Introduction to Postcolonial Literature and Theory – EN2043

Coordinator: Dr Melanie Otto

Week-by-week outline

1 Introduction

**Under Western Eyes**

3 -- E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India*
   -- Jenny Sharpe, ‘The Unspeakable Limits of Rape: Colonial Violence and Counter-Insurgency’, in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*

**Language and Identity**
   -- Margaret Atwood, ‘Death by Landscape’, in *Wilderness Tips* (copies provided on Blackboard)

5 Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart*

**Postcolonial Feminism and Subaltern Knowledge**
6 -- Gayatri C. Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*

7 Study week

8 Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*

**Hybridity and Translation**
9 -- Homi Bhabha, ‘Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition’, in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*
   -- ‘Of Mimicry and Man’, in *The Location of Culture* (copies provided on Blackboard)
   -- ‘Signs Taken for Wonders’, in *The Location of Culture* (copies provided on Blackboard)
Salman Rushdie, *Midnight’s Children*

**Place and Displacement: Settler Colonialism**

-- D E S Maxwell, ‘Landscape and Theme’ (copies provided on Blackboard)
-- Lorenzo Veracini, ‘The Settler-Colonial Situation’ (copies provided on Blackboard)

-- Shaun Tan/John Marsden, *The Rabbits*

**Course texts:**

Laura Chrisman and Patrick Williams (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Harlow: Longman, 1994)

E M Forster, *A Passage to India* (any edition)

Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (any edition)

Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (any edition)


**Further Reading**


Jane Hiddleston, *Understanding Postcolonialism* (Stocksfield: Acumen, 2009)


Ania Loomba, *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* (London: Routledge, 2005)


Introduction
Lecture 1, week 2

Colonies of exploitation
Settler colonies
Mixed colonies

Decolonization
Anne McClintock, ‘The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term Post-colonialism’

Robert Young:
Tricontinental
Bandung Conference (1955)
Tricontinental Conference, Havana (1966)
Amilcar Cabral, Frantz Fanon

Edward Said, ‘Jane Austen and Empire’, Culture and Imperialism

1. [...] postcolonialism involves first of all the argument that the nations of the three non-western continents (Africa, Asia, Latin America) are largely in a situation of subordination to Europe and North America, and in a position of economic inequality” (Robert Young, Post-colonialism: A Very Short Introduction (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) p. 4)

2. [Postcolonialism] means looking from the other side of the photograph, experiencing how differently things look when you live in Baghdad or Benin rather than Berlin or Boston, and understanding why. It means realizing that when western people look at the non-western world what they see is often more a mirror image of themselves and their own assumptions than the reality of what is really there […]. (Robert Young. p.2).

3. We use the term “post-colonial” […] 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. (Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures (London/New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 2)
4. So the literatures of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries, and Sri Lanka are all post-colonial literatures. [...] What each of these literatures has in common beyond their special and distinctive regional characteristics is that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre. It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial. (Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, p. 2)

5. What English has given us as a model for poetry [...] is the pentameter [...] as it carries with it a certain kind of experience, which is not the experience of a hurricane. The hurricane does not roar in pentameters. And that’s the problem: how do you get a rhythm which approximates the natural experience, the environmental experience? (Kamau Brathwaite, *History of the Voice: The Development of Nation Language in Anglophone Caribbean Poetry* (London/Port of Spain: New Beacon, 1984), pp. 10)

6. In the counterpoint of Western classical music, various themes play off one another, with only a provisional privilege being given to any particular one; yet in the resulting polyphony, there is concert and order, an organized interplay that derives from the themes, not from the rigorous melodic or formal principle outside the work. In the same way [...] we can read and interpret English novels, for example, whose engagement (usually suppressed for the most part) with the West Indies or India, say, is shaped and perhaps even determined by the specific history of colonization, resistance, and finally native nationalism. At this point alternative narratives or new narratives emerge, and they become institutionalised or discursively stable entities. (Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), pp. 59-60)

7. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two
warring ideals in one dark body [...]. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, - this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the old selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American. (W.E.B. DuBois, The Souls of Black Folk, 1903, in The Norton Anthology of African American Literature, ed. by Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nelly Y. McKay (New York/London: W W Norton & Company, 1997), p. 615)

8. One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word ‘alien’, yet English is not really an alien language to us, it is the language of our intellectual make-up – like Sanskrit or Persian was before - but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. (Raja Rao, Kanthapura, 1938 (Delhi: Hind Pocket Books, Orient Paperbacks [no date]))

9. The actual physical borderland that I’m dealing with in this book is the Texas-U.S Southwest/Mexican border. The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the Southwest. In fact, The Borderlands are physically present wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. (Gloria Anzaldúa, Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, 1987, second edition, introd. by Sonia Saldívar-Hull (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999), preface).

10. [Diasporic literatures include] works produced by globally dispersed minority communities that have common ancestral homelands. (Bruce King (ed.), New National and Post-Colonial Literatures, p. 214).
11 The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined, not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of “identity” which lives in and through, not despite, difference; by **hybridity**. (Stuart Hall, ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora’, in Patrick Williams & Laura Chrisman (eds.), Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader, pp. 401-402)

12. I have settled on the image of ships in motion across the spaces between Europe, America, Africa, and the Caribbean as a central organising symbol for this enterprise and as my starting point. The image of the ship – a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion – is especially important for historical and theoretical reasons [...] . Ships immediately focus attention on the middle passage, on the various projects for redemptive return to an African homeland, on the circulation of ideas and activists as well as the movement of key cultural and political artefacts: tracts, books, gramophone records, and choirs. (Paul Gilroy, The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (London/New York: Verso, 1993), p. 4)

13. **1495: Salamanca**

**The First Word from America**

Elio Antonio de Nebrija, language scholar, publishes here his “Spanish-Latin Vocabulary.” The dictionary included the first Americanism of the Castilian language:

*Canoa: Boat made from a single timber.*

The word comes from the Antilles. These boats without sails, made of the trunk of a ceiba tree, welcomed Christopher Columbus. Out from the islands, paddling canoes, came the men with long black hair and bodies tattooed with vermilion symbols. They approached the caravels, offered fresh water, and exchanged gold for the kind of little tin bells that sell for a copper in Castile. (Eduardo Galeano, Memory of Fire, trans. By Cedric Belfrage (London: Quartet Books, 1995), p. 68)