indebted to Bhabha's less binary, more deconstructive models, such as his 'third space' of inside/outside diasporic negotiation.

While a number of postcolonial critics were retrospectively charting cross-cultural contact, appropriation, exchange and conflict within and across national/regional boundaries in an age

without the internet, globalization theory was debating the defining features of (post)modernity. Ashcroft makes a point in his work on *Post-Colonial Transformation* (2001). He argues that "Western development models" (now largely defunct) "act to force the local into globally normative patterns", but that these same patterns are acted on and transformed "to the requirements of local values and needs" (16). It is not an either/or choice: "the modern can be 'used' and 'resisted' at the same time" (Ashcroft, 23). Ashcroft's perspective on this issue is indicative of a broader strand in postcolonial studies- a strand which intersects with the challenge issued by postmodernism to shake up 'grand narratives' progress, modernity, rationalism.

So, a number of critics have emphasized the transformational powers of local agency in and on the global, drawing attention to divergent discrepant, resistant or plural modernities. For many, fundamentally modern phenomena lie at the heart of their perspectives on globalization. Appadurai, Shohat and Stam believe, "the media are absolutely central to any discussion of [...] globalization" (145); Ashcroft suggests that 'globalism', like imperialism, finds its origin, teleology, ideology and technology in the discursive and historical rise of a specifically European modernity (210).

It is clear that the clash over the utility, scope, purpose and practice of post-colonialism has been complex, heated and lengthy. At points it seems to boil down to sub-disciplinary turf-wars in which 'the text', 'the city', 'the migrant', 'the media' is either needlessly relied or rejected outright. However, a salutary consequence of the persistent refinement of the field during these debates has been that any definition of what post-colonialism does continues to functions as a provisional, working set of tennis. This is what keeps the field critically alive.

Works Cited

Ahmad, Aijaz. *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures.* London: New York: Verso, 1992.

Ashcroft, Bill. *Post-Colonial Transformation.* London: New York: Routledge, 2001.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures.* London: Routledge, 1989.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture.* London; New York: Routledge, 1994.

Huggan, Graham. *The Post-Colonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins.* London; New York: Routledge, 2001.

Jameson, Fredric. "Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." Social Text 15, 1986.

The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1992.

Sharrad, Paul. "Pastoral, Romance and Post-Colonial Consciousness: Spenser and Koch." CommonwealthEssays and Studies 14.1, 1991.

"Post-Colonial Issue." Spec. Issue of New Literatures Review 17, 1989.

Shohat, Ella and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. London & New York: Routledge, 1994.

Tiffin, Chris and Alan Lawson, eds. *Describing Empire: Post-colonialism and Textuality.* London; New York: Routledge, 1994.