

The Way to the Decolonization of Mind and Text

السبيل إلى إنهاء استعمار العقل والنص

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Received 06 /01/2021 Accepted 09/06/2021 Published online 15/09/2021**Abstract:**

This article sets out to demonstrate and propose alternative ways to access and assess the Eastern heritage. It is for the construction of a complementary and reciprocal relationship of mutual respect and understanding between the West and the the East that question the essence of western logic of supremacy. It is by inserting alternative voices and stories, rather than reinforcing official culture that insists on fixed or hierarchical forms and adheres to strict boundaries between the west and the Rest. Therefore, It is an effort to move beyond the familiar and universal, to step outside the arena of modern times, to ignore western modes of telling and narrating , and to be out of the frames of western logic of supremacy. It is only by recalling the previously silenced (hi)story, restores outdated (hi)story and reintegrates (hi)story that was once considered unofficial, silenced, forgotten or misunderstood.

Keywords: Eastern heritage, West, East, (hi)story, hierarchical forms

ملخص:

تهدف هذه المقالة إلى إظهار واقتراح طرق بديلة للوصول إلى التراث الشرقي وتقييمه . بناء علاقة تكاملية ومتبادلة تتسم بالاحترام والتفاهم المتبادلين بين الغرب والشرق وذلك من خلال التساؤل عن جوهر المنطق الغربي وذلك . من خلال إدخال أصوات وقصص بديلة ، بدلاً من تعزيز النظرة الغربية التي تركز على أشكال ثابتة أو هرمية وتلتزم بحدود صارمة بين الغرب والشرق لذلك ، فهي محاولة لتجاوز المؤلف ، والخروج منه وتجاهل الأنماط الغربية للقول والسرد ، والخروج من أطر المنطق الغربي .

الكلمات المفتاحية: التراث الشرقي ، الغرب ، الشرق ، القصة ، التاريخ

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1. INTRODUCTION

The way is by the transgression the western frontiers and boundaries of telling and narrating outside the common polarities of East and West. For that reason, it is set for re-imagining the past, celebrating the present and offering hope for the future. Hence, the western narrative is not set for focalizing the Eastern narrative by marginalization and exclusion out of the Western narratives; it is not for including the East, it is for excluding. The way is by saturating the need for a fresh approach of approaching western supremacy which often goes unnoticed, unquestioned, unchanged and unchallenged.

2. Postcolonial Departures and Arrivals

The Western narratives conceptualize the colonized with the drastic effect which scars the imagination of the westerners, and accordingly, it helps in creating a viewpoint of the colonized people. They play a very powerful role in molding the perception of reality. The Western narratives reveal ignorance and prejudice. They project them as barbarians, primitive², ahistorical, ignorant, beasts and cannibals. The representations of the Other³ are typically portrayed from a Western point of view. It places the natives in the background, marginalizing them to construct a space between the margin and the center by unifying and generalizing the white man's perspective and representation of the colonized.

The (hi)story of colonialism is always in an engagement with the minds of writers, scientists, and of course, people. It is an important source of inspiration for writing. Novelists and historians search like never before for narrating the (hi)story of colonialism from the perspective of the colonized. They attempt "to give expression to colonized experience, and sought to undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported colonization - the myths of power, the race classifications and the imagery of subordination" (Boehemer, 1995: 3).

3. The Crucible of Western Narratives

The diversity in the narrative accounts of the past is due to the position of power of the colonizers. The aim of diversity is to highlight the value of alternative accounts that are presented by the colonized. These accounts are relayed by the colonized that have been silenced and indoctrinated with the belief that their voice could never overpower their colonizers. As "the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased" (Loomba, 2005: 7). The colonized people aim to show that they have all become agents of their own history, and therefore, it is impossible to turn a blind eye to the alleged superiority of colonizers.

² Oxford dictionary defines the word primitive in the following way: "Relating to, denoting, or preserving the character of an early stage in the evolutionary or historical development of something." The idea of the primitive people is a constructed idea which presupposes that there is also another civilized people

³ In general terms, the 'other' is anyone who is separate from one's self. The existence of others is crucial in defining what is 'normal' and in locating one's own place in the world. The colonized subject is characterized as 'other' through discourses such as primitivism and cannibalism, as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view.

The history of the colonized was previously ignored and forcibly censored by their colonizers. In the times of colonialism, the ignorance of colonized was essentially for providing the colonizers with a threshold of power and pre-eminence that allow them to exploit others⁴. The sculpt of colonial relations is specified by “colonial power and discourse which is possessed entirely by the colonizer and therefore there is no room for negotiation or change” (Bhabha,1983:200). In the same vein, Fanon also states: The Western discourse of colonialism is constituted by the other [...]by the exclusion, marginalization, and oppression of racial others.” (Fanon. 1961:210).Thereafter, the history of nations is written by the colonizers, and there is only one version of the reality which is disseminated. That is why, the colonized are silenced, and the colonizers speak for them from their position of superiority.

In Africa, Asia and Australia, the traditional life of colonized was disrupted. Their traditional values which were mainly based on cultural heritage were demonized and denounced barbaric and wild. “Their traditions, rituals, and ceremonies were considered acts of savagery. Their languages were misconstrued and were considered as brutal sounds close to that of the animals” (Rees, 2005:11). The colonized society is never the same as their lives radically transformed by the influence of the colonizers. The course of history for the natives was changed after colonialism.

4. Imperial Mind; Complexities and Complicities

The desire of colonizers to know and to report details of their discoveries of land and people is “often an exercise in imaginative discourse which was grounded on their fears, prejudices and selfish motives” (Rees, 2005:1). Hence, the colonizers had an assignment of justifying their acts of violence which were unleashed on the natives. Any gesture of antagonism on the part of the native people was met with brute force of bullets. By the same token, it was destructive the belittling discourses of textual violence that denied the acceptance of the colonized as human beings, and thereby enhanced the process of colonization.

The past was threatened and forcefully subjected to change. It was entirely obliterated. The native people were swabed off from the face of earth. Therefore, pre-colonial literature⁵ is an irrefutable concern which is indefatigably tackled in post- colonial writings. In his book. *Culture and Imperialism*, Said writes:

Many of the more interesting post-colonial writers bear their past within them—as scars of humiliating wounds, as instigation for different practices, as potentially revised visions of the past

⁴ The term the ‘other’ can be transferred to postcolonial theory. Ashcroft et al make an attempt to describe the state of things in Lacan’s use of the ‘other’. According to Lacan there are two different types of “others” – the ‘other’ and the ‘Other’. The ‘other’ is not really another person but the reflection the child discovers in the mirror that resembles itself but at the same time is “separate enough to ground the child’s hope for an ‘anticipated mastery’” that will be “the basis for the ego” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin, 1989: 170). Imperial discourse identified by their difference from the centre, and become the focus of anticipated mastery by the imperial ‘ego’ (Ibid). It is in the Other’s “gaze that the subject gains identity” (Ibid). “This Other can be compared to the imperial centre, imperial discourse, or the empire itself” (Ibid). Similarly, the colonized people have to understand the world through the colonizer’s world view and construct their own identity in relation to the colonizers.

⁵ Pre-colonial African literatures did exist; it is difficult to trace them back because they were predominantly oral. Many pre-colonial African cultures were predominantly oral and the colonizer’s racist assumed that since these languages were not written , they did not exist’ (Katrak 231).

tending toward a new future, as urgently reinterpretable and redeployable experiences, in which the formerly silent native speaks and acts on the territory taken back from the empire. (1994:31)

The same as, there is no present without the past, postcolonial writers frequently revisit their past to question their present. As colonization has caused a fissure in their history by “the construction of opposites and others” (Said, 1978:332). Thus, the yearning of going to the pedigree for convalescent intentions is one of the missions of postcoloniality.

As the past continues to preoccupy the present, postcolonial⁶ writings interrogate the European versions of history. The politics of representation come to the front as the writers inspect various colonial discourses which were used as a powerful tool in the process of colonization. Hence, “the achievement of superiority has been accomplished not only by the sword and cross” (Willinsky, 1998:134). The writers take it upon themselves as a responsibility to counter these falsifying images of their past and expose the colonial designs that skulk underneath such constructions. For the reason that the postcolonial writer writes from an alternate viewpoint, he addresses the colonial discourses of binary constructions and oppositions. The writer stands in direct conflict with colonial writings and stereotypical representations of the West.

Postcolonial writers interpret the racial representation of the colonized. They are in a postcolonial re-examination of Western superiority from the latter’s standpoint. It is “the critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and modes of discourses that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France and other European imperial powers” (Abrams, 1999:236). Since the voice of colonized has always been voiceless in most western works, the postcolonial text, as seen by Elzette Steenkamp, is “characterized by a desire to challenge normative European notions of power by giving voice to the marginalized, misrepresented and silenced other” (2008:10). The Other has been marginalized and silenced, due to the fact that the colonizers are in the “privileged centre” (Ashcroft, 1989: 104). The colonizers have a narcissistic view of the world (1989:161). The process of writing back aims to challenge, defy, and refute the colonial misrepresentation of the colonized in their colonial pre-texts and pretexts. It is the beginning of forwarding an-other version of the colonial (hi)story and challenging the western worldviews.

Postcolonialism has emerged as a counter-discourse for the sake of representing of the misrepresentations which colonialism carried out against the culture and the people of colonized countries. Postcolonialism is “the critical analysis of the history, culture, literature and modes of discourses that are specific to the former colonies of England, Spain, France and other European imperial powers”. (Abrams, 2005:236). It may also deal with literature written in or by citizens of colonizing countries that takes colonies or their peoples as its subject matter. In short, the theory is based around the concepts of otherness and resistance. The literary work which is written in postcolonial context is characterized by a desire to defy the colonizers notions of power by giving voice to the marginalized, misrepresented and silenced colonized. Postcolonial writers express their anti-colonial resistance.

⁶ It is important, from the outset, to clearly define "postcolonial literature." If post followed with a hyphen (postcolonial) generally has a temporal understanding, postcolonial with no hyphen cannot be reduced to Appropriation”, the period after colonial era. Even with a hyphen, it still cannot be reduced to temporality with some thinkers. For Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins, its main features are to be found elsewhere: The term post-colonialism is according to a too rigid etymology – is frequently misunderstood as a temporal concept, meaning the time after colonialism has ceased, or the time following the politically determined Independence Day on which a country breaks away from its governance by another state. It signifies several things at the same time: (1) coming after, (2) negating, (3) continuing, or even (4) appropriating, their predecessors, namely, colonialism and modernism, respectively.

They write history from the point of view of the silenced and marginalized by reconsidering the early versions of history which are written by the colonizers. It is the act of “re-placing the text” (Ashcroft et al, 1989:77), and seeing with fresh eyes a pre-text from a new critical perspective to construct a con-text. It is the idea of granting those marginalized people a place in the centre and a chance out the margin to tell their own story themselves. By doing so, they put them on an equivalent status with their colonizers.

5. Revealing the Curtain of the Imperial Mind

The con-text of postcolonial rewriting is based on a postcolonial reading and interpretation of pre-texts and pretexts. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said speaks of a reading strategy which is the consequence of the complicated imbalance between the margin and the centre. It is a kind of an oppositional reading “with an effort to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented” (1994:66).

It is built on a postcolonial re-reading of colonial texts. It is an examination for colonial texts. A postcolonial interpretation of the colonizers literary works changes our views of their pure literary work and opens our eyes to the direct and indirect racial representation of non-western races. Helen Tiffin writes of the role of the postcolonial writer who “re-enters the texts of European traditions with a view of interrogating and destabilizing the assumptions on which they rested [...] and a replacing of texts in sites where a politics of oppositionality is thus invoked” (1989:67). The responsibility of the postcolonial writer is to question the assumptions of the colonial discourse which requires the re-reading and re-writing of the colonizer’s historical and fictional writings. The postcolonial writer makes a mindful and a purposeful relationship with the original text in order to call the attention to what is not said, or intentionally said. He seeks to undermine, dismantle, and subvert the authority of the canonical text. The writer analyses the canonical text with the intention of adapting, appropriating, and revising what is seen offensive in the eyes of the previously colonized.

The white colonizers came not just for exploitative reasons but to stay as permanent settlers and monopolize the rights of the land. By the means of power, the white settlers gained control over the land and the people. It is Eurocentrism, and it is a fundamental axes of contemporary times and a colonial heritage from the bygone times of colonialism. According to Peter Childs and Roger Fowler, Eurocentrism is a way of thinking that privileges Europe (or “the West”) as the centre of historical development and posits European culture as superior to all others (2006:75). Eurocentrism as a socio – political and philosophical concept in European thought gradually came into existence and took concrete form as from the 15th Century, or what is popularly known as the Modern Age. The Age of Discovery with its inventions in diverse spheres of European life created material comfort and enhanced the discovery of new areas of the globe and their various economic resource potentials. The sense of supremacy that came with the above accomplishments, along with its attendant regional pride, of Europe taking the centre stage in world affairs, made some of its people to assume a superiority status over other nations and races of the earth. It is the above foregrounding factors which gave rise to the coinage of the term, Eurocentrism. The *Encarta 2007 Dictionary* further defines Eurocentrism rather bluntly and tersely as “Focusing on Europe or its people, institutions, and cultures, often in a way that is arrogantly dismissive of others”. In the given historical and geographical perception of Europe, the continent equally sees itself as representing the highest form of civilization. Or, as Buchan and Heath note, the ‘savage’ sees “white, western culture reflected back by ‘civilization’; and as a beneficent gift to the colonized in the colonial

imagination ” (2006:6). In this sense, Europe came to regard itself not only as the centre from which civilization radiates outwards to other nations, but also as “the end of history, and the future of humanity” (Childs and Fowler, 2006:77), and the blacks in the following light: “The blacks whether originally a distinct race or made distinct by time and circumstances are inferior to the whites in endowments of the body and mind” (Tembo,2006:62).

It is globalized and exported to the rest of the world in the modern times as the hegemonic criteria to racialize, classify and pathologize the rest of the world’s people in a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority. And consequently, the (hi)story of Western civilization has privileged what is western for the sake inferiorizing the Rest. Therefore, it is a necessity to question the western international intention which is related to other cultures and peoples from a position of superiority and is blind to the cultures of the non-western world.

As a result of holding the power, the Westerners’ voices that tell the story for the reason that the Other is condemned by inferiority; hence, the West has dehumanized the Rest. It is stated that:

Every person, however slightly he may be acquainted with the affairs of our time, sees clearly the actual inferiority of all those who have been in the East, or Africa are stuck by the way in which the mind of the true believer is fatally limited by the species of iron circle that surrounds his head, rendering it absolutely closed to knowledge. (Ernest, 1896:1)

Thereafter, it is up to the Westerners’ voices that tell the (hi)story; because of this, the Other is “condemned to immobility and silence”, and hence, colonialism has dehumanized the natives (Young,2004:159). Orientalist ideas of difference and division dating back to colonial times have affected and infected the foundations of public life in the Rest. In the postcolonial era; Orientalism without colonialism is a headless theoretical beast, that is much [...] harder to identify and eradicate because it has become internalized in the practices of the postcolonial state, the theories of the postcolonial intelligentsia, and the political action of postcolonial mobs.(Breckenridge & van der Veer, 1994: 11).

Therefore, the superiority of the West is reconstructed the hierarchy of the modern times and put the rest of the world in the margin, but rather it embraces their inferiority.

6. CONCLUSION

It is an obtrusive fact that the globe is under the dominance of the West. The western nations started attacking, invading and colonizing the globe in the 16th century and kept on doing so in modern times for the sake of bringing the remote regions of Caribbean countries, African States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Asia, Middle East and beyond under their supermacy. They realized it by employing Colonial Discourse and Eurocentric cultural superiority to justify the act of colonization as indispensable act for uplifting the rest of the world. It is an apparatus of Western power that produces knowledge about non-western cultures under colonial control. Controlling what is known and the way it is known, ‘colonial discourse’ serves to justify Western domination over colonized people. In this sense, the link between power and knowledge is the key to understand colonial discourse theory. In short, ‘colonial discourse’ can be defined as a discourse (in Foucault’s sense) that produces knowledge about colonized people in order to legitimate colonial domination.

This discourse constitutes a particular kind of symbolic power which serves to legitimate a hegemonic and colonialist point of view.

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