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Postmodernism and its resentment

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Abstract
Often people refer to some features associated with post-modernism in the arts, including theatre and literature, but also architecture. A considerable source of confusion is that the terms pair of concepts in philosophy social science. Modernism in the arts, with its rejection of the idea of representation and the emphasis on challenge and unfamiliar (e.g, Picasso), is actually in some affinity with postmodern philosophy. Nevertheless, the postmodern idea between different spheres- such as high culture and low (mass) culture- and the break with elite ideas of a specific space and function of art make it possible point at some overall features of postmodernism as an overall label which seem to work broadly, in adversity of fields.

Keywords:

Introduction
After describing postmodern hyperspace as "the inability of the human mind to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world", Frederic Jameson (1994: 44), in "The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," ends the essay by stressing the need to find new modes of representation to grasp the unrepresentable, disjunctive, unmappable positioning of the fragmented subject in a global multinational economy. From Andy Warhol to Bonaventure Hotel, post modern hyperspace is apparently a smooth transition of sorts. Smoothness in Jameson's rhetoric that enables him to move from one location, which is the American context, to a transitional, transgeographical space – the global economy- in an apparently unproblematic way.

It is at this juncture, these (mappable?) points at which the process of translation is perceived that the postcolonial articulates, problematizes and effectively disrupts generalizing constructions and theorizations of postmodernism and post modernity. In the present study Jameson's postmodern hyperspace is ethnocentric, in this report, it attempts to demonstrate that the moment of entry, or to be more specific, those moments when the other begins to speak or is heard speaking marks the disjunctive points in postmodern theorizations. The postcolonial subject is a testament of the condition of emergence of modern subject. Not the modern subject per se, but the subject that turns to the postcolonial and says there is a crisis of narratives, a collapse of science and reason, universal norms, truths, meaning as content, and points to the unrepresentable present, the postindustrial, global network, the multinational postmodern world in which history has disappeared, imitation is possible not parody, and the real has become un-real; that subject only reiterates the specificity of its disintegration and the non-emergence of another, other subject.

Jameson distinguishes between two positions on the notion of the individual subject and its disappearance. The first position accepts that at a certain point in the past, in the age of competitive capitalism, the emergence of the bourgeois class, there did exist this thing called individualism or the individual subject which at present in this post-industrial multinational age has disappeared. The second position is more radical. It adds, "not only the bourgeois individual subject a things of the past, it is also a myth; it never existed in the first place; there have never been autonomous subjects of that type. Rather, this construct is merely a philosophical and cultural mystification which sought to persuade people that they 'had' individual subjects and possessed this unique identity" (Jameson1983: 115).

The postcolonial modifies the second position. While the mystification and philosophizing part would run counter to experience, both lived and remembered the postcolonial notes that the individual subject that once existed was not an autonomous subject but a subject imbricated in the construction of self and other. In the process of subject construction, when the post colonial apprehends the unmappability of the terrain, the overwhelming cross-networking of social and economic systems, the production of reality and the formation of communities in an

inscaping of scapes (intended pun on Hopkins), it realises that it has not so much come into being as it has been released from bondage.

But is the postcolonial subject a free-floating signifier with unbouned freedom to construct its cultural identity? Release from bondage does not necessarily imply an erasure of the otherness of the self. The process of othering with its implicit and explicit installation of difference, difference as othered and the other as different is continuous but disjunctive. This mean difference not only as something other than an extra additional characteristic, element, quality or signifier, but difference as the site of production in the postcolonial condition. The modern subject produces difference to construct its subjectivity.

When Lyotard (1993:xxv) writes, "Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities: it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable", the question arises, how and where do the differences come from? The question leads us beyond sensitivity to differences: differences not just perceived as such, as existing and occurring in isolation in an otherworldly, extra-terrestrial space and then to be confronted as differences that need to be addressed and co- opted to facilitate cognitive mapping, but rather to understand that these differences are made possible, in that they exist as differences not only as qualities and elements that were at a given time unknowable or unrecognizable or even suppressed and effectively controlled, but as having been constructed in the process of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion within the margins of the centre and the periphery.

The postcolonial is politically inclined in every sense of the term. In any discussion of postmodernism, the post colonial asks, who is speaking? Who posits analyses, recognises, conceptualizes and theorizes this cultural space called postmodernism? To the postmodern notion that the subject has disappeared, the postcolonial responds by pointing out it is only a certain subject that has disappeared.

While this disappearance may be constructed as a distinct of disjunction giving rise to a literal overturning of those modernist impulse and projects, the postcolonial, on the other hand, rejoices that the subject has disappeared, or perhaps, even displays feelings of boredom. Postcolonial discourse and processes of subject constructions serve also to demonstrate that the hue and cry in the postmodern condition can also originate from narcissistic self-indulgence. Nelly Richard observes that a once universalizing subject has become bankrupt, the inhabitants of the margins do not necessarily feel a loss, or are threatened by this collapse because their relationship to the centre and modern subject has been one of dispossession (p.468).

What do gestures of reclamation, repossession and re-narration in the post-colonial condition signify? It is precisely at this point that the postmodernist intervenes by asking, if the process of subject construction involves a retrieval of the past, of history, what is this history that can be called back and retrieved? Is it an untainted past, the pre-colonial culture, tradition, history, or an "impure source of authority? Through what agency and in what mode? When history has been effectively re-narrated (by the oppressor) and sometimes effaced, what does it mean to articulate and construct subjectivity?

In "Secondary Elaborations" Jameson writes "In the postmodern, the past itself has disappeared along with the well-Know 'sense of the past' or historicity and collective memory. Where its buildings still remain, renovation and restoration allow them to be transferred to the present in their entirety as these other, very different and postmodern things called *Simulacra* (Jameson 1999: 309). The real as the unreal negates the very notion of the pure reality or tradition. "In other words the feeling that postmodern people have about the modern will begin to tell us more about postmodernism itself than about the system it supplanted and overthrew" (p.313). To extend and modify the same, the feeling that postcolonial people have about their history and tradition will reveal the condition of post-coloniality, and that process and tools (as language) of identity construction problematize notions and gestures of returning to a pure, untainted past. It is not so much a rediscovery of roots, but a new creation and nourishment of roots.

To demonstrate how this plays itself out to move back in time to the European migration to America and the subsequent evolution of literature conceived as a monolithic counter narrative to European hegemony. Traditionally, American history is marked by the arrival of the Pilgrim father who moved away from Europe to pursue the Puritan ideal of maintaining direct communion with God without traditional and societal institutions as mediators. The trust towards creating a unique and distinct American voice in literature gained its impetus in moving away from European cultural hegemony. Americanness, the American Dream, the authentic American voice, the discovery of the New World embodies two important strains: the 'frontier' as its controlling metaphor and the tension of breaking away from a 'mother country' to counter the force of tradition with its power to control the present.

Spiller begins his *The Cycle of American Literature* (1955) with an introduction of the First Frontier and then discusses the "architects" of American Culture—Edwards, Franklin and Jefferson and the list contains canonized American figures as Irving, Cooper, Emerson, Thoreau, Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, and begins the Second Frontier with Howells and Twain, Spiller is one among innumerable scholars, critics, historians, scientists etc., who recreate, invoke, reinscribe and codify views of American history and literature primarily in terms of an originary, antecedent European tradition. What happens then, asks Lauter (1990:13) to William Wells Brown's *Clotel* (1859), Frank Webb's *Garies and Their Friends* (1857), Martin Dewlaney's *Blake* (1859) and Harriet Wilson's *Our Nig* (1850) which are contemporaries of *The Scarlet Letter and Moby Dick* ?

There is a significant contribution that emerges in this traditional view of American literary history with its postcolonial concerns: the American narrative emerges as a single, monolithic, European preoccupation with identity and displacement foregrounding the relationship of an American periphery with a European centre.

My argument is that the tendency to read American literature primarily in terms of situating the discourse within the paradigm of a dominant mother country or breakaway settler colony is a reaffirmation of European colonizing practices or, in Hodge and Mishra's words, Post-orientalism (Hodge and Mishra 1994: 276-290). This reading engenders Oriental ideas that reality is that which is perceived and experienced by Europeans possessing universal values. This Eurocentric version of American literature involves a double subversion. It suppresses the narrative of Africans who were brought to American as slaves and marginalizes the experiences of the indigenous population, the American Indians.

My proposition is that the literature of America is a labyrinthine post-colonial narrative. We have to re-envision

American history and its literary development by investigating the structure of social and economic power that facilitates the emergence of the ethnic group at the expense of other groups. The Europe narrative is not a smooth, linear, progressive movement towards experiencing the frontier and realizing the American Dream. Rather, these various historians continually intersect, break away from, rupture and influence one another in a dialogic field of forces.

In this *worldliness* emerges the African-American literary voice. Lucy Terry, a slave girl, is recognized as the first American Black poet. Her *(*1746) captures the action of an Indian raid. Writes Diedre Mullance (1993:24), "Her poem recalls the popular capacity among the Indians and establishes early on the central role of African-American women in American literary history". Jupitor Hamon was the first Black poet to be published in 1760. Briton Hammaon, in 1760 published an autobiographical pamphlet titled *A Narrative* of the *Uncommon Sufferings* and a Surprising Deliverance of Briton Hammon, a Negro Man. It was a document of historical and literary importance.

In 1773 Phyllis Wheately became the first Black in America to publish a volume of verse, *Poems*. Helen Burke comments on how Wheately who is representative of those excluded from hegemonic discourse on the basis of ethnicity, class and sex constructed herself as a political subject to construct a voice that could be heard. Wheately manipulates literary conventions in terms of inserting a black predecessor into Western tradition to gain a recognition of her own voice. Extending Foucault's concept of power and knowledge Burke conducts an inquiry into the power structure that made and permitted such occasional speaking voice to be heard within an obstruct discourse. Wheately "exists as a speaking subject only within the boundaries defined by the hegemonic culture" (Burke 1994:202)

This subjectivity that is "granted" then appropriated to further marginalize the blacks. What emerges a constructed subjectivity that is absorbed into mainstream life and discourse by its very absorption further strengthens an suppression of marginal voices. It is at this time that Edwards, Franklin and Jefferson had written and were writing those definitive "masterpieces". Now to blissfully celebrate the fact that Lucy Terry, Jupiter Hammon, Briton Hammon and Phillis Wheatley "spoke" is one thing but to rigorously inquire in what cultural and social circumstances and under what systems of constraints their articulation was made possible and for what purpose is another matter entirely.

So what if the other(s) has spoken? To whom and why does it matter and that marginal voices have at some point or the other been allowed to speak? To whom and why does it matter that marginal voice have at some point or the other been allowed to speak? Where is the need to delve into history to recover, uncover and restore speaking, singing, dancing, writing voices and presences? Who asks these questions and why? These questions gain significance since colonization involves not just a systematic oppression of the native peoples and cultures but the fact that "by a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. This work of de-valuing pre-colonial history takes on a dialectical significance today (Fanon1994: 37).

Post-coloniality does not mean a 'free' condition after colonialism; that after the legal, written, symbolic form of a declaration of independence, the native peoples are suddenly free to be what they were once more—human beings with a history. This idea frequently finds its echo in statements like-now that you have your freedom, what wrong with the world and you, now that you are free to be yourself? Underlying these statements is a tacit assumption that it is possible for the minorities, oppressed, natives to go back to their original ways of living, culture and tradition now that they are politically free to do so.

But when we understand that one of the ways in which the colonizes legitimized their colonizing practices was by convincing the natives that if they (the colonizers) should leave, the natives would go back to their barbaric ways, the idea of essentialism is re-invoked only to be further problematized. The assumption is just a rewarding of the essentialist idea-the immutability of identity.

However, in the post-colonial situation, with the possession as opposed to dispossession (the notion of freedom to own, construct, write, sing, dance, worship—on One's own terms) a distinct possibility, the construction of identity is not simple enactment of rituals of retrieval, of the past, history, tradition and the pre-colonial era. This throwing back, this self-reflexivity, this gesture of claiming as one's own, this movement towards an "own-ness" is not an affirmation of some essentialist (static), original idea or notion of pure beginnings: rather, of progress, civilization and culture. It is essential not in terms of the fixed, unchanging nature of the stereotype but to the degree that it is able to refute, reconceptualise, renarrate and re-invest with a multiplicity of meanings its distorted past; precisely that culture the oppressor so thoroughly suppressed. In rejecting Eurocentric notions of postcolonial subjectivity, it does not automatically mean that the postcolonial subject affirms the reclamation of pure, untainted original history, initial logic and point of beginning.

This leads to the postmodernist confrontation: "where documentary historical actuality meets formalist self-reflectivity and parody. At this conjecture, a study of representation becomes not a study of mimetic mirroring or subjective projecting, but an exploration of the ways in which narratives and images structure how we see ourselves and how we construct notion of self, in the present and in the past". (Hutcheon 1989:7). In This confrontation the notion of critical distance, the configuration of history as always a past, the production of knowledge and discourse "untainted" by politics, the unproblematic construction of subjectivity, fixed patterns of representation and the stability of cultural signification are thoroughly problematized, negated, disrupted, and in a variety of ways and in different locales re-enacted, re-invested, and re-codified for political, religious and cultural process. This disjunctive process of simultaneous affirmation and negation, observes Bhabha, is how newness enters the world. It is a moment of enunciation, an enunciation that is never complete but always caught in the process of creation (Bhabha 1994: 212-235).

He further observes, " Cultural global is figured in between spaces of double frames: its historical originaliity marked by a cognitive obscurity; its decentred "subject" signified in the nervous temporality of the transitional, or the emergent provisionality of the "present". In this double frame the "newness of migrant or minority discourse has to be discovered in Medias res: a "newness" that is not part of the "progressive" division between past and present, or the archaic and the modern, nor is it a "newness" that can be contained in the mimesis of "original and copy" (p.227).

Conclusion

The postcolonial turn to history to construct identity is circumscribed by a postmodernist self reflectivity that gives rise to new articulation, new regroupings, new determinations and new identities. Its moment of enunciation is its moment of translation. It is the post-colonial transnational as the postmodern translational.

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