

A stack of old, handwritten letters and envelopes, some with postage stamps, resting on a wooden lattice structure. The letters are aged and feature cursive handwriting. One prominent letter has a one-penny postage stamp and the address 'Mrs. Smith, Bates PA, Hbure'. Another letter in the foreground has the name 'Smith.' written on it. The background shows more letters and envelopes, some with stamps, all slightly out of focus.

Postcolonialism

Postcolonialism

- It is a name for a critical and theoretical approach in literary and cultural studies, an approach that addresses itself to historical, social, political, cultural and textual implications of the colonial encounter between the colonizing West and the colonized non-West, and how this encounter has shaped the lives of both parties involved in the encounter – the colonizer and the colonized.
- However, it also designates a politics, namely politics of resistance against unjust forms of political and cultural authority, dating back to the 16th century and stretching all the way up to the present times. On this understanding, postcolonialism is concerned with the more practical issues of agency, resistance and everyday political activity.

Edward Said - *Orientalism* (1978)

- He applied post-structuralist critical theory, in particular that of Michel Foucault, to the political, cultural and material realities of colonization.
- Orientalism was a systematic discourse about the East in which the natives were being represented as weak, inferior, secondary, effeminate and unable to rule themselves.
- Said's *Orientalism* seemed to suggest that the colonized peoples were utterly silenced by being made into the objects of Western systems of knowledge and therefore lacked the appropriate language or strategy to fight back.

Gayatri Spivak

- She doesn't see colonial oppression as monolithic, but a very heterogeneous affair with a number of fractures, ruptures and contradictions in its very structure.
- Consequently, she sets out to identify such points of rupture within the colonial discourse.
- She has also noted how postcolonial analysis so far has taken up only traditional masculinist positions.
- She coined the term *strategic essentialism*
 - only an intermediate stage in the ongoing process of decolonization or the assertion of women's rights, in which it might be politically useful to embrace rather conventional essentialist notions such as that women are natural home-lovers or that all Irish love Guinness

Homi Bhabha

- He shares with Spivak the interest in the ruptures and instabilities of the colonial discourse. He is however, mainly concerned about the ambiguous *in-betweens* that result from the encounter between the Self and Other, the Centre and the Periphery, the colonizer and the colonized.
- *Of Mimicry and Man (1985)*, he argues that the colonial system requires that the natives remake themselves in the image of the European master, becoming secondary to the colonizer , but also other to what they were before

Aijaz Ahmad

- particularly preoccupied with the ironic fact that postcolonialism's most powerful theorists (the postcolonial holy trinity of Said, Spivak and Bhabha) are all well-established Western academics who built and secured their academic careers by theorizing oppression.
- On top of that, their arguments refer to purely Western canons of philosophical thought, including deconstruction, feminism and post-structuralism.

Postcolonial literature

- is concerned with the world as it existed during and after the period of European imperial domination and the effects of this on contemporary life.
- So the literatures of African countries, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Caribbean countries, India, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, South Pacific Island countries and Sri Lanka are all postcolonial literatures.
- The literature of the USA should also be placed in this category. Perhaps because of its current position of power, and the neo-colonizing role it has played, its postcolonial nature has not been generally recognised.