

Postcolonial Criticism “Ethnic Studies”

The Central ideas in Postcolonial literature Postcolonial has many common motifs and themes like ‘cultural dominance’ and ‘Racism’, ‘quest for identity’, ‘racial discrimination’, ‘inequality’, ‘hybridity’ along with some peculiar presentation styles. Most of the postcolonial writers reflected and demonstrated many thematic concepts which are quite connected with both ‘colonizer’ and ‘colonized’. White Europeans continually accentuated on racial discrimination for their superiority over colonized. It was most evident in South Africa that the apartheid was incorporated in national laws. Among the most notable acts of this kind were ‘The Groups Areas Act’, ‘Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act’, ‘Immorality Act’, ‘The Population Registration Act’, ‘Bantu Authorities Act’, and ‘The Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act. Each of these acts were limiting, restricting and discriminating colonized from the ruling White.

Both the writers Nadine Gordimer and Coetzee in their fiction showed how apartheid destroyed South Africa in many ways as emotionally, morally and economically. In postcolonial context, language played crucial role in control and subjugation of colonized people. Colonizers often imposed their language upon their subjects in order to control them. So most postcolonial writers address the issues in many ways by mixing the local language with imposed language, the result is a hybrid one that underscores the broken nature of the colonized mind

The term ‘Postcolonialism’ is widely refers to the representation of race, ethnicity, culture and human identity in the modern era, mostly after many colonised countries got their independence. It is connected with imperialism

from the moment of colonization until 21st century; “The word imperialism derives from the Latin imperium, which has numerous meanings including power, authority, command, dominion, realm, and empire” (Habib 737). It describes many interactions between ‘coloniser’ and ‘colonised.’ Majority of the world was under the control of European countries. Especially the British Empire consisted of “more than a quarter of all the territory on the surface of the earth: one in four people was a subject of Queen Victoria.”

It is the literature and the art produced in the countries such as India, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Senegal and Australia after their independence, called as Postcolonial literature. Edward Said’s prominent book *Orientalism* is an assessment of Western representation of the Eastern culture under the label ‘Postcolonial Studies’. Canada and Australia are often treated as ‘settler’ countries as they are part of British Commonwealth of Nations. Most famous postcolonial writers like Rushdie, Achebe, Ondaatje, Fanon, Derek Walcott, J. M. Coetzee, Jamaica Kincaid, Isabelle Illende, and Eavan Boland etc. Most of their literary works were representing interrelations between the coloniser and the colonised, such as *Things Fall Apart* (1958), *Midnight Children* (1981), *The Waiting for the Barbarians* (1990), *Disgrace* (1990) and *English Patient* (1992) etc. Spread of Postcolonialism There is a single largest defining factor in outlining world politics in the second half of 20th century i.e. Britain’s loss of empire at the outset of World War II.

After that Britain lost most of its formal colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Pacific, South-East Asia and the far East including Persian Gulf etc., In the 17th century, Britain had gained control over many parts of North America, Canada and Caribbean Islands along with slaves from Africa and market development in India. Nevertheless, Britain viewed its imperialistic expansion as a moral responsibility and exerting greater control over the countries like India, Africa and China. A famous British writer Kipling

referred this responsibility, 'the white man's burden' of civilizing the people who were obviously incapable of self-governing.

Many colonised countries such as India, Pakistan, Ireland, Kenya, Nigeria and so on started writing a type of literature reflecting and representing their own experiences while and after colonization. Frantz Fanon laid essential theoretical foundation for the future colonial theories in his famous book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1992). He argues that a new world can come into being only with a violent revolution by African farmers. In another instant, he used his personal experiences in his book *Black Skin, White Mask* (1952) to show relationship between colonized and colonizer in terms of psychology in observing emotional damage to both colonized and colonizer.

His work anticipated Said's Orientalism. Said's Orientalism critiques Western representation of the East as irrational, antiwestern, primitive and dishonest. According to Said, Orientalism is an ideology born of the colonizers' desire to know their subjects to control them in a better manner. Said argues, "To write about the Arab Oriental world...is to write with the authority of a nation...with the unquestioning certainty of absolute truth backed by absolute force." Another postcolonial theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak whose writings focused on the intersections of gender, ethnicity of postcolonial subjects viewed her job as a postcolonial critic. Bhabha illustrates his "conception of 'cultural difference' in terms of what he describes as 'the language metaphor', which represents cultures in semiotic terms as functioning and assigning value in the same way that systems of language provide meaning" (Gilbert, 124).

Homi Bhabha's theory and criticism investigates ideas of 'Hybridity' and 'Ambivalence' to construct national and cultural identities. "Hybridity, perhaps the key concept throughout Bhabha's career in this respect, obviously depends

upon a presumption of the existence of its opposite for its force” (Gilbert, 128). In his famous books *Nation and Narration* (1990) and *The Location of Culture* (1994) used psychoanalysis and semiotics to explore the ‘spaces’ created by dominant social formations in the works of Morrison, Gordimer etc.

Postcolonial Authors Some of the most prominent authors of Postcolonial literatures are Chinua Achebe, J. M. Coetzee, Franz Fanon, Michael Ondaatje, Salman Rushdie, Li-Young Li, Derek Walcott and Jamaica Kincaid,, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak etc. “The four names appear again and again as thinkers who have shaped postcolonial theory: Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak” (Innes, 5). Though all these writers had different lands, nationalities and social backgrounds, they could all create their own distinction in producing wonderful works of literature of which many would certainly come under the label ‘Postcolonial literature. Chinua Achebe of Nigeria with his first novel, *The Things Fall Apart* (1958) writes about the tensions between the people and the values of the native Igbo community and the Christian colonizers.

He worked in many universities in Nigeria and America for more than three decades. In addition to his fictional writings, he wrote some non-fiction collection of essays *Home and Exile* (2000). Achebe got the Man Booker International Prize in 2007 for his literary merit so as J. M. Coetzee who was apartheid writer. J. M. Coetzee developed vigorous anti-imperialist attitudes as a white writer living in South Africa for the apartheid. In most of his novels, he represented his own alienation from his fellow Africans. *The Life and Times of Michael K* is an award winning novel set in Cape Town with a protagonist Michael K who is a gardener. His novels *Research Journal of English Language and Literature* are allegorical and accentuating the everlasting nature of human vindictiveness. Coetzee received his second Booker Prize for his *Disgrace* (1999).

Though he got numerous awards, the highest one is Nobel Prize in literature in 2003. Another notable writer in Postcolonial literature, Frantz Fanon who was interested in the emotional effects of colonization and racism on blacks, his most known work *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961 and become a leading critic of colonial power and influenced aggressive revolution. Moreover he had significant influence on many thinkers such as Homi Bhabha, Jean Paul Sartre, and Edward Said. Edward “ Said is concerned with the ways in which knowledge is governed and owned by Europeans to reinforce power, and to exclude or dismiss the knowledge which natives might claim to have” (Innes, 9). Michael Ondaatje is a novelist, critic, poet born in Sri Lanka and moved to London with his mother.

He is best known for his Booker Prize winning novel the English Patient which features the interactions of characters of various nationalities during the last days of WWII. Salman Rushdie is an Indian postcolonial writer who wanted to become a writer from his childhood. His most successful and Booker Prize winning novel is *Midnight's Children* which got him international reputation. By sketching Indian history from 1910 to 1976 he weaved personal experiences with history. His *The Satanic Verses* got banned and caused a Muslims protest throughout the world termed the book blasphemous. He had to face troubles in the name of ‘fatwa’ for the novel *The Satanic Verses*. In most of his writings, Rushdie explores the intersections of history, religion, culture and identity. On par with male writers in postcolonial literature, there are notable female writers such as Jamaica Kincaid, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak have contributed in a greater extent. Kincaid’s novel *A Small Place* describes about Antigua.

Mostly she wrote about women’s experiences with other women in addition to the effects of patriarchy and colonialism women’s own image. Another female writer and one of the prominent theorists of postcolonial literary theory is Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak who translated Derrida’s *Of*

Grammatology in to English along with its preface. She gave numerous interviews on her critical opinions about postcolonial literature. Postcolonialism literature in English One of the most influential novels of Postcolonialism is *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, explores the interaction between traditional African society and British colonizers. In this novel the character Okonkwo struggles to understand and cope up with the changes got from Christianity and British control. His novel examines various situations occurred after the postindependence fictional West African village. Achebe conveyed through his novels how the British legacies continue to weaken possibility of uniting the country.

South African novelist and Booker Prize winner J. M. Coetzee explores the themes of crime, revenge, land rights and racial justice post-apartheid South Africa. The plot of the novel strongly connected with the character David Lurie was expelled from for sexual harassment. Salman Rushdie's most popular novel *Midnight's Children* intertwines personal events into the history of India. The narrator in the novel is Saleem Sinai. Author used many devices like Magic Realism, Hindu story telling etc. In addition Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* surveys lots of postcolonial themes such as intersections between national and individual identity which caused in consciousness.

It is set in a country house in Florence and describes the lives of a young woman and three men from various countries including a badly burnt English patient dying in a room. Some significant writers in postcolonial literature are like Ngugu wa Thiongo, Edwidge Danticat Leslie Marmon Silko, Jamaica Kincaid including Li-Young Lee contributed considerably. Ngugi's *Decolonizing the Mind* is a kind of multiple type genre and it describes various traditions of his people. It also presents how British education system tried to destroy the local culture and its language Gikuyu. Silko in his novel *Ceremony* celebrates various traditions and myths of the Laguna Pueblo and influence of

white relation on local culture. It also shows how Native Americans hold a special position in postcolonial discourse.

In addition to many male postcolonial writers whose works have been examined just Research Journal of English Language and Literature before, there are some renowned female novelists also contributed, especially Jamaica Kincaid with her famous novel *Small Place* is one of the postcolonial discourse with which she draws on her personal experience of living in British colony of Antigua. Kincaid expresses her contempt for the British ways for colonized. In this novel she focuses on the English Educational system which attempted to turn natives into English. Further she points out that the native people like to adopt the worst of foreign culture and pay no attention to the best.¹

Another novelist Edwidge Danticat from Haiti is the writer of the novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. Her novel presents many themes like migration, sexuality, gender and history as they are the most common postcolonial themes. In this novel the protagonist Sophie struggles to get an identity out of desperate cultures and languages such as French, English to adapt to American ways after she reaches Brooklyn, New York. Danticat become a leading female voice of postcolonial literature. The Central ideas in Postcolonial literature Postcolonial has many common motifs and themes like 'cultural dominance' and 'Racism', 'quest for identity', 'racial discrimination', 'inequality', 'hybridity' along with some peculiar presentation styles. Most of the postcolonial writers reflected and demonstrated many thematic concepts which are quite connected with both 'colonizer' and 'colonized'.

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sometimes referred to as “Minority Studies,” has an obvious historical relationship with “Postcolonial Criticism” in that Euro-American imperialism and colonization in the last four centuries, whether external (empire) or internal (slavery) has been directed at recognizable ethnic groups: African and African-American, Chinese, the subaltern peoples of India, Irish, Latino, Native American, and Philipino, among others. “Ethnic Studies” concerns itself generally with art and literature produced by identifiable ethnic groups either marginalized or in a subordinate position to a dominant culture. “Postcolonial Criticism” investigates the relationships between colonizers and colonized in the period postcolonization.

Though the two fields are increasingly finding points of intersection—the work of bell hooks, for example—and are both activist intellectual enterprises, “Ethnic Studies and “Postcolonial Criticism” have significant differences in

their history and ideas. “Ethnic Studies” has had a considerable impact on literary studies in the United States and Britain. In W.E.B. Dubois, we find an early attempt to theorize the position of African Americans within dominant white culture through his concept of “double consciousness,” a dual identity including both “American” and “Negro.”

Dubois and theorists after him seek an understanding of how that double experience both creates identity and reveals itself in culture. Afro-Caribbean and African writers—Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Chinua Achebe—have made significant early contributions to the theory and practice of ethnic criticism that explores the traditions, sometimes suppressed or underground, of ethnic literary activity while providing a critique of representations of ethnic identity as found within the majority culture.

Ethnic and minority literary theory emphasizes the relationship of cultural identity to individual identity in historical circumstances of overt racial oppression. More recently, scholars and writers such as Henry Louis Gates, Toni Morrison, and Kwame Anthony Appiah have brought attention to the problems inherent in applying theoretical models derived from Euro-centric paradigms (that is, structures of thought) to minority works of literature while at the same time exploring new interpretive strategies for understanding the vernacular (common speech) traditions of racial groups that have been historically marginalized by dominant cultures.

Though not the first writer to explore the historical condition of postcolonialism, the Palestinian literary theorist Edward Said’s book *Orientalism* is generally regarded as having inaugurated the field of explicitly “Postcolonial Criticism” in the West. Said argues that the concept of “the Orient” was produced by the “imaginative geography” of Western scholarship and has been instrumental in the colonization and domination of non-Western

societies. “Postcolonial” theory reverses the historical center/margin direction of cultural inquiry: critiques of the metropolis and capital now emanate from the former colonies.

Moreover, theorists like Homi K. Bhabha have questioned the binary thought that produces the dichotomies—center/margin, white/black, and colonizer/colonized—by which colonial practices are justified. The work of Gayatri C. Spivak has focused attention on the question of who speaks for the colonial “Other” and the relation of the ownership of discourse and representation to the development of the postcolonial subjectivity.

Like feminist and ethnic theory, “Postcolonial Criticism” pursues not merely the inclusion of the marginalized literature of colonial peoples into the dominant canon and discourse. “Postcolonial Criticism” offers a fundamental critique of the ideology of colonial domination and at the same time seeks to undo the “imaginative geography” of Orientalist thought that produced conceptual as well as economic divides between West and East, civilized and uncivilized, First and Third Worlds. In this respect, “Postcolonial Criticism” is activist and adversarial in its basic aims. Postcolonial theory has brought fresh perspectives to the role of colonial peoples—their wealth, labor, and culture—in the development of modern European nation states. While “Postcolonial Criticism” emerged in the historical moment following the collapse of the modern colonial empires, the increasing globalization of culture, including the neocolonialism of multinational capitalism, suggests a continued relevance for this field of inquiry.

Every Literary text is constructed with language. Therefore, it is imperative to determine how a particular writer has utilized the potentials of language to negotiate meaning(s) for his text. This thesis is anchored on the premise that, as Brumfit and Carter (1986) put it, we need to show "how what is said is said and how meanings are made" within the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic ambience of the text.

As a bilingual and bicultural text, the structure of language use in Okara's *The Voice* "calls attention to itself" (Murakarovsky, 1964:58), in the sense that the author manipulates and adapts the rhythm, register, syntax and semantics of the English Language to the linguistic and cultural nuances of his native ijaw Language. Specifically, the peculiarity of Okara's linguistic style in the text under study is a product of, or direct response to, the lingering problem of language in African literature.

This problem borders on whether or not the colonial linguistic media (i.e. Portuguese, English, French etc), would be able to adequately and authentically express the socio-cultural and linguistic realities of the African continent. Scott (1990) refers to it as:the long-standing debate among critics of African literature over the relation between African authors and the colonial linguistic legacy. This debate which has dominated Africa literature in the past fifty years (Osundare, 2004), stems from the recognition among African scholars/writers of the centrality of language to literature, and the close connection between political independence and cultural emancipation. As literary works are cultural artifacts, the basic thinking is that, the use of colonial languages in African literature is a willing perpetuation of imperialism. Significantly, there has been a sustained polarity of opinion about the appropriate attitude the African writer should adopt to this phenomenon.

These range from the fervidly nationalist to the stridently compromising. Osundare (2004) identifies three "attitudes" viz: (i) accomodationist, (ii)

gradualist, and (iii) radicalist. According to this scholar, the first group (i.e. accommodationist), which has as its chief promoter, Leopold Sedar Senghor of Senegal, favours an outright use of imperialist languages; while the "gradualists" are "the dwellers of the middle of the road", prominent among whom is Ali Mazrui who advocates a de-Anglicization and reAfricanization of the English language, to authentically convey Africa's literary sensibilities. The third group, on the other hand, is the "radicalist" composed of writers who call for an immediate adoption of indigenous African languages as the media of literary expression.

Obi Wali and Ngugi Wa Thiongo are proponents and exponents of this attitude. Instructively, majority of African writers belong to the "gradualist" group identified above (i.e. indigenizing the colonial language). The Special Issue on Social Science Research © Centre for Promoting Ideas, USA www.ijhssnet.com 203 Gabriel Okara, Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, Elechi Amadi, J.P. Clark-Bekederemo, Kofi Awoonor, etc. all fall into this category. In the main, this linguistic constraint would have informed the device of "transliteration" adopted in Okara's *The Voice*.

On his part, Ushie (2001), summarizes some of the major positions canvassed by scholars on the problem of language in African literature as follows: a) Those who, following Obi Wali, have continued to advocate the use of African indigenous languages, e.g. Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Immeh Ikiddeh. b) Those who have followed the sophisticated formal English expression e.g. Okigbo, Soyinka, Dennis Brutus, J.P. Clark-Bekederemo, e.t.c. c) Those who, following Janheiz Jahn, have suggested that European languages, for instance, English, be used in such a way that languages bear the African cultural experience while remaining intelligible internationally.

Chinua Achebe's novels, especially *Things Fall Apart* and *Arrow of God*, and the poetry of Okot P „Bitek and Kofi Awoonor illustrate this category. d)

Those who advocate transliteration as a way of keeping intact African cultural heritage while using foreign words, e.g. Gabriel Okara, AS illustrated in his novel, *The Voice* e) Those who may be described as following a plural code e.g. Ken Saro Wiwa (whose literary oeuvre is a pot-pourri of linguistic codes with which he has experimented in his work.

His novel, *Sozaboy*, for instance, comes in Nigerian pidgin English; his poetry collection *Songs in a Time of war*, is in both Nigerian “Standard” English and in Nigerian pidgin English; while several of his biographical works are in sophisticated Nigerian English, just as his posthumously published novel. Generally, it is germane to note that African scholars who advocate the use of indigenous languages are goaded on by nationalist sentiments, while their counterparts who favour colonial languages place a high premium on the global intelligibility and outreach of a work of art. Bilingualism and African Literature We have established Gabriel Okara's text as a bilingual text.

It is, therefore, pertinent to shed some light on the term “bilingualism”, in relation to African literature. Bloomfield (1933) defines the term as “the native-like control of two languages”. Lambert (1977) sees it as “the existence of two languages in the repertoire of an individual or a speech community”. The significant thread that runs through both definitions is that the term reflects a situation where two languages are used side by side, whether by an individual or a given society. Bilingualism is a product of language contact. Appel and Muystan (1987:1) confirm inter alia: “Language contact inevitably leads to bilingualism.” The inference of this is that, at least, two different languages with distinctive features (i.e. lexical, semantic, phonological and syntactic) must come into contact for bilingualism to occur or manifest. Akindele and Adegbite (1992) identify factors such as colonialism, commerce, conquest, annexation and war, etc, as having the potentials to precipitate such language contacts.