



POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES

Semester : 6 Group: C

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INTRODUCTION

What remains of **colonization** when it is, in principle, over? Out of this great movement of European conquest that began in the sixteenth century and ended with the decolonization movements of the late twentieth century, what's remaining? What is active, still present, in this past that seems to haunt societies which have been affected in many ways and in many forms?

This philosophical/political question crosses a multitude of disciplinary fields in and out of the human sciences: history, sociology, political science, ethnology, economics, linguistics, geography ... etc. it really concerns all areas of culture. The postcolonial situation has given rise to singular works, vanguardist or pastist such as hybridization, miscegenation, or multiform contestation of western modes of thought and creation.

Attempting to overcome, to a certain extent, a marxist third world ideologies that dreamed of an absolute liberation succeeding a no less absolute western domination, the postcolonial theory intends to take as its object of study the link (symbolic or material and not fantasized) that ex-colonized with their traumatic past, lived as history and / or memory. These preoccupations and reflections that many English-speaking countries lead, in a deep but also sometimes disordered way, in a disciplinary field which ended up acquiring a certain autonomy in the university institutions: the postcolonial studies.

Postcolonial studies

This term should not be understood in a narrow chronological sense but in the generally accepted sense of the north atlantic, as forged by theorists like Edward Said¹, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak², Homi Bhabha³. These academicians were motivated at the same time by their experience as immigrants, by their reflection on the colonial past and by their reading of the philosophers (Derrida, Deleuze, Foucault) or essayists (Memmi⁴, Fanon⁵), to undertake a deconstruction of the western canon, to bring suspicion to the

¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1978

² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, 1988, in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds) *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, London: Macmillan.

³ Homi K Bhabha. (ed.) (1990) *Nation and Narration*. Bhabha, (1994) *The Location of Culture*

⁴ Memmi, Albert (1965) *The Colonizer and the Colonized*.

⁵ Franz Fanon, (1961) *The Wretched of the Earth*.

ethnocentrism of European literatures and aesthetic theories. Their followers including Robert J.C. Young⁶, Bill Ashcroft⁷, Laura Chrisman, Benita Parry⁸, Leela Gandhi⁹, Ania Loomba¹⁰, David Spurr¹¹ ... and others) deepen, develop and synthesize the founding intuitions.

As a discipline, Postcolonial Studies attempt at being sensitive to the geopolitics of literature, attentive to the consequences of the great movement of civilization (and destruction of civilizations) that was European colonization. It also measures the tracks that western hegemony printed on more than three quarters of peoples in the world. Thus, the term postcolonial refers to all cultures that the imperial process has affected from colonization to today: Africa, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Islands, Sri Lanka ... etc. these consequences of colonization, of course, are not only political and economic, but they concern all the forms of cultural life and production which the domination of the center, when not eradicated, has durably disturbed, inflected, modified. The literatures, born of these transformations (for some, well before decolonization proper), constitute an ideal laboratory for observing this postcolonial fate, insofar as they generally call into question the very imperialism that inspired them.

Postcolonial studies are therefore primarily intended to describe and analyze the phenomena of appropriation or abrogation, mimicry or resistance, submission or challenge, rejection or grafting that come into play.

Bill Ashcroft argues that “The semantic basis of the term ‘postcolonial’ might seem to suggest a concern 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 for example, in constructing national literary histories, or in suggesting comparative studies between stages in those histories. ...

We use the term ‘post-colonial’, however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. We also suggest that it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted.” (The Empire Writes Back. p. 2-3.)

⁶ Robert J.C. Young, (1995), *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. R. J.C. Young, (1990) *White Mythologies*.

⁷ Bill Ashcroft (et.al.) *The Empire Writes Back*

⁸ Laura Chrisman and Benita Parry, (2000), *Postcolonial Theory and Criticism*.

⁹ Leela Gandhi, (1998) *Postcolonial Theory A critical introduction*.

¹⁰ Ania Loomba, (1998) *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*.

¹¹ David Spurr, (1993) *The Rhetoric of Empire: Colonial Discourse ...*