

Women Writing

Women's writing is seen as a literature that is written by women, about women, and for women. Women writers have started questioning the stereotypical image constructed by men. They also work on redefining the concepts of freedom and creativity from the female point of view. In her influential book "*The Laugh of the Medusa*"(1980), Hélène Cixous urges women have to write about their conscious knowledge and desires:

Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies. Woman must put herself into the text as into the world and into history by her own movement.

(Cixous, 1980: 275)

Women's writings put much emphasis on queries of changing nature of the social and political life. Sue Kossew, in her book: *Writing Woman, Writing Place Contemporary Australian and South African fiction* (2004) remarks on this. When she writes:

What is important, then, about all the texts discussed is their engagement with contemporary dilemmas at a time when both nations are undergoing continuing processes of social and political change. It is in these women writers' texts that many of these current anxieties and desires are textualised, and this study provides a map of their writerly concerns.

(Kossew, 2004: 2)

The new position of woman in society is empowered in by the process of deconstructing attitudes created by patriarchy. Women writers have had to work to change the male's habit of thought toward women. They try to abandoning the transgressing fixed lines drawn by men's oppression that serve to fuel their anger against the politics of othering women.

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory is one of the widely debated theories of late. It is a platform of thoughts adopted by numerous theorists from the previously colonized nations to "explore the ways that representations and modes of perception are used as fundamental weapons of colonial power to keep colonized peoples subservient to colonial rule" (McLeod, 2000:17).

The term postcolonial refers to the “various cultural effects of colonization” (Ashcroft et al, 1995: 168) on societies that previously colonised. These effects continue to be felt because “the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased” (Loomba, 2005: 7). As "it has extended its concern into debates concerning multiculturalism, diaspora, racism and ethnicity as the mass migrations in the postwar period by formerly colonized peoples" (Childs and Fowler, 2006: 185) the theory was, and still is, at the core of many academic and degree courses. It is also "used to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day." (Bill Ashcroft et al, 1995: 2) It, therefore, "recognizes both historical continuity and change"(McLeod, 2000: 33) in the attitudes about colonised nations. Postcolonial theorists develop many strategies to "examine the culture (literature, politics, history, and so forth) of former colonies of the European empires, and their relation to the rest of the world" (Makaryk, 1993: 155). In that sense, postcolonialism is the exploration of the effects of colonisation on the colonized.

Postcolonial studies have raised a number of political questions. It draws upon scholars to explore new ideas. Unsurprisingly, the literature produced during the colonial era was provoked by intellectuals of postcolonial countries such as: Fanon, Spivak, Edward Said, and Bhabha to record the distortion of reality drawn by the colonial writers. Postcolonial Studies enjoy an extraordinary fame in the 1970's after the publication of Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (1978). It is the book "which constituted the Orient in the consciousness of the west offers an influential analysis of how the world was constructed in the European mind." (Ashcroft et al, 1995: 165) In this regard, Said demonstrated that the Western image of the East was painted from the colonialist subjective point of view.

In this thorough reconsideration of Said's perspective, Boehmer (2005) argues that "Orientalism in Said's interpretation is the body of knowledge on the basis of which Europe developed an image of the East to accompany and justify its territorial accumulations."(48). Hence, there is much to say about postcolonial theorist's legacy and of their advocacy. They questioned patterns of misrepresentation of the non-western world and explore the ongoing relationships between east and west, colonizer and colonized, white and black, and indigenous and colonial societies. They "examined the ways in which colonial discourse operated as an instrument of power, initiated what came to be known as colonial discourse theory, that theory which, in the 1980's, saw colonial discourse as its field of study."(Ashcroft et al, 1995: 39)

Postcolonial Theorists

Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak are the names that are often mentioned in postcolonial studies. They contribute enormously to postcolonial theory and their works form the basis on which the theory has emerged.

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961)

Frantz Fanon is the postcolonial writer whose name is often associated with the process of decolonisation. Albert Memmi considers him as "A prophet of the Third World, a romantic hero of decolonization" (quoted in Loomba, 2005: 123). Fanon was the student of Aime Cesaire; the great poet and Marxist politician. He studied medicine and psychiatry in France where Lacan was one of his teachers. Fanon's works: *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965) are a remarkable analysis of the effect of Europeans imperial power.

To talk about Fanon's contribution to postcolonial theory, Rabaka Reiland (2010) refers to Fanonism as a set of critiques to the colonial features. She argues;

When Fanon's critiques of racism, sexism, colonialism, capitalism, and humanism are brought into the ever-widening orbit of Africana critical theory, which is to say that when Fanon's discourse on white supremacy, patriarchy, racial colonization, racial violence, racial exploitation, racial oppression, and what it means to really and truly be and become "human"—though thoroughly racialized and colonized—are analyzed for their contribution to the deepening and ongoing development of the Africana tradition of critical theory, something unprecedented in the annals of Africana intellectual history happens: five distinct forms of Fanonism emerge.

(Reiland, 2010: 2)

Fanon believed that black people had accepted to be inferior. He questions white men who consider themselves superior to black men and blames black men of proving the superiority of Western culture.

Fanon shared the move of educated Africans and encouraged the validation of the African culture and civilization. He believed that such restoration of the past would allow the Africans to live free from European rule. He negated the Western stereotypical image that legitimates the incapability of the Africans.

Edward Said (1935- 2003)

The literary and cultural critic Edward Said focused on the portrayals of Orient. *Orientalism* (1978) is Said's most influential and much controversial work. Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (2001) argue that Said's works are considered as a canonical event. As he

has crossed the apparent divide between academic scholarship and public recognition. This accolade reflects his impact on the contemporary cultural terrain, but it also demonstrates how relevant the concept of worldliness has become to our consideration of creative and intellectual work. (137)

Said has pointed out that "language and literature together implicated in constructing the binary of a European self and non-European Other, which is a part of the creation of colonial authority." (Quoted in Looma, 2005: 66) He also offers a number of insights into Europe's special ways of representing the non-west lands.

Orientalists' views challenged the false belief on that the contemporary oriental societies could be civilized only when they adopted the European mode of life. Said's *Orientalism* unveils Western control. He views *Orientalism* as a set of procedures shaped Orient. This discourse was systematically utilized by the Europeans during and after the colonisation of the Orient.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1942-)

Gayatri Spivak is a leading theorist in postcolonial theory. She was born in Calcutta (India) and got her B.A. from the Calcutta University. She went to the United States and got her M.A. and Ph.D in English literature at Cornell University, where Paul De Man was one of her teachers. She taught at various American universities, including the University of Texas, the university of Pittsburgh, and Columbia University.

Spivak is feminist and Marxist writer. She links postcolonialism and feminism by highlighting the double burden of women. Spivak's critical views "encompass a range of theoretical interests, including Marxism, feminism, deconstruction, postcolonial theory and cutting-edge work on globalisation." (Morton 2003:1).

The publication of her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" creates a history for her. Spivak concerns herself with the process of othering people. This process is seen by her as the cause of the subalterns' tragedy. As postcolonial theorists, Spivak views Postcolonial theory as a site for colonised people to negotiate their rights. She looks at the postcolonial history as new era that could hold positive change for postcolonial countries.

Homi Bhabha (1949 -)

David Huddart, in his book titled *Homi K. Bhabha* (2006), states: "Although many of his most influential writings were originally published during the 1980s, Bhabha is very much a thinker for the twenty-first century." (2) Bhabha's contribution is acknowledged by modern critics all over the world. He investigated the dilemma of postcolonial people whose culture is affected by the colonial discourses.

He is influenced by Derrida's works that examine the binary structure created by Western thoughts. Bhabha tries to deconstruct dichotomies such as: West and the Orient, the colonizer and the colonized, the oppressor and the oppressed, and the self and the other. Bhabha also employs Mikhail Bakhtin literary theory in his examination to the relationship between these dichotomies. Bhabha, like other theorists, shows strong support to way used by postcolonial writers to deconstruct the colonial habit of thought.

Postcolonial Literature

Communities of the formerly colonized countries have responded to the sense of cultural alienation to colonial domination. Such reaction is manifested in the form of literature that "was both a consequence of and reaction to the European imperial process" (Tiffin, 1988: 23). Postcolonial literature has therefore an anti-colonial and anti-imperialist tendency. These writings reflect the breadth of fierce resistance to the colonial discourse and "undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported colonization - the myths of power, the race classifications and the imagery of subordination" (Boehemer, 2005: 3). Postcolonial literature is then the body of writing that encourages rethinking the question of power in the colonial history and explores the possibility of subaltern others to transform themselves into subjects of their own. It also calls to examine the relationship between the West and Orient is viewed.

With reference to Ashcroft et al (1995), post-colonial literature includes all literatures "affected by the colonial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2). This is because we still admit the

constant effects of colonial practices, as well as the changing forms of representation embedded during and after colonial era. In response to such representation, "many authors had made explicit their concern to correct the misrepresentations of their culture and history which were produced by, and in turn helped to produce, colonial attitudes. (Chew and Richards, 2010: 56). It is no wonder that a striking task of postcolonial writers is to know how to negotiate the colonial power and rework them for their own purposes. In this regard, Postcolonial writers offer interpretation and alternative construction of the previously constructed self and other. They reconstitute their culture and history with the spirit of assertion, independence, leadership and intellectual strength.

The commitment of postcolonial writers to their inborn culture involves a conscious choice to place enough tactical pressure to persuade their reader to re-examine social realities. In doing so, postcolonial writers describe a wide array of experiences and preoccupied themselves with themes and issues that are basically central to their existence such as: the conflicts between tradition and modernity, migration, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, place and responses to colonialism. Hence, people's quest for cultural identity is clearly seen in the work of those postcolonial writers who "focused on reconstituting from the position of their historical, racial, or metaphysical difference a cultural identity which had been damaged by the colonial experience".(Boehmer, 2005: 177)

Postcolonial novel contains "a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized"(Bakhtin, 1981: 262). These voices represent different ideological positions of postcolonial writers whose attempt is to interrogate the misrepresentations of colonial ideology. Modern postcolonial writers' interpretation of the colonial history has been seen by many critics as a process of writing back. They are involved in bringing the lost history back in which the subjugated assert themselves and move towards a new direction that supports their new cultural, social and literary agenda.

Postcolonial literature set its own form, structure, syntax and style to give a deep analysis of the psychological effects on the colonized. Postcolonial writers therefore have an outlook that is always constructive and purposeful in tracing a psychological development of their characters within the postcolonial context. They experienced a renewed sense of freedom in purposing their writings to challenge the states of consciousness encouraged by the colonial experience which had modified not only physical realities of life, but also internal modes of the psyche of the marginalised.

Postcolonial Literature's Key Concepts

When viewed within the scope of the postcolonial literature, the concepts I will be looking at are those which demonstrate their relevance in studying postcolonial texts. Many of these concepts overlap and interweave in one another and therefore treated as separate entities.

Colonialism

Colonialism is defined as a process of establishing power and hegemony. However, the problem in defining colonialism arises when compared to imperialism. It is relevant to point out the difference between colonialism and imperialism, two concepts commonly mixed up. As stated by Childs and Williams (1997), a clear distinction must be drawn between imperialism and colonialism as they represent two different methods of exercising power. They describe imperialism as follows; "The extension and expansion of trade and commerce under the protection of political, legal, and military controls"(227), while colonialism they refer to as the process of "the settling of communities from one country in another, usually in a conquered territory". (Ibid) Colonialism is a common feature in history. It created a violent reaction from the colonized who charged with the rhetoric of independence and the self assertion.

Identity

One's identity is term that is commonly used in postcolonial literary as well as theory. The word identity "reflects the notion that one can know who someone really is. In the second view, identity is seen as acquired through socialisation or the internalisation of imposed social roles. (Code, 2000: 277) It is associated with the sense of belonging which is shared by social group's members. However, the formation of one's identity is always controversial because not all individuals share the same degree of commitment to same characteristics, values and beliefs.

Within the context of postcolonial literature, identity requires a special examination. The identity of a person shapes during his life and is influenced by the life circumstances.

The influential post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha's target is mainly how ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity relate to what he refers to as the colonial identity. Bhabha shows a strong opposition to the acclaimed post-colonial theorists and author of *Orientalism*, Said, whose focus is on the disparities between

the colonizer and the colonized. Rather, Bhabha explores the points of similarity between the two. He argues that the white is constructed as being the oppressor and the non white as the subjugated. The clash of cultures affects both parties. According to Bhabha the identity both the colonizers and the colonized has become ambivalent. He argues that the identity of the coloniser "provoke a feeling of disturbance, synonymous to a "nervous condition" and the uncanny state of ambivalence; a state of mind that he argues to be the place in where the hybrid identity comes into existence." (Childs and Williams, 1997:123)

Hybridity

The word has become a cultural subject closely associated with Homi Bhabha. It is more commonly used to describe the in-betweenness of two different cultures. The influence of colonizing culture during the colonial period had a great impact on both the colonized and the colonizing cultures. In the work *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (2000), Ashcroft et al. distinguish various types of hybridity when they write: "Hybridization takes many forms: linguistic, cultural, political, racial, etc." (118) The term of hybridity coined in its modern meaning by Homi K. (1980). It has become fundamental part foundational in the development of Postcolonial Studies but opens up to stringent critiques.

Hybridity refers to the experience that is shared by colonized and the colonizers. People who live between two cultures find it difficult to belong to either culture. This is what Bhabha refers to as "a Third Space". This Third Space, according to Childs and Fowler (2006) what:

Allows us to conceive of the identities of cultures in terms that transcend the binary dialectic between 'us/them', 'insider/outsider', 'inclusion/exclusion'. It also enables discussion of cultural difference in terms that do not exoticize it for in such exoticism Bhabha detects an Othering principle that distances difference and disavows the constitution of the Self by the Other.

(Childs and Fowler, 2006: 112)

The term hybridity is a controversial term in postcolonial criticism. Homi Bhabha is the leading critic who has tried to emphasize the hybrid identity of the colonized.

Language

Language has become a central concept in post-colonial theory. Simon During argues that " language to be an extremely important feature of a person`s identity, revealing much information about a person. If the language embodied in a person`s identity evaporates, a conflicting sense of identity will reveal itself." (quoted in Childs and Williams, 1997:193) By adapting to a foreign language, issues of identity will automatically arise: "In both literature and politics the post-colonial drive towards identity centers around language ... For the postcolonial to speak or write in the imperial tongues is to call forth a problem of identity, to be thrown into mimicry and ambivalence."(Ibid)

In the colonial era, colonizers deprived the natives from their right to speak their language and imposed their language on them. Many writers, who are forced to study [under colonization](#), felt humiliated for speaking their native language. In response to this situation, postcolonial including Ngugi wa Thiong'o invited people to promote their original languages. Other writers like Chinua Achebe see the colonial language as a more practical choice to enhance inter-nation communication adapted it in innovative literary works.

Ambivalence

The postcolonial conditions force society to adopt new way of life. People need to find a way to adapt their values. It is easy, then, for a person to become emotionally confused as they adjust to the new cultural conditions. The term "Ambivalence" is pivotal in Bhabha's theory. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2000), ambivalence "disrupts the clear-cut authority of colonial domination because it disturbs the simple relationship between colonizer and colonized. Ambivalence is therefore an unwelcome aspect of colonial discourse for the colonizer."(10) It explains the problem caused in the different cultures where Western culture's values are considered superior to native one. It is in this disturbed bond between Western and the indigenous cultures where the ambivalence is emerged.

Place/Displacement

The concern with identity continues to claim space in studying of place and displacement. The crisis of identity is caused by the sense of being displaced which is the result of the contact with unfamiliar place. It is "the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery

of an effective identifying relationship between self and place." (Ashcroft et al., 2000: 8) In post-colonial theory, the word 'place' refers to the in-between-place where the individual feels that his/herself caught between two places. It also describes the void between place and language.

The lack of contact with the unfamiliar surroundings leads to a serious sense of alienation. The feeling of alienation shapes the way in which the colonized behaves in the meeting with the coloniser could be "compared to the feeling of displacement which characterizes the colonizer`s encounter with the wilderness of the 'uncivilized' world." (Ibid, 23-24) The imposition of the language of a coloniser enslaves displaced individuals. Their language has been rendered unprivileged in the alien land. This situation created a gap between both cultures.

The Other

The 'other' responds to the need of creating a space between the self and the other that doesn't fit the norms. As stated by Ashcroft et al.: "The existence of others is crucial in defining what is "normal" and in locating one`s own place in the world." (Ashcroft et al. 2000: 154) The Empire established a systematic segregation between the colonizer and the colonized and sticks all what is uncivilized to the other. Othering is a system of creating identities by subjecting others. The other always adopts self negation politics that leads to the destruction of the self. The racial, geographic, ethnic, economic or ideological differences contribute to the denial of the other.