Postcolonialism Study Guide

Postcolonialism

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Introduction

The term "Postcolonialism" refers broadly to the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture, and human identity itself are represented in the modern era, after many colonized countries gained their independence. However, some critics use the term to refer to *all* culture and cultural products influenced by imperialism from the moment of colonization until today. Postcolonial literature seeks to describe the interactions between European nations and the peoples they colonized. By the middle of the twentieth century, the vast majority of the world was under the control of European countries. At one time, Great Britain, for example, ruled almost 50 percent of the world. During the twentieth century, countries such as India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Canada, and Australia won independence from their European colonizers. The literature and art produced in these countries after independence has become the object of "Postcolonial Studies," a term coined in and for academia, initially in British universities. This field gained prominence in the 1970s and has been developing ever since. Palestinian-American scholar Edward Said's critique of Western representations of the Eastern culture in his 1978 book, *Orientalism*, is a seminal text for postcolonial studies and has spawned a host of theories on the subject. However, as the currency of the term "postcolonial" has gained wider use, its meaning has also expanded. Some consider the United States itself a postcolonial country because of its former status as a territory of Great Britain, but it is generally studied for its colonizing rather than its colonized attributes. In another vein, Canada and Australia, though former colonies of Britain, are often placed in a separate category because of their status as "settler" countries and because of their continuing loyalty to their colonizer. Some of the major voices and works of postcolonial literature include Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* (1981), Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958), Michael Ondaatje's novel *The English Patient* (1992), Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988), Isabelle Allende's *The House of the Spirits* (1982), J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Disgrace* (1990), Derek Walcott's *Omeros* (1990), and Eavan Boland's *Outside History: Selected Poems, 1980-1990*.

Themes

Racism

Racial discrimination is a theme that runs throughout postcolonial discourse, as white Europeans consistently emphasized their superiority over darker-skinned people. This was most evident in South Africa, whose policy of apartheid was institutionalized in national laws. These laws included the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act, which prohibited sexual intercourse and marriage between whites and blacks. The Groups Areas Act limited black access into areas reserved for whites. The only blacks permitted in these areas were workers, who first had to apply for state permission. The Population Registration Act categorized Africans into racial groups, which were based upon a person's appearance, education, and manners. Perhaps the most insidious of the apartheid laws were the Bantu Authorities Act and the Abolition of Passes and Coordination of Documents Act. The former relegated all Africans to their native lands and laid the groundwork for the denationalization of black and colored Africans. The latter required all Africans to carry identity papers containing a photograph, fingerprints, and work history. Strict penalties were meted out if a person could not produce a passbook. The fiction of Nadine Gordimer and Coetzee, both white South Africans, shows how apartheid has devastated the country morally, emotionally, and economically. Coetzee's characters are often privileged whites who are forced to acknowledge the material and psychological harm that apartheid has caused black Africans. Racism is a primary theme in the writing of Walcott, Kincaid, Fanon, and Danticat, as well.

Language

In occupied countries, colonizers often controlled their subjects through imposing their language upon them and forbidding them to speak their own. Educational systems enforced this. Postcolonial writers address the issue of language in various ways. Some, like Danticat and Walcott, mix the language(s) imposed on them with their indigenous language, creating a hybrid tongue that underscores the fractured nature of the colonized mind. Others, such as Ngugi, turned away from English to write exclusively in Gikuyu. Ngugi argues that continued use of English only helps Africans to forget their own precolonial past. Yet another approach to language is Silko's who, in *Ceremony*, intersperses a conventional Anglophone narrative with Indian folk legends to create a novel that underscores how Native Americans have to create a coherent whole out of disparate ways of seeing, describing, and being in the world. Some critics worry that the postcolonial works studied in universities are chosen for their postmodern style, rather than for the ways in which they describe the real-world oppression of people from former colonies.

Identity

In their desire to reclaim a past that had been taken from them, postcolonial writers often address the question of identity, either implicitly or explicitly in their work. However, doing so often requires using the language of the colonizers, which in itself complicates the drive to become the person they thought they were or should have become. The inability to return to a past now gone forever is a consequence of the notion of hybridity. Hybridity refers to the admixture of practices and signs from the colonizing and colonized cultures; it is a central fact of the postcolonial experience and is evident in almost all postcolonial texts. Colonizers are as much a part of the colonized as the colonized are of the colonizers. This cross-fertilization of cultures can be positive as well as dangerous, and writers often show an ambivalent attitude towards the phenomenon.

Hybridity challenges the idea that a person or a country has any essential "uncontaminated" or unchanging identity and that the desire to reclaim such an identity is rooted in an impossible nostalgia. This idea raises issues such as whether or not a colonized people can avoid adopting colonists' behavior and attitudes. Kincaid describes this phenomenon in *A Small Place*, showing how Antiguans have become "Anglicized" in their thinking. The idea of hybridity also challenges representations of colonized people, seen in descriptions such as "black consciousness," or "Indian soul," and the notion that "they" are all the same. Totalizing descriptions like these deny the difference among colonized people, as well as reinforce the constructed differences between them and their colonizers. Danticat's Sophie, for example, struggles to understand her own identity in the welter of language and culture into which she was born and through which she moves. Her migration to New York City further complicates her understanding of who she is, as she must now also come to grips with a diasporic Haitian culture, which is itself in flux.

Style

Point of View

Point of view refers to the eyes and sensibility through which a story is told or information is presented. Postcolonial literature challenges status quo Western points of view through using narrators who represent previously silenced or oppressed people. Since much literature from colonized countries was written from the colonizers'—usually male—point of view, it's not surprising that much postcolonial literature employs narrators who themselves are doubly oppressed, being both colonized by "outsiders" and being women. Silko, Danticat, Boland, and numerous other postcolonial writers express the particular difficulties women from colonized countries face, as they battle patriarchal attitudes and institutions of their oppressors as well as from their own people.

Narration

Narration refers to how a series of events is told. The mode of narration is deeply intertwined with an author's style and subject matter. Some postcolonial novels are narrated in a relatively straightforward manner in which events are recounted chronologically. However, many postcolonial works adopt a postmodern approach to storytelling. Postmodern narration, in this sense, refers to the use of different points of view, multiple narrators, and blending of styles and genres to describe events and action. Rushdie employs a kind of postmodern narration in *Midnight's Children*, as does Danticat in *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and Silko in *Ceremony*. Critics often use "Postmodernism" to refer to literature and art produced after World War II that take literary techniques to an extreme. Heavily affected by the brutality of Nazi atrocities during the war and the specter of nuclear holocaust, much postmodern literature shows an extreme pessimism of the human condition. With its hyper self-reflexivity, its often fractured and disjointed relaying of action, and its play on language, postmodern narration makes sense for postcolonial writers, many of whom are attempting to subvert colonial representations of their world and traditions.

Setting

Setting refers to time, place, and culture in which the action of a story takes place. Features include geographic location, characters' physical and mental environments, cultural attitudes, or the historical time of the action. The setting for postcolonial literature varies from country to country, writer to writer, although a good many of the novels are set *after* the countries have declared their independence from Great Britain. Kincaid's *A Small Place*, for example, chronicles life after Antigua won the right to self-governance, and Coetzee's *Disgrace* is set in a post-apartheid South Africa, when the power relations between whites and blacks are shifting.

Historical Context

Britain's loss of empire in the wake of World War II is arguably the single largest defining factor in the shaping of world politics in the last fifty years. Between 1945 and 1985, Britain lost almost all of its fifty formal dependencies in Africa, the Caribbean, the Mediterranean, the Pacific, South- East Asia, and the Far East and withdrew from a number of countries in the Persian Gulf over which it exerted considerable influence. In the preceding three centuries, Britain had colonized numerous countries and lands, while competing for resources and markets with Holland, Spain, and France, each of which had its own colonies and territories. In the seventeenth century, Britain had gained control over the eastern coast of North America, eastern Canada, the Caribbean Islands, and parts of Africa, which it used to acquire slaves, and had developed markets in India. The colonization of Ireland was also undertaken in earnest during this century. After the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815, Britain became the leading industrial power in Europe, whose world economic strength was supported by its superior military, especially its navy.

During the nineteenth century, the British Empire tottered. The abolition of slavery by Britain and its empire in the early part of the century and the emphasis on free trade created an unfavorable economic climate for Britain, and its dependencies became more and more of a burden to manage. However, Britain also viewed its imperialistic expansion as a moral responsibility, using Darwin's theories of evolution as a rationale for exerting greater control over India, Africa, and China. British writer Rudyard Kipling referred to this responsibility as "the white man's burden," meaning that it was the God-given duty of the British to civilize and Christianize people who were obviously incapable of governing themselves.

The sheer size of Britain's empire contributed to its downfall, as it simply did not have the resources— militarily, economically, or morally—to stem the rise of nationalist movements in its territories. After World War I, the size of the British Empire expanded even farther to include territories "won" from Germany and Turkey during the war, such as Egypt, for whom they became the "trustee." In 1931, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and the Irish Free State formed the "Commonwealth of Nations," which backed Britain during World War II. After World War II, nationalist movements succeeded in ousting European colonizers from their countries. Numerous countries won independence from Britain, including India and Pakistan (1947), Ireland (1949), Egypt (1951), Kenya (1963), and numerous others. French colonies such as Chad, Benin, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Central African Republic, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Togo, Zaire, Somalia, Congo, Gabon, and Cameroon also declared independence in 1960, and Mozambique and Angola declared their independence from Portugal in 1975. Britain, however, is not ready to cede all of its territories, as evidenced by their battle for the Falkland Islands, a group of islands in the south Atlantic about three hundred miles east of the Argentinean coast. Although Argentina has claimed the islands since the early 1900s, Britain has occupied and administered the islands since 1833, rejecting Argentina's claims. In 1982, the two countries went to war over the Falklands, which has a total population of about 2,000

people. Britain used its superior naval power to defeat Argentina, but not before Argentina lost 655 men and Britain 236.

In the last decade, another colonial empire has crumbled, this one more rapidly than the British Empire. Former Russian colonies, once a part of the United Soviet Socialists Republic, declared their independence from Russia. In 1990, the Congress of Deputies of Russia adopted the Declaration of Independence, and in 1991, Moldavia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Belarus, Uzbekistan Armenia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan declared independence but joined the Commonwealth of Independent States, a federation created to share resources and to interact on the basis of sovereign equality. Because of the lack of translations and the heavy censorship inside the U.S.S.R., which existed for years, little academic work has been done on the literature from these emerging countries.

Movement Variations

Literary Theory

Postcolonial theorists critically study both colonial texts and texts written after colonialism. One of the primary reasons postcolonial literature has become as popular as it has is due in large part to theorists such as Said, Spivak, Fanon, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Homi Bhabha, and others, who explain the significance of the literature in relation to history, politics, philosophy, and literary traditions and discuss its place in contemporary society. Many of these theorists and critics are themselves from postcolonial countries and so speak with the authority of experience. Said, for example, is Palestinian; Spivak is from Calcutta, India; Fanon is from Martinique, a French colony. In challenging how writers and others have represented colonial subjects, these theorists seek to empower themselves and the literary projects of postcolonialists in their attempts to reshape perceptions and thinking about formerly colonized people and countries. The emergence of postcolonial studies as a field of academic inquiry and the popularity of postcolonial literature in the last thirty years or so is due in no small part to these theorists. The institutionalization of postcolonial studies has also come about at the same historical moment as poststructuralist theory, which challenges fundamental assumptions as to the nature of human identity, history, language, and truth itself.

Film

As countries gained their independence from colonial powers, filmmakers sought to describe the experience of the new countries and the changes wrought by independence upon individuals and their respective states. Deepa Mehta, for example, a Canadian-based Indian director, challenges Indian traditions in films such as *Fire*, *Earth*, and *Water*, (1996-2000), which seek to de-mystify the exoticism of India for foreigners and to interrogate the politics of sexuality in pre- and postcolonial India. Another well-known Indian director, Mira Nair, gained an international reputation with her film *Salaam, Bombay*! (1988), which documents the poverty and hopelessness of Bombay street children. Since then, Nair has directed films exploring racial tensions between immigrants and minorities in the United States. In films such as *Mississippi Masala* (1991) and *The Perez Family* (1993), Nair shows the hopes and aspirations of people from postcolonial countries and what becomes of them when they encounter a different kind of oppression in the country they believed would provide them with new lives. Another Indian director, Shyam Benegal, made films depicting the feudal, colonial, and patriarchal structures undergirding Indian society. For example, his 1996 film, *Making of the Mahatma*, describes the British colonial domain in South Africa, emphasizing the formative development of Gandhi. Other directors who explicitly address postcolonial themes in their films include Farida Ben Lyazid, Ken Loach, Deepa Mehta, Ketan Mehta, Mira Nair, Peter Ormrod, Horace Ove, Satyajit Ray, Mrinal Sen, and Ousmane Sembene.

Music

When colonizers have ruled a country for long periods of time, it is inevitable that their influence would manifest itself in the art and music of the colonized peoples. The hybrid culture of colonies often integrates both native material and material of the occupying forces. Because much of this music transcends national borders and cultural boundaries, it is often referred to as "World Music." In *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Twenty-nine Issues and Concepts*, Bruno Nettl lists three motivating behaviors expressed in the music of postcolonial non- Western countries: the first is "the desire to leave traditional culture intact, survival without change"; the second is "simple incorporation of a society into the Western cultural system"; and the third is "the adoption and adaptation of . . . products of Western culture . . . with an insistence that the core of cultural values will not change greatly and does not match those of the West." Examples of postcolonial music exhibiting cultural hybridity include Aboriginal pop music groups of the 1970s such as Yothu- Yindi, which combined elements of popular music and tribal ritual songs. In *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, Martin Stokes, who writes this kind of music, shows the "restructuring of song texts by incorporating a mixture of ritual symbolism and concern with colonial hegemony." An example of a hybrid musical form that reflects the migration of peoples across national borders is Indian Ravi Shankar's blending of classical Indian music with Western sounds. Shankar became an international celebrity when he began performing with the Beatles' George Harrison in the 1960s. One album, called *Soundz of the Asian Underground*, features ambient music and hip hop songs played by Asian musicians with instruments native to their own culture.

Representative Authors

J. M. Coetzee (1940-)

John Michael Coetzee was born on February 9, 1940, in South Africa. His father, a government worker who lost his job because he disagreed with South Africa's apartheid policies, was an early influence in the writer's life. Coetzee took a bachelor of arts degree in 1960 from the University of Cape Town and a master of fine arts degree in 1963. In 1969, he received his Ph.D. in English from the University of Texas at Austin. He has worked in academia for most of his adult life, holding teaching positions at the University of Cape Town, the State University of New York in Buffalo, Johns Hopkins University, and Harvard University. Coetzee is currently professor of general literature at the University of Cape Town.

As a white writer living in South Africa during apartheid, Coetzee developed powerful anti-imperialist feelings. His novels, deeply influenced by postmodern ideas of representation and language, illustrate the insidious ways in which dominant groups seek to impose their culture and thinking on conquered peoples. For example, his first novel, *Dusklands* (1974), tells two distinct but parallel stories: one of the workings of the United States State Department during the Vietnam war and the other Jacobus Coetzee's conquest of South Africa in the 1760s. Coetzee's own alienation from his fellow Afrikaners is evident in his novels, most of which focus on the thoughts and actions of a single character put in an untenable situation. Coetzee's Booker Prize-winning novel, *The Life and Times of Michael K* (1984), set in racially divided Cape Town, tells the story of gardener Michael K who, after taking his dying mother to the farm on which she was raised, lives happily until he is accused by the government of aiding guerillas. Coetzee's early novels, however, are not polemical. Rather, they are allegorical, underscoring the timeless nature of human cruelty.

Coetzee's other novels include *From the Heart of the Country* (1977), *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1982), *Foe* (1987), *Age of Iron* (1990), *The Master of Petersburg* (1994), and *Disgrace* (1999), for which he received his second Booker Prize. In addition to the Booker Prizes, Coetzee has been awarded the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the Faber Memorial Award in 1980, the Jerusalem Prize in 1987, and the Mondello Prize in 1994. Coetzee is also a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. In addition to his novels, Coetzee has written collections of essays and edited and translated a number of other books. His memoir, *Boyhood: Scenes from Provincial Life* was published in 1997.

Frantz Fanon (1925-1961)

Frantz Fanon was born July 20, 1925, in the French colony of Martinique and left in 1943 to fight with the Free French in World War II. A psychiatrist, Fanon was interested in the emotional effects of racism and colonization on blacks. Fanon considered himself

French, but his experience as a black man in France caused him to rethink his ideas about culture and identity. In 1952, he published *Black Skin, White Masks*, originally titled "An Essay for the Disalienation of Blacks." With the publication of *The Wretched of the Earth* in 1961, Fanon established himself as a leading critic of colonial power and a voice for violent revolution. As head of the psychiatry department at Blida-Joinville Hospital in Algeria in 1953, Fanon saw firsthand the kind of psychological damage done to the tortured and the torturers during the Algerian war for independence. Fanon resigned his post and worked openly with the Algerian independence movement in Tunisia. He was an important influence on thinkers such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Homi Bhabha, and Edward Said. Fanon died December 6, 1961, of leukemia at the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, where he had sought treatment.

Jamaica Kincaid (1949-)

Born Elaine Potter Richardson on the island of Antigua, May 25, 1949, Jamaica Kincaid was educated in the British school system of the colony. In 1967, Antigua achieved self-governance, and in 1981 it became an independent country of the Commonwealth. Kincaid moved to New York City, where she studied photography at the New York School for Social Research and began writing for magazines including *Ingenue* and *The New Yorker*. Much of her writing displays her disdain for all things English and the inability of native Antiguans to resist British cultural imperialism. In her book about Antigua, *A Small Place* (1988), Kincaid describes the island as follows:

Antigua is a small place, a small island . . . . It was
settled by Christopher Columbus in 1493. Not too
long after, it was settled by human rubbish from Europe,
who used enslaved but noble and exalted human
beings from Africa . . . . to satisfy their desire
for wealth and power, to feel better about their own
miserable existence, so that they could be less lonely
and empty□a European disease.

In addition to *A Small Place*, Kincaid has published a number of novels including *Annie John* (1986); *At the Bottom of the River* (1992); *The Autobiography of My Mother* (1996); *Lucy*; (1990); *My Brother* (1997); and, with Eric Fischl, *Annie, Gwen, Lilly, Pam and Tulip* (1986). Invariably, Kincaid writes about women's experiences with other women and the effects of colonialism and patriarchy on women's self-image.

Li-Young Lee (1957-)

Li-Young Lee is one of the leading poetic voices of the Chinese diaspora writing in America. A profound sense of loss and nostalgia and a questing for and questioning of one's national or ethnic identity often characterize diasporic writing. Lee was born August 19, 1957, in Jakarta, Indonesia, to Richard K. Y. Lee and Joice Yuan Jiaying, the granddaughter of China's provisional president, Yuan Shikai, elected in 1912 during the

country's transition from monarchy to republic. Before moving to Indonesia, Lee's father was China communist leader Mao Zedong's personal physician. In 1959, the Lees left Indonesia after President Sukarno, for whom Lee's father had been a medical advisor, began openly persecuting the country's Chinese population. After wandering through the Far East for five years, the family immigrated to the United States, settling in Pennsylvania. With publication of his first collection of poems, *Rose*, in 1986, Lee garnered widespread attention from critics, who were moved by the mix of tenderness, fear, and longing in his portraits of his family, especially his father. *Rose*, for which Lee received New York University's Delmore Schwartz Memorial Poetry Award, was followed in 1990 by *The City in Which I Love You*, which was the 1990 Lamont poetry selection of the Academy of American Poets. In addition to the two titles mentioned above, Lee has written a critically acclaimed memoir, *The Winged Seed* (1995), which reads like an extended prose poem. His most recent collection of poems is *The Book of My Nights* (2001).

Michael Ondaatje (1943-)

Born on September 12, 1943, in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), to Mervyn Ondaatje and Doris Gratiaen, Michael Ondaatje was educated at St. Thomas College in Colombo and Dulwich College in London, where he moved with his mother. Between 1962 and 1964, Ondaatje attended Bishop's University in Lennoxville, Quebec, and eventually took his bachelor of arts degree at the University of Toronto in 1965. In 1967, he received an master of fine arts degree from Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Ondaatje taught at the University of Western Ontario, London, between 1967 and 1971, and has been on the English faculty at Glendon College, York University in Toronto, Ontario, since 1971.

A novelist, critic, and poet, Ondaatje is best known for his 1992 novel, *The English Patient*, which details the interactions of characters of various nationalities during the last days of World War II. The novel explores the relationships between past and present, individual and national identity, and how those relationships shape a person's idea of "home." The novel was adapted into an internationally acclaimed film in 1996. Ondaatje has received a number of awards for his writing, including the Ralph Gustafson Award, 1965; the Epstein Award, 1966; and the President's Medal from the University of Ontario in 1967; and the Canadian Governor-General's Award for Literature in 1971 and again in 1980. In 1980, he was awarded the Canada-Australia Prize, and in 1992 he was presented with the Booker Prize for *The English Patient*. Ondaatje's most recent work is the novel *Anil's Ghost*, which is set in Sri Lanka, in the middle of the island country's violent civil war.

Salman Rushdie (1947-)

Born into a prosperous Muslim family in Bombay, India, on June 19, 1947, Ahmed Salman Rushdie was raised in a liberal atmosphere in which education was valued. His parents, Anis Ahmed Rushdie, a Cambridge-educated businessman, and his mother,

Negin, a teacher from Aligarh, India, migrated from Kashmir before Rushdie was born. Rushdie grew up reading Western comic books and watching Disney movies as well as films made in Bombay. By his tenth birthday, he knew he wanted to be a writer. Rushdie attended Rugby in England at age thirteen and in 1965 enrolled in King's College, Cambridge. In 1968, he graduated with a master of fine arts degree in history. After graduation, Rushdie moved to Karachi, Pakistan, to join his family, who had moved there in 1964.

In Karachi, Rushdie wrote advertising copy by day and worked on his fiction at night. His first major success as a writer was his novel, *Midnight's Children*, which won the prestigious Booker Prize in 1981 and brought Rushdie international fame. Weaving personal experience with history, Rushdie traces Indian history from 1910 until 1976. His 1983 novel, *Shame*, a satire of the Pakistani elite, was short-listed for the Booker Prize in 1984. In 1988, Rushdie published his most well-known work, *The Satanic Verses*. Calling the book "blasphemous," many governments banned the novel, and Muslims throughout the world protested. Ayatollah Khomeini, Iran's spiritual leader, declared a judicial decree, known as a fatwa, sentencing Rushdie to death. Rushdie immediately went into hiding. In 1998, the Iranian government withdrew the fatwa against Rushdie. Rushdie has continued to write, exploring the intersections of history, culture, religion, and identity. In 1990, he published *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* and, in 1994, *East, West*, a collection of his short stories. His most recent fiction includes *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1991) and the novel *Fury* (2000).

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1942-)

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is one of the leading theorists of postcolonial literary theory. Born February 24, 1942, in Calcutta, West Bengal, Spivak took a bachelor of arts degree in English from the University of Calcutta and then left India for graduate work at Cornell University, from which she received both her master's degree and Ph.D. in comparative literature. Spivak's dissertation director was Paul de Man, one of the leading scholars of deconstructionist theory. Spivak's academic career was launched after she translated Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1976) into English and wrote its preface. In addition to her work on Derrida, Spivak has authored a number of critical texts and edited numerous collections of essays including *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (1987); *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (1993); and, most recently, *A Critique of Post-Colonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (1999). Spivak has given numerous interviews on her thinking about Postcolonialism and teaching. These interviews are more accessible than her own writing, which her critics often call "unreadable."

Derek Walcott (1930-)

Born January 23, 1930, on St. Lucia, a former British colony of the Windward Islands in the Lesser Antilles, Derek Walcott was educated in the British school system but lived the life of an impoverished colonial. The son of an English father and an African mother,

Walcott's mixed racial heritage provides him with a unique understanding of postcolonial culture. Already a practicing poet, Walcott began writing drama after graduating from the University College of the West Indies. Walcott's writing grafts Caribbean, African, and Latino sources onto European traditions of poetry and drama to elegantly express the complexities of the postcolonial condition. Indeed, critics have sometimes faulted him for relying *too* much on Western literary traditions. Walcott's themes include the injustices of racism, colonial oppression, and the search for a coherent and stable identity and past. More recently, Walcott, who has held a teaching appointment at Boston University since 1981, has begun to explore the theme of exile in his writing. When the Swedish Academy awarded him the Nobel Prize in 1992, it noted Walcott's contributions to Caribbean theater and praised his book-length poem, *Omeros* (1990), which retells Homer's *Odyssey* from a Caribbean perspective, using native characters to explore events in colonial history. Walcott's numerous collections of poetry include *The Castaway, and Other Poems* (1965), *The Bounty* (1997), and *Tiepolo's Hound* (2000). A few of his best-known plays include *Henri Christophe: A Chronicle in Seven Scenes* (1950), *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1967), and *Viva Detroit* (1990).

Representative Works

Breath, Eyes, Memory

In her 1994 novel, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*, Haitian-born Edwidge Danticat examines themes of migration, gender, sexuality, and history, common themes of postcolonial literature. The novel follows the exploits of Sophie in her battles to carve an identity out of disparate languages and cultures, such as Creole, French, and English and to adapt to American ways in the Haitian diaspora after she arrives in Brooklyn, New York. Danticat's emphasis on women's experience makes her a leading younger voice of postcolonial feminism. *Breath, Eyes, Memory* was an Oprah Book Club selection and helped Danticat to be named one of the Best Young American Novelists by *Granta* magazine in 1996.

Ceremony

Leslie Marmon Silko's 1977 novel, *Ceremony*, is widely considered to be one of the most important works of Native-American literature written. Silko's novel celebrates the traditions and myths of the Laguna Pueblo people while examining the influence of white contact on Pueblo storytelling. As a people who continue to live under a form of colonial rule (i.e., the United States) yet who have achieved a degree of autonomy, Native Americans occupy a special place in postcolonial discourse.

Decolonizing the Mind

Kenyan Ngugi wa Thiong'o's 1986 book is part memoir, part treatise, describing the storytelling traditions of his people and the ways in which the British colonial educational system attempted to eradicate Gikuyu language and culture, effectively colonizing the mind of native Kenyans. Ngugi writes: "I believe that my writing in Gikuyu . . . an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples."

Disgrace

J. M. Coetzee's 1999 novel, *Disgrace*, is set in Cape Town, South Africa, and explores the themes of racial justice, crime, revenge, and land rights in post-apartheid South Africa. Apartheid refers to the 317 laws enacted by Dr. D. F. Malan's nationalist party in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These laws legally strengthened already existing racial segregation and economic, political, and social domination by whites. The plot's action revolves around David Lurie, a divorced white university professor expelled from his school for sexual harassment. Shortly after Lurie moves to his lesbian daughter Lucy's country farm, local blacks rape her. The story concerns Lurie's response to that incident. Coetzee received his second Booker Prize for the novel.

The English Patient

Michael Ondaatje's 1992 novel, *The English Patient*, explores many of the primary themes of postcolonial discourse including the intersections between individual and national identity and how the dialogue between the two shape consciousness. The novel is set in a villa in Florence and follows the lives of a young woman and three men, all from different countries, as they revolve around the badly burned English patient who lies dying in an upstairs room. The novel was adapted into an internationally acclaimed film in 1996.

The House of the Spirits

Isabelle Allende's first novel, *The House of Spirits*, published in 1982, tells the history of Chile through female characters. As in many postcolonial novels, Allende stakes out the margins, here represented by women, to critique the center, represented as established patriarchal power. In retelling Chile's history from the position of a historically oppressed group, Allende exposes the immorality and cruelty at the heart of the colonizing authorities. In doing so, she reclaims not only the history of her country but her own personal history as well, as she refuses to play the part of victim any longer.

Midnight's Children

Salman Rushdie's 1981 Booker Awardwinning novel weaves his personal history into the history of India, using a narrator, Saleem Sinai, who was born in 1947, the year of Rushdie's birth and India's independence. Rushdie employs a number of narrative devices, including Hindu story telling, Magic Realism, and a style analogous to the "Bombay talkie," a type of Indian film, to underscore how difficult it is to write history and to show the many opportunities that independence offered the country, many of which have been squandered. *Midnight's Children* secured Rushdie's reputation as a writer of international stature, but Rushdie also offended many Indians for depicting Indira Gandhi, the prime minister of India, as a tyrant. Rushdie revised the novel and apologized. His 1988 novel, *The Satanic Verses*, brought Rushdie even more trouble, as Muslim fundamentalists considered the novel blasphemous of Islam and the prophet Mohammad. The Indian government banned the book, mass protests against it sprung up around the world, and Ayatollah Khomeini, the spiritual leader of the Iranian revolution, issued a *fatwa*, a judicial decree sentencing Rushdie to death.

Outside History: Selected Poems, 1980-1990

In her 1990 poetry collection, *Outside History: Selected Poems, 1980-1990*, Eavan Boland challenges the poetic traditions of England and Ireland, suggesting that Irish women have been doubly oppressed: once by their position as a colony of England and second by their gender. Boland tackles the difficult task of rewriting history so as to give Irish women a voice and a place in the poetic traditions of her own country. Her poetry,

though frequently addressing experiences that many women share, alludes to Irish poetic tradition and mythology.

Rose

Li-Young Lee's first collection of poems, *Rose*, published in 1986, provides a glimpse into the consciousness of the Chinese diaspora. Lee, whose parents emigrated from China to Indonesia and then with their family to America, was born in Jakarta. His poems, though deeply personal and full of family history, show the devastating emotional and psychological effects that forced emigration has on both families and individuals. The atmosphere of "silence" in Lee's poems illustrates the writer's own shame in his inability to speak the language of his new country.

A Small Place

In her 1988 book, *A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid draws on her personal experience of growing up on the British island colony of Antigua to express her contempt for the ways in which British colonialism had destroyed her country. In particular, she focuses on the British educational system and how it attempted to turn Antiguans into English. Kincaid also reserves blame for Antiguans themselves, in their willingness to adopt the worst of British culture and ignore the best. She describes the country both before and after independence, suggesting that in some ways the country has been worse off since it became self-governing.

Things Fall Apart

Chinua Achebe's 1958 novel, *Things Fall Apart*, is set in Africa at the turn of the twentieth century and explores the interaction between traditional African society and British colonialism. The protagonist, Okonkwo, a member of the Ibo tribe, struggles to understand and adjust to the changes brought by British control and Christianity. More than eight million copies of the novel have been sold worldwide, and it has been translated into more than fifty languages. *Things Fall Apart* is also regularly included on syllabi in literature, history, and philosophy classes. In 1959, Achebe was awarded the Margaret Wrong Memorial Prize for the novel. Achebe's 1987 novel, *Anthills of the Savannah*, examines the post-independence condition of a fictional West African country, showing how the legacies of colonialism continue to undermine the possibility for the country to unite.

Critical Overview

In his 1962 book *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon laid the theoretical groundwork for much postcolonial theorizing to come. Fanon condemns African revolutionary programs as insufficient and argues that a new world can come into being only with a violent revolution led by the rural African peasantry. The book develops themes introduced in Fanon's first book, *Black Skin, White Mask* (1952). In this book, Fanon uses his personal experience to show how the relationship between colonized and colonizer is normalized as psychology, resulting in emotional damage to both. A French-speaking native of the French colony of Martinique, Fanon argues that language plays a central role in shaping the consciousness of the colonized people. Fanon's work anticipated studies such as Said's *Orientalism* but has been heavily criticized for its portrayal of black women.

Said's 1978 study, *Orientalism*, one of the foundational texts of postcolonial studies, critiques Western representations of the East, arguing that since the nineteenth century, Western scholars have depicted "Arab" cultures as irrational, anti- Western, primitive, and dishonest. Orientalism, Said claims, is an ideology born of the colonizers' desire to know their subjects to better control them. 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." By showing how historians routinely present their "vision" of the Orient as objective and impartial, Said demonstrates how they deceive themselves just as their writing misrepresents others. Critics agree that Said's study remains one of the most important works of postcolonial theory written.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's writing has focused on the intersections of gender, ethnicity, representations of postcolonial and colonial subjects, and the place from which these representations are often made: the university. In an interview in *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990), Spivak says that she views her job as a postcolonial critic who also teaches as twofold:

to see how the master texts need us in the construction
of their texts without acknowledging that need;
and to explore the differences and similarities between
texts coming from the two sides which are engaged
with the same problem at the same time.

Homi Bhabha's theory and criticism on Postcolonialism investigates the ideas of hybridity and ambivalence in postcolonial discourse, especially as they contribute to constructing national and cultural identities. In his 1990 study, *Nation and Narration* (1990), Bhabha uses a mix of psychoanalysis and semiotics to explore the ways in which Third World nations and nationalities have been constructed through narrative traditions that have also positioned them as inferior to the West. In his study, *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha discusses the "spaces" created by dominant social formations in the writings of Toni Morrison and Nadine Gordimer, among others.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2

Critical Essay #1

Semansky holds a Ph.D. in English from the State University of New York at Stony Brook, and he is an instructor of literature and writing whose essays, poems, stories, and reviews appear in publications such as College English, Mississippi Review, New York Tribune, The Oregonian, *and* American Letters & Commentary. *His books include* Death, But at a Good Price *(1991) and* Blindsided *(1998). In this essay, Semansky considers the institutionalization of postcolonial literature*.

The adoption of postcolonial literature in the English curriculum of British and American schools in the last few decades has coincided with changes in how and why literature is studied. These changes include ideas about what texts should be included in class syllabi, issues of literary taste, and the purpose(s) of studying literature.

The writing studied in literature classrooms in the United States and Great Britain is often referred to as belonging to the canon. The term derives from the Greek word "kanon" and originally denoted the list of books in the New Testament and Hebrew Bible that came to comprise the Holy Scriptures. More recently, the phrase "literary canon" has been used to denote the "major authors," critics, and historians considered to be the most important for students to read. Surveys of the great works of Western civilization, for example, traditionally would include works by Plato, Aristotle, John Milton, William Shakespeare, and so forth, in short, works by men of European descent. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, a number of events has challenged the assumptions embodied in the literary canon. These events include the Civil Rights movement in the United States, the Women's Liberation movement, and the accelerated unraveling of the British Empire in the wake of World War II. As more and different people began to assert their own rights to explore their heritage and express their identities, critics began to expose the ideological underpinnings of the literary canon and how those underpinnings served one group of people while excluding another. Since the 1960s, a number of critics have argued for the revision, or even the abolition, of the literary canons.

In *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*, Bill Ashcroft, Careth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin point to "the development of English as a privileged academic subject in the nineteenth century," arguing that its study "has always been a densely political and cultural phenomenon . . . called into the service of a profound and embracing nationalism." Nationalism refers to a favoring of the traditions, practices, language, myths, and rituals of a group of people who believe their way of life superior to that of others. By instituting its own school system into its colonies, the British used education as a primary means of controlling colonized people. Walcott, for example, a writer of African, Dutch, and English descent, grew up in St. Lucia of the West Indies reading Milton, Spenser, Shakespeare, and other British writers. He was taught to think like a British person and to develop British tastes. His notion of what made "good" literature, then, was in large part defined by his British education. Indigenous people were "other," defined by and through their difference from the colonizers. The idea of "otherness" has helped to foster the notion that Third World

countries are backward, inferior, and uncivilized. The editors of *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* summarize the insidiousness of colonial literary education as follows:

As it inculcates Western Eurocentric values, literary education supports a kind of "cultural colonization," creating a class of colonial subjects often burdened by a double consciousness and by divided loyalties. It helps Western colonizers rule by consent rather than violence.

In many cases, however, colonized countries had no national literature of their own, no literary tradition, no concept of literature itself, and so there was no basis of comparison for colonized people, many of whom could neither read nor write. Some of these colonies had strictly oral storytelling traditions and no history of written language. The British, in their attempts to "educate" the inhabitants of their colonies, used their own language and literature as models of civilized and superior thinking and behavior.

During the independence movements of British colonies and after colonies declared their independence, natives of former colonies attempted to establish their own literary traditions. The writing produced by postcolonial natives is often a literature of resistance that integrates Western modes of writing and narrative with local traditions and ways of knowing. Walcott's plays such as *The Sea at Dauphin* (1954), for example, mixes West Indian language and customs with elements of Greek drama. And Walcott's establishment of the Little Carib Theatre Workshop, later renamed the Trinidad Theatre Workshop, was an attempt to provide native West Indian writers with a place to develop and produce plays about their own history and culture.

However, writing about one's own history and culture after centuries of colonization, for Walcott as well as for other postcolonialists, has proved a difficult, virtually impossible task. Representing the relationships between precolonial cultures and imperial cultures necessarily includes the acknowledgement of culture's hybrid nature and the futility of ever recovering a "pure" past. The idea that all cultures are representations and the result of political forces at work shows up in the postmodern forms and styles that postcolonial writers such as Walcott, Coetzee, Rushdie, and so forth have chosen to "depict" the postcolonial condition. Although the meaning of the term "postmodern" is as hotly debated as the term "postcolonial," in reference to postcolonial writing it denotes writing that mixes genres and, often, languages, integrates traditional Western forms with indigenous materials, and foregrounds how identities are social constructions rather than essential features of people, countries, or cultures.

As style, the postmodern is most often embodied in the novels of postcolonial writers rather than, say, poetry or drama, and it is the novel to which postcolonial critics pay most attention. The novel, as a kind of writing that attempts to create and people its own world with elaborate characterizations, plots, and detailed setting, is apropos for writers motivated to reshape public as well as personal history. Coetzee's novels, for example, especially *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1982), which is set in an imaginary empire not

unlike South Africa, employs postmodern strategies and devices to foreground their status as works of fiction, while at the same time suggesting a political stance towards a real place and policy, that is, South African apartheid. Postcolonial literature that overtly uses postmodern compositional strategies is not without its detractors; however, critics often claim that it can send the message that oppression and colonialism are a part of the human condition and will always be here. In his review of Coetzee's novel, Irving Howe comments on Coetzee's universalizing approach towards describing South Africa's predicament:

That 'a heart of darkness' is present in all societies
and a beast 'lurks within each one of us' may well
be true. But such invocations of universal evil can
deflect attention from the particular and at least partly
remediable social wrongs Mr. Coetzee portrays. Not
only deflect attention, but encourage readers, as they
search for their inner beasts, to a mood of conservative
acquiescence and social passivity.

The inclusion of postcolonial literature in English departments in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia in the last few decades has also been part of the move away from the study of literature per se and towards the study of culture broadly conceived. Some colleges and universities are even abandoning literature departments altogether and replacing them with cultural studies departments, whose courses include literature, heavy doses of theory of various stripes□literary and other□historical documents, movies, and texts not traditionally studied in literature classrooms. Some of the questions raised by the study of postcolonial literature include the following: Which writers speak best for the postcolonial nation? How does postcolonial literature ask readers to reexamine their own notions of history and "otherness?" In what language should the postcolonial writer write? Is America itself a postcolonial country, and if so, what does that say about Americans' authority to theorize about the postcolonial condition?

The shift in focus in Western schools away from the study of English and American literature and towards curricula that embrace an international worldview using a variety of texts has been for the good. Such curricula allow people whose voices have previously been stifled to speak out and allow artifacts previously ignored to be studied. This inclusion of new texts and writers can (potentially) make English departments agents of social change, rather than simply arbiters of literary taste.

Source: Chris Semansky, Critical Essay on Postcolonialism, in *Literary Movements for Students*, The Gale Group, 2003.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay excerpt, Krupat explains that while Native American literature contains a lot of Postcolonial attributes and ideologies, it should not be classified as Postcolonial literature because Colonialism sstill exists in the Americas.

In the current climate of literary studies, it is tempting to think of contemporary Native American literatures as among the postcolonial literatures of the world. Certainly they share with other postcolonial texts the fact of having, in the words of the authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, "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." Yet contemporary Native American literatures cannot quite be classed among the postcolonial literatures of the world for the simple reason that there is not yet a "post-" to the colonial status of Native Americans. Call it domestic imperialism or internal colonialism; in either case, a considerable number of Native people exist in conditions of politically sustained subalternity. I have remarked on the academic effects of this condition in the first chapter; here I note the more worldly effects of this condition: Indians experience twelve times the U.S. national rate of malnutrition, nine times the rate of alcoholism, and seven times the rate of infant mortality; as of the early 1990s, the life expectancy of reservation-based men was just over forty-four years, with reservation- based women enjoying, on average, a lifeexpectancy of just under forty-seven years. "Sovereignty," whatever its ultimate meaning in the complex sociopolitical situation of Native nations in the United States, remains to be both adequately theorized and practically achieved, and "independence," the great desideratum of colonized nations, is not, here, a particularly useful concept.

Arif Dirlik lists three current meanings of the term *postcolonial*. Postcolonial may intend "a literal description of conditions in formerly colonial societies," it may claim to offer "a description of a global condition after the period of colonialism"□ what Dirlik refers to as "global capitalism," marked by the "transnationalization of production"□ and it may, most commonly in the academy, claim to provide "a description of a discourse on the above-named conditions that is informed by the epistemological and psychic orientations that are products of those conditions." Is any one of these meanings useful to describe contemporary Native American literature? Dirlik's first sense of the postcolonial will not work because, as already noted, the material condition of contemporary Native "societies" is not a postcolonial one. His second sense might perhaps come a bit nearer, inasmuch as Native societies, although still in a colonial situation, nonetheless participate in the global economy of a world "after the period of colonialism." To give a fairly undramatic anecdote, in Santa Fe, Native Americans sell traditional ceramic work and jewelry (including "traditional" golf tees) across the street from where non-Native people offer the "same" wares made in Hong Kong. In something of a parallel fashion, Lakota people travel to Germany and Switzerland to promote tourism at Pine Ridge. As for the last of Dirlik's definitions, little discourse surrounding Native American literature, to the best of my knowledge, has been selfconsciously aware of having been formed "by the epistemological and psychic orientations that are products" of the postcolonial.

(And the "nationalist" Native critic seeks to reject any formation whatever according to these "orientations.") Perhaps, then, it may not be particularly useful to conceptualize contemporary Native American literature as postcolonial.

But even though contemporary Native American fiction is produced in a condition of ongoing colonialism, some of that fiction not only has the look of postcolonial fiction but also, as I will try to show in the second part of this chapter, performs ideological work that parallels that of postcolonial fiction elsewhere. Here, however, I want to suggest a category□the category of anti-imperial translation□ for conceptualizing the tensions and differences between contemporary Native American fiction and "the imperial center." Because historically specifiable acts of translative violence marked the European colonization of the Americas from Columbus to the present, it seems to me particularly important to reappropriate the concept of translation for contemporary Native American literature. To do so is not to deny the relationship of this literature to the postcolonial literatures of the world but, rather, to attempt to specify a particular modality for that relationship.

To say that the people indigenous to the Americas entered European consciousness only by means of a variety of complex acts of translation is to think of such things as Columbus's giving the name of San Salvador to an island he *knows* is called Guanahani by the natives□and then giving to each further island he encounters, as he wrote in his journals, "a new name." Columbus also materially "translated" (*trans-latio*, "to carry across") some of the Natives he encountered, taking "six of them from here," as he remarked in another wellknown passage, "in order that they may learn to speak." Columbus gave the one who was best at learning his own surname and the first name of his firstborn son, translating this otherwise anonymous person into Don Diego Colon.

Now, any people who are perceived as somehow unable to speak when they speak their own languages, are not very likely to be perceived as having a literature□especially when they do not write, a point to which we shall return. Thus, initially, the very "idea of a [Native American] literature was inherently ludicrous," as Brian Swann has noted, because Indian "languages themselves were primitive." If Indians spoke at all, they spoke very badly (and, again, they did not write). In 1851, John De Forest, in his *History of the Indians of Connecticut*, observed, "It is evident from the enormous length of many of the words, sometimes occupying a whole line, that there was something about the structure of these languages which made them cumbersome and difficult to manage."

Difficult for whom, one might ask, especially in view of the fact that De Forest himself had not achieved even minimal competence in any Native language. Further, inasmuch as these were spoken languages, not alphabetically written languages, any estimate that single words occupied the length of "a whole line" could only depend on De Forest's decision to write them that way. De Forest's sense of the "cumbersome and difficult" nature of Indian languages, as I have noted, implies that any literature the Natives might produce in these languages would also be "cumbersome and difficult." Perhaps the Natives would do better to translate themselves or be translated, to "learn to speak"□ in this case, to speak English□in order to have a literature. De Forest was wrong, of

course, although what most people know as Native American literature today consists of texts originally written in English.

Almost half a century after DeForest, as late as 1894, Daniel Brinton—a man who actually did a great deal to make what he called the "production" of "aboriginal authors" visible to the dominant culture— nonetheless declared, "Those peoples who are born to the modes of thought and expression enforced by some languages can never forge to the front in the struggle for supremacy; they are fatally handicapped in the race for the highest life." The winners in the "race for the highest life," therefore, would be the race with the "highest" language; and it was not the Indians but rather, as Brinton wrote, "our Aryan forefathers" who were the ones fortunate enough to be endowed "with a richly inflected speech." As Kwame Anthony Appiah explained in reference to Johann Gottfried von Herder, the *Sprachgeist*, "the 'spirit' of the language, is not merely the medium through which speakers communicate but the sacred essence of a nationality. [And] Herder himself identified the highest point of the nation's language in its poetry," in its literature. "Whoever writes about the literature of a country," as Appiah elsewhere cited Herder, "must not neglect its language." For those like the Indians with "primitive" languages, there would seem to be little hope, short of translation, for the prospects of literary achievement. Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century, the linguistic determinism expressed by Brinton— and, of course, by many others—worked against the possibility of seeing Native Americans as having an estimable literature at exactly the moment when the texts for that literature were, for the first time, being more or less accurately translated and published.

But here one must return to the other dimension of the translation issue as it affects Native American literatures. For the problem in recognizing the existence of Native literatures was not only that Natives could not speak or, when they did speak, that their languages were judged deficient or "primitive" but also that they did not write.

Here I will only quickly review what I and others have discussed elsewhere. Because *littera-ture* in its earliest uses meant the cultivation of letters (from Latin *littera*, "letter"), just as *agriculture* meant the cultivation of fields, peoples who did not inscribe alphabetic characters on the page could not, by definition, produce a literature. (They were also thought to be only minimally capable of agriculture in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, but that is another story.) It was the alteration in European consciousness generally referred to as "romanticism" that changed the emphasis in constituting the category of literature from the medium of expression, writing—literature as culture preserved in letters—to the *kind* of expression preserved, literature as imaginative and affective utterance, spoken or written. It is only at this point that an oral literature can be conceived as other than a contradiction in terms and the unlettered Indians recognized as people capable of producing a "literature."

For all of this, it remains the case that an oral literature, in order to become the subject of analysis, must indeed first become an object. It must, that is, be textualized; and here we encounter a translation dilemma of another kind, one in which the "source language" itself has to be carried across—*trans-latio*—from one medium to another, involving something more than just a change of names. This translative project requires that

temporal speech acts addressed to the ear be turned into visual objects in space, black marks on the page, addressed to the eye. Words that had once existed only for the tongue to pronounce now were to be entrusted to the apprehension of the eye. Mythography, in a term of Anthony Mattina's, or ethnopoetics has been devoted for many years to the problems and possibilities involved in this particular form of media translation.

Translation as a change of names—as a more or less exclusively linguistic shift from "source" to "target" language—may, historically, be traced in relation to the poles of identity and difference, as these are articulated within the disciplinary boundaries of what the West distinguishes as the domains of art and social science. Translators with attachments to the arts or humanities have rendered Native verbal expression in such a way as to make it appear attractively literary by Western standards of literariness, thereby obscuring the very different standards pertaining in various Native American cultures. Conversely, translators with attachments to the social sciences have rendered Native verbal expression in as literal a manner as possible, illuminating the differences between that expression and our own but thereby obscuring its claims to literary status. I have elaborated on these matters elsewhere, and so I will here turn from considerations of the formal implications of translation practices to their ideological implications. I want to explain what I mean by anti-imperial translation and why it seems to me that a great many texts by Native American writers, though written in English, may nonetheless be taken as types of anti-imperial translation.

I base my sense of anti-imperial translation on a well-known, indeed classic text, one that I have myself quoted on a prior occasion. The text is from Rudolph Pannwitz, who is cited in Walter Benjamin's important essay "The Task of the Translator." Pannwitz wrote, "Our translations, even the best ones, proceed from a wrong premise. They want to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German instead of turning German into Hindi, Greek, English. Our translators have far greater reverence for the usage of their own language than for the spirit of the foreign works . . . The basic error of the translator is that he preserves the state in which his own language happens to be instead of allowing his language to be powerfully affected by the foreign tongue." My use of Pannwitz was influenced by Talal Asad's paper, "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology," originally presented at the School for American Research in 1984 and published in James Clifford and George Marcus's important collection *Writing Culture* in 1986. As will be apparent, I am much indebted to Asad's work.

Asad's subject, like mine, is not translation in the narrow sense but rather translation as cultural translation. The "good translator," Asad wrote, "does not immediately assume that unusual difficulty in conveying the sense of an alien discourse denotes a fault in the latter, but instead critically examines the normal state of his or her own language." Asad notes the fact that languages, if expressively equal, are nonetheless politically "unequal," those of the Third World that are typically studied by anthropologists being "weaker" in relation to Western languages (and today especially in relation to English). Asad remarks that the weaker, or colonized, languages "are more likely to submit to forcible transformation in the translation process than the other way around." Asad cites with approval Godfrey Lienhardt's essay "Modes of Thought" and quotes Lienhardt's

exemplary explanation of anthropological translation: "We mediate between their habits of thought, which we have acquired with them, and those of our own society; in doing so, it is not finally some mysterious 'primitive philosophy' that we are exploring, but the further potentialities of our thought and language." This sort of translation, Asad affirms, should alter the usual relationship between the anthropological audience and the anthropological text, in that it seeks to disrupt the habitual desire of that audience to use the text as an occasion to know *about* the Other, a matter of "different *writings and readings* (meanings)" in order to instantiate the possibility that translation, as a matter "of different uses (practices)," can be a force moving us toward "*learning to live another form of life."*

My claim is that Native American writers today are engaged in some version of the translation project along the broad lines sketched by Asad. Even though contemporary Native writers write in English and configure their texts in apparent consonance with Western or Euramerican literary forms□that is, they give us texts that look like novels, short stories, poems, and autobiographies□ they do so in ways that present an "English" nonetheless "powerfully affected by the foreign tongue," not by Hindi, Greek, or German, of course, and not actually by a "foreign" language, inasmuch as the "tongue" and "tongues" in question are indigenous to America. The language they offer, in Asad's terms, derives at least in part from other forms of practice, and to comprehend it might just require, however briefly, that we attempt to imagine living other forms of life.

This is true of contemporary Native American writers in both literal and figurative ways. In the case of those for whom English is a second language (Luci Tapahonso, Ray Young Bear, Michael Kabotie, Ofelia Zepeda, and Simon Ortiz are some of the writers who come immediately to mind), it is altogether likely that their English will show traces of the structure and idioms of their "native" language, as well as a variety of linguistic habits and narrative and performative practices of traditional expressive forms in Navajo, Mesquakie, Hopi, Tohono O'odham, and Acoma. Their English, then, is indeed an English, in Pannwitz's words, "powerfully affected by the foreign tongue," a tongue (to repeat) not "foreign" at all to the Americas. Here the Native author quite literally tests "the tolerance of [English) for assuming unaccustomed forms," and an adequate commentary on the work of these writers will require of the critic if not bilingualism then at least what Dell Hymes has called some "control" of the Native language.

Most Native writers today are not, however, fluent speakers of one or another of the indigenous languages of the Americas, although their experiences with these languages are so different that it would be impossible to generalize. (E.g., Leslie Marmon Silko certainly heard a good deal of Laguna as she was growing up, just as N. Scott Momaday heard a good deal of Jemez, whereas many of the Native American writers raised in the cities did not hear indigenous languages on a very regular basis.) Yet all of them have indicated their strong sense of indebtedness or allegiance to the oral tradition. Even the mixed-blood Anishinaabe□Chippewa□ writer Gerald Vizenor, someone who uses quotations from a whole range of comtemporary European theorists and whose own texts are full of ironic effects possible only to a text-based literature, has insisted on the centrality of "tribal stories" and storytelling to his writing. This is the position of every other contemporary Native American writer I can think of□all of them

insist on the storytelling of the oral tradition as providing a context, as bearing on and influencing the writing of their novels, poems, stories, or autobiographies.

In view of this fact, it needs to be said that "the oral tradition," *as it is invoked by these writers*, is an "invented tradition." It can be seen, as John Tomlinson has remarked, "as a phenomenon of modernity. There is a sense in which simply recognizing a practice as 'traditional' marks it off from the routine practices of proper [*sic*] traditional societies." This is not, of course, to deny that there were and continue to be a number of oral traditions that "really" existed and continue to exist among the indigenous cultures of the Americas. Nor is it to deny that some contemporary Native American writers have considerable experience of "real" forms of oral performance. I am simply noting that "the oral tradition" as usually invoked in these contexts is a kind of catchall phrase whose function is broadly to name the source of the difference between the English of Native writers and that of Euramerican writers. This "tradition" is not based on historically and culturally specific instances.

A quick glance at some of the blurbs on the covers or book jackets of work by contemporary Indian writers makes this readily apparent. When these blurbs are written by non-Indians (and most are, for obvious reasons, written by non-Indians), reference to "the oral tradition" usually represents a loose and vague way of expressing nostalgia for some aboriginal authenticity or wisdom, a golden age of wholeness and harmony. When these blurbs are written by Native Americansthis generalization I venture more tentativelythey are (to recall the discussion I offered in the first chapter of this book) a rhetorical device, a strategic invocation of what David Murray has called the discourse of Indianness, a discourse that has currency in both the economic and the political sense in the United States. Once more, to say this is in no way to deny that the narrative modalities and practices of a range of Native oral literatures, as well as the worldviews of various Native cultures, *are* important to many of the texts constituting a contemporary Native American literature, and not merely honorifically, sentimentally, or rhetorically.

Anyone who would make the claim that a particular Native text in English should be read as an instance of cultural translation must offer a specific demonstration of how that text incorporates alternate strategies, indigenous perspectives, or language usages that, literally or figuratively, make its "English" on the page a translation in which traces of the "foreign tongue," the "Indian," can be discerned. If one then wants to claim that this translation is indeed an anti-imperial translation, it becomes necessary to show how those traces operate in tension with or in a manner resistant to an English in the interest of colonialism.

Source:

Arnold Krupat, "Postcolonialism, Ideology, and Native American Literature," in *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*, edited by Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt, University of Mississippi Press, 2000, pp. 73-94.

Adaptations

British director Isaac Julien's adapted Algerian revolutionary Frantz Fanon's classic text, *Black Skin, White Mask*, into a film of the same name in 1996. It has been released by California Newsreel. The film features interviews with family members and friends, documentary footage, readings from Fanon's work, and dramatizations of crucial moments in Fanon's life.

Michael Ondaatje's novel, *The English Patient*, was adapted into a film in 1996, directed by Anthony Minghella. It was winner of nine Oscars, including best picture.

Director Mira Nair's film *Mississippi Masala* (1991), explores the racial tensions between immigrant Indians from Uganda and resident African-Americans in the South. Nair's film *The Perez Family* (1993), follows the lives of Cuban refugees who came to the United States in the Mariel boatlift of 1980.

Topics for Further Study

In groups, list of all the countries that were colonies or territories of another country (e.g., Great Britain, Portugal, France, United States, etc.) in 1900, 1939, and today, and then note the date each achieved independence. Which territories or colonies have not yet achieved independence or have achieved only partial independence? Each group member research the independence movement(s) in one of those countries and report to the class.

The principal overseas dependencies of the United States include the territories of Guam, the United States Virgin Islands, American Samoa, and the Commonwealths of Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands. After researching the history of United States control of these territories, argue for or against their right to independence.

Pretend that Fidel Castro's government has been overthrown and that you have been named as a member of the committee charged with drafting a constitution for the new government. What declarations or articles will you argue should be included in the new constitution? Read the constitutions of other countries including the United States as part of your research.

Some theorists of Postcolonialism are known for their notoriously dense and often unreadable prose. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is one of them. In groups, read her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" included in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg's *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (1988), summarize it, and present its main points to your class. Discuss the differences in the main points that your group presented and those of other groups.

The conflict of cultures is at the heart of much postcolonial literature. Think about a time when you came into contact with a culture you knew little about, and then write a short essay about that event.

Compare and Contrast

1940s-1960s: Numerous European colonies in Africa gain their independence including Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco, Ghana, Guinea, Chad, Benin, Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Madagascar, Central African Republic, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Togo, Zaire, Somalia, Congo, Gabon, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, and Gambia.

Today: Although these countries have declared their political independence from European powers, many of them are still virtually economic colonies of Western powers such as the United States. The Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), for example, derives almost 14 percent of its production from Nigeria, which is dependent on oil for 80 percent of government revenue. However, Nigeria's dependence on Western money for its oil has also contributed to corruption, environmental degradation, and social unrest from tribes such as the Ogoni, who claim Shell's operations are polluting their land.

1940s-1960s: Numerous colonies in Asia and the Middle East gain their independence, including Yemen, Malaysia, Myanmar, India, Pakistan, Kuwait, Israel, and Jordan.

Today: Many of these countries continue to feud over land. India and Pakistan, for example, fight over the ownership of the Kashmir region, and the Palestinian people remain locked in a bloody battle with Israel for their own state.

1940s-1960s: Numerous colonies in the Caribbean, Central America, and the South Atlantic gain their independence though remain a part of the British Commonwealth, including Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica, Antigua, and Trinidad & Tobago.

Today: Many of these countries, such as Barbados and Jamaica, have become tourist destinations for Europeans and Americans, although the majority of the native populations live in poverty.

What Do I Read Next?

Mark Crinson's *Empire Building: Orientalism and Victorian Architecture* (1996) examines how racial theory, as well as political and religious agendas, informed British architects and how Eastern ideas came to influence the West.

In *The Short Century: Independence and Liberation Movements in Africa 1945-1994* (2001), Okwui Enwezor has edited a collection of writing and images, including essays, studies, speeches, manifestos, and photographs, which document the cultural and political record of Africa from 1945 to 1994 and offer a glimpse into the ideologies that shaped the continent's history and life during the period.

Andrew Gurr's *Writers in Exile: The Identity of Home in Modern Literature* (1981) defines "exile" as a feature of West Indian, African, Australian, and New Zealand literature written in English and surveys many of the major writers from these countries.

In 2000, Oxford University Press released *World Cinema: Critical Approaches*, edited by John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson. This collection of essays on world cinema, much of it from postcolonial countries, addresses subjects such as concepts of national cinema, East Central European cinema, Anglophone national cinemas, and African cinema.

George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960) details his experiences as a West Indian in London and contains his well-known essay on Shakespeare's play, *The Tempest*, raising questions of canonicity, exile, and the relationship between the center and the margins.

Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1965) is an early sociological study of the destructive impact of colonialism on both colonizers and colonized.

In *Missionaries in India* (1998), author Arun Shourie focuses on the intentional misinterpretations of Hinduism by Christian missionaries and the harm those misinterpretations have caused the country.

Leslie Marmon Silko's novel *Almanac of the Dead* (1991) is perhaps her most controversial work. Silko addresses many issues related to American Indians, including the European conquest of them.

Further Study

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds., *The Empire Writes Back*, Routledge, 1990.

This accessible study surveys new writing in cultures as diverse as India, Australia, the West Indies, Africa, and Canada and details many of the debates that animate postcolonial discourse.

□, eds., *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Routledge, 1995.

This anthology provides the most comprehensive selection of texts in postcolonial theory and criticism to date, featuring ninety of the discipline's most widely read works. All the well-known theorists such as Said, Spivak, and Homi Bhaba are represented as well, and their essays have been edited for clarity and accessibility.

Fanon, Frantz, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Grove, 1967.

Fanon leans heavily on his personal experience in this book to show how his intellectual and emotional world, as well as his country, has been colonized by the French.

Said, Edward, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, 1978.

Said's study of how the West has historically represented the Arab world ranks as one of the most important works of postcolonial theory.

Thieme, John, ed., *Post-Colonial Literatures*, Arnold, 1996.

This anthology offers writing from more than two hundred writers and is the most comprehensive selection of anglophone postcolonial writing ever published in one volume. Thieme organizes the sections according to regions including Africa, Australia, Canada, Caribbean, New Zealand and South Pacific, South Asia, South-East Asia, and Trans-Cultural Writing. Thieme also provides a useful introduction explaining his text choices and strategy of organization.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Literary Movements for Students (LMfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, LMfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on

□classic□ novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of LMfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of LMfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in LMfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by LMfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

LMfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Literary Movements for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LMfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the LMfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Literary Movements for Students

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Adams, Timothy Dow. "Richard Wright: "Wearing the Mask," in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Literary Movements for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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