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Postcolonialism—New Directions in the New Millennium

Professor Janet Wilson, University of Northampton , UK

Introduction

My title is close to that of a book of essays I co-edited and which was published by Routledge in 2010 -- *Rerouting the Postcolonial : New Directions for the New Millennium*. Now we are well into the second decade of the 21st century, the preposition 'in the New Millennium' is more appropriate than the anticipatory 'for' ; in this lecture I will range over some of the issues confronting the field of Postcolonial Studies in the last decade, the steps already taken in raising consciousness of changing political, social and economic problems into its disciplinary practices, the response to problems such as the rise of terrorism and terrorist network associated with religious/Muslim fundamentalism , the political revolution throughout Europe and the middle east initiated by new Arab spring last year; and new trends which arise from a shift of attention to issues that come more to the foreground due to the changing political/economic climate: I can name four to begin with: migration and diaspora, the sacred, the environment (ecocriticism), globalisation —these were all included in the 2nd edition of the *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* (published in 2006) in a remapping of the field in the decade since the vol was first published in 1995. I understand that you are all doing a module on postcolonial and some of you are preparing topics for MA dissertations, and so you have an interest in topics such as fundamentalism and religion and consumerism, so will touch on these as well.

I. Terror and the Postcolonial

The new century has been dominated by the new threat to western nations' autonomy and security posed by terrorist /suicide bombings -- of the NY trade centre of 9.11, the London Bombing of 7/7/05 and the Madrid bombings of WHEN? , All have been associated with Muslim fundamentalism in the media , but Postcolonial critics are less concerned with religious fundamentalism as a cultural category. In fact. they would want to delink fundamentalism from religion, and see it, rather in the words of Stephen Morton, as 'a dogmatic attitude to the inviolability of particular actions and practices' Rather attention is devoted to the Western reprisals, state sponsored terrorism in the form of the War on Terror, and the war in Afghanistan , the military occupation of Iraq, There are also related disciplinary measures against terrorism such as the British and American continuing support of Israel's occupation to the West Bank and Lebanon, and in national states the extension of laws of detention, surveillance procedures and the suspension of habeas corpus (CHECK, p. 11 B&M) . The so called unquestioned rightness of the war against terror based on neo imperial orthodoxies, is being challenged by the sceptical postcolonial critic who asks why should the postcolonial state propagate terror? What national and transnational agendas do such a practice and discourse mask? Edward Said drew attention to way that discourse of terrorism has served the interests of the Israeli state and its policies towards other (Palestinians) in an article in 2002 in which he complained at the media focus on suicide bombings in Palestine that it obscured something that is far worse,' the official Israeli evil that has been visited so deliberately and so methodically upon the Palestinian people'— gesturing towards an historical relationship between imperialism and the discourse of terrorism

To postcolonial critics, Elleke Boehmer and Stephen Morton in their introduction to a volume essays called *Terror and the Postcolonial* (2010) terror is becoming the western zeitgeist of 21st century,, and is the object of new study. Questions asked include, What is postcolonial about every day terror, and how is terror colonial or neo imperialist (as critics see it in these anti-terrorist formations as a demonstration of western power) ? Critics see these as timely reminders of the fact that the discipline has not heeded sufficiently the continuing inequities , of globalisation such as labour exploitation of third world subjects and exclusion of subaltern subjects who might be migrants and diasporic form certain national formations. Nor has it addressed the relationship between present day violence and terror and that of imperialism, colonisation in the contemporary post colony (i.e. the social space left after colonial power has retreated leaving the post-imperial nation despite its flag independence (i.e. many nations still carry neo imperialist structures).

So although the dominant paradigm of empires and colonies—the political binaries of coloniser-colonised, metropolitan centres and colonial peripheries, might seem to have little relevance into day's increasing globalised political and fiscal landscapes, with border crossing and transnational flows of people and products, (Arjun Appadurai—ethnoscapes, mediascapes, financescapes)) there is reason to return to the colonial archive of violence , repression and surveillance in the records of colonial formations of sovereignty to establish how these practices continue into counter terrorist formations. For as Boehmer and Morton remind us in their introduction to *Terror and the Postcolonial* and, historical, cultural and literary studies have devote d too little

time to the scrutiny of contemporary imperialism and the traditional colonial and terroristic forms it takes: recognising the rapid pace by which globalisation has revealed imperialism has not always carried over into reawakening of the anti-European critical strain, or the investigation of its collusion with the decentered kaleidoscopic forces of world capitalism. (B&M 9, Loomba et al). Examining terror is to cut across several binaries, such as the dichotomy between modern and anti modern (through stigmatising Muslim fundamentalism as hearkening back, conservative), for terrorism is both modern and anti modern, and the transnational versus the national (both collaborate in the production of terror) .

We can turn to Mohsin Hamid's in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*: (178) for its an insight into the way that the meaning of terrorism is defined by narratives of counter terrorism, that are used to justify the state's use of military force, and mask the way in which the UK-led war on terror, serves US economic, geopolitical, interests at the expense of human lives in Pakistan, Iraq and Afghanistan (Hamid's protagonist points out that counterterrorism was carried out by a killers **not wearing the uniforms of killers**, and observes that the lives of those of us who lived in lands in which such killers also lived, has no meaning except as collateral damage' (precarious case of civil life in Pakistan during US war on Afghanistan).

Hamid's story has resonances for postcolonial critics, for example fundamentalism (represented by the firm he works with Sampson Underwood) is aligned with American consumerism, and the economic system of capitalism, not religion; and it anticipates some familiar assumptions, e.g. the discrimination

that his protagonist Changez suffered in the US after 9/11 due to his dark skin and beard, his obvious marker of foreignness and middle easternness, points to new immigration policies and tightening of controls partly due to the fact that the two—immigrants and terrorists-- have become conflated in people's minds . The conceptual alignment between the control of transnational migration and the perceived terrorist threat to the security of the nation, --has been inflamed by the rhetoric of extremist Right Wing groups like Le Pen's party in France and the British National Party in England, who imply that all foreigners will /immigrants are a threat, The adoption of new, often exclusionary immigration policies, overrules the individual's social and political rights upon which the liberal democratic state is based, These new debates about immigration and terrorism, and new representations of migrants in the cultural political legal discourses of terror, lead Stephen Morton points out in a recent issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, (2010), that there is a need for informed scholarly article and further debate about the competing narratives, cultural histories and legal arguments that frame immigration and terrorism. (WHERE?_

II. The Discipline of Postcolonial Studies

Postcolonial literature like Hamids' offers a critical subversive scrutiny of the colonial relationship and set out to resist colonial perspectives . As postcolonial critics our role is to introduce reading practices which identify such oppositional literary strategies, and assess their effectiveness in pointing to a need for a reconsideration of social, political and cultural inequities). The discipline has until recently been taught mainly in English departments of western universities (and increasingly in non western departments as well) --

but from an outsider, resistant position through engaging with texts and culture which are traditionally outside the established English canon. In seeking to challenge the canon it has also initiated a critical scepticism as well as a self reflexive revisionism.

These modes of enquiry and critique may underpin the response to the encroachment of globalisation, a field that is associated with the social sciences, and threatens to displace postcolonialism as a discipline, because to many people globalisation constitutes the dominant perspective through which to view the contemporary moment. As Ania Loomba et al argue in their introduction to *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond*, 'it is important to go beyond a certain kind of postcolonial studies in order to engage with the imperial formations and ideologies associated with globalization'.

Western critics have been criticised for universalising what are in reality historically, culturally and geographically specific systems of analysis and representations (Bark Moore Gilbert, page?). This stemmed in part from the degree of abstractness which came with institutionalisation, as postcolonial theory from thinkers like Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, absorbed poststructuralist and historicist ideas; this meant that for some postcolonial critics and intellectuals in the third world, there was a theoretical refinement about persistent inequality (and the evils of neo globalisation such as poverty and corruption) in reiterating well built theories which drifted even further away from the conditions they purported to be describing. As my discussion of critical attitudes towards the counter-terrorist discourses and networks in the 21st century shows, Western practitioners are often tinged by ambivalence,

creating a permanent self exculpatory position of self critique. But this has meant, paradoxically, that the developments in theories which seemingly threatened to remove postcolonialism from its ethical roots, prompts a movement which has metamorphosed to meet its critiques. So the field constantly adapting its models and coming up with new ideas, sometimes borrowed from other critics and alternative fields such as human geography (Doreen Massey) and political philosophy such as Slavboj Zizek). At the same time, as the recent investigation of the relationship between postcolonialism and terror indicate, the disciplines adapts its discourses of resistance and politicised critique to the new demands of globalization and neo-imperialism and show a reinvigorated engagement with these same areas-- resistance and liberation -- which have traditionally constituted its strength.

Along with this ongoing analysis of gaps and weaknesses in the enterprise, comes a capacity for adjustment, expansion and change. This inheres in postcolonial theory itself, the strengths of which are its capacity to infuse and diffuse itself into diverse and often seemingly incompatible fields of engagement and geopolitical vistas—its decolonising energy (political, as well as ideological and cultural) is effective precisely because it disrupts monolithic ideologies, it can destabilise grand narratives of both cultural modernity and anti-colonial resistance . So when there is a move to new intellectual and geopolitical territories which might be obliquely postcolonial such as global China, East Central Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union, post-Apartheid South Africa, middle eastern countries, like Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, after the Arab spring over a year ago it is possible to adapt theoretical paradigms to

unusual political circumstances and to address ideological constructions of such cultures in ways which both define and disrupt their centralising, normative assumptions. Postcolonialism is also marked by a sense of potentially uncharted territory as it diversifies into new disciplinary areas like ecocriticism, diaspora studies. These are supplemented by the retrieval and reassertion of the pedagogical and ethical import of the postcolonial in conjunction with its aesthetic potential, which is taken up through new models of textual interpretation (Poyner and Graham)..

Therefore I see that conceptual and disciplinary challenges posed by globalisation and related movements like terrorism, diaspora, environmentalism, have led to a readjustment in the last decade as postcolonial practitioners focus more on the neo-imperial practices that mark out the global condition—showing a shift away from the earlier predominantly literary critical explorations of the 1980s and the vogue for the theoretical and cultural which marked out the 1990s. The temporal horizons of the field now focus less on ‘the narrative of decolonisation’ (Gikandi), than on neocolonial imbalances in the postcolonial present—inequalities, poverty and oppression;

In our volume *Rerouting the Postcolonial: New Directions for the New Millennium*, we aim to show how the field is developing under the impact not just of globalization, but also of environmentalism, religious fundamentalism and transnational formations which may either be political and economic (terrorism, neo liberal ideologies), or cultural (the transnation, the glocal or the cosmopolitan). The ‘rerouting’ of the title plays on the roots/ routes homophones (roots associated with origins, location and place, and routes

(travel with its attendant meanings of uprooting, rerooting, new directions and reconceptualisations of space) In diaspora discourses the homophones have been blended together, to construct alternative 'public spheres'. The inter-related but oppositional meanings of the terms encapsulate the way that transformative ideas of relocation –stemming from the discourses of migration, diaspora, and the new mobile spaces offered by cosmopolitan travel— require new approaches and methods of investigation that go beyond the identifications of national time and space, showing, e.g. how diaspora communities build a new consciousness and solidarities allowing them to live inside the nation but with a difference.

I and my coeditors argue in the introduction that topics and issues commonly associated with the discipline-- diasporic and minoritarian subjectivities, global networks of terrorist activity and power, metropolitan immigrant communities-- are now being treated now in ways that assure us that the postcolonial project has come to embrace a much larger set of intellectual positions than is commonly presumed and that it brings into dialogue diverse scholarly agendas and scholarly practices. In fact as Canadian critic, Diana Brydon says, its decolonizing energies are being dispersed within much broader fields of engagement, to the extent that in some cases a project may be informed by postcolonial thinking without actually categorizing itself as postcolonial or acknowledging postcolonial influences as such (174)—there are different fields of endeavour many of which grapple with related questions within different frame of reference.

Global imaginaries

Running throughout the collection and what I would like to focus on here -- is a renewed engagement with global imaginaries, and subjectivities---which according to Edouard Glissant mean the ways a culture has of perceiving and conceiving of the world, and it implies definitions of community and culture as constantly under construction rather than fixed in nature. One might of course, question the impact of globalization, for example is it anything new or it just a reconfiguring of the familiar capitalist mode of production? Secondly we might see that globalization is in retreat, especially with credit crunch and the current economic crisis; but what is clear is that the current globalising of culture and society has brought to the fore problems which in being addressed require the translation of terms like 'imaginaries' across different geospatial locations, disciplinary formations and frameworks of theoretical allegiance.

Alongside the new thinking provoked by globalization is a fusion of postcolonial studies with sociology and urban studies to examine the phenomenon of new metropolises like Mumbai, Istanbul, aiming to locate the postcolonial in the urban imaginary that they represent—in order to open up to a broader understanding of transitional and transnational postcolonialism and the 21st century expression of the global scale of the urban. The new urban/cities consist of new forms of asymmetrical powers relations embracing social elites and third world societies, which become emancipated because they enter the system of global finance—these cities are at the heart of financial and telecommunication service—and are multicultural meeting places, compact diffuse urban webs, showing a new cosmopolitanism which resists the metropolitan roots of cosmopolitanism at large; yet these are not just new forms of cosmopolitanism,

as the discourses on diaspora and migration also show ghettoization and enclavisation, of people living in a time warp, drawing on mythologies and old traditions

Cosmopolitanism

Nevertheless cosmopolitanism identifies an interface between the postcolonial and theories of globalization, because of its implications of citizenship, civilised conversation 'conviviality' and heightened political responsibilities. Rerouting the postcolonial as one contributor says, requires the deliberate cultivation of cosmopolitan allegiances, because the resistance to colonialism requires more than ever the encouragement of complex, provisional and itinerant loyalties, -- resistance must be global. Secondly cosmopolitanism is being redefined in relation to the new articulations of transnationalism and neoliberalism as a way of addressing the mobility, contingency and varied cultural positions of subjects in an increasingly globalized world, There is a call to expand the term from its association with elite privileged western minorities by Simon Gikandi and Anthony Appiah, in the recognition that the occupation of spaces outside national territories in the current global mobilisation of peoples requires new discursive modes. Speaking of cosmopolitanism in relation to locality, Gikandi draws attention to the limitations of the current theoretical vocabulary to articulate the experiences of postcolonial lives lived beyond national boundaries both in the midst, and paradoxically at the margins of the global international system; the experiences of refugees, nomads, asylum seekers who are often excluded from western cosmopolitan discourses such as diaspora theories—

Globalisation and the Nation State

The new thinking about cosmopolitanism also engages with postcolonial arguments about the category of the nation—which either rehearse its demise or its renewal in relation to globalization ; for national cultural imaginaries, which until recently have been the mode through which the imaginary of the world system has operated are now being challenged by globalization and supplemented by other forms of cultural and social imaginaries which can operate at sub national or supra national levels. (Brydon, 167) : The deterritorialisation which come with globalisation has led to the weakening of the nation state and the national imaginary although the nation remain principal sites for the articulation of subjects’ rights, for imposition of new security measures; Postcolonial critiques of the nation as an *exclusionary* political formation are the source of what Bill Ashcroft calls the transnation—a way of thinking about the world of movement both within and beyond the nation which reflecting the ‘rhizomic interplay of travelling subjects within as well as between nations’; --this can also be seen as a kind of cosmopolitan utopianism a quintessentially human space where global and local imaginaries might mingle.

UTOPIAN TURN IN POST COLONIAL STUDIES

This utopian potential can also be detected in the development of interconnected epistemologies of the global and local. Hence a ‘glocal’ sensibility and a ‘border thinking’ stem from the non-conflictual embrace of several different systems, localities and traditions (including faith -based practices) because as Diana Brydon argues, ‘it is possible to live attuned to different temporal and civilizational systems’ (161); the glocal allows for

distinct levels of individual and collective identity to be expressed and for ethical imperatives and representational choices to be brought together. This strand of utopianism might come close to Paul Gilroy's notion of planetary humanism --a global solidarity against racism and all types of essentialism through increased conversation -- and so in that way is also reminiscent of Leela Gandhi's 'affective communities' which underpin a more utopian vision of the world. Two glocal projects, according to Patrick Williams (in *Rerouting the Postcolonial*) are the West-East Divan Orchestra cofounded by Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim, and the New Social movements such as the World Social Forum, and we anticipate that we will find others through our collaborations with universities in Gujarat.

There is therefore a new utopian turn in postcolonial studies, emerging partly as a response to the impact of globalization and the pervasiveness of neo-imperial ideologies. Utopianism is one strand of transnational cosmopolitanism reflecting the increased mobilisation both within and between cultures and nations, and the need for a more engaged dialogue with the Other; but this is neither abstract or theoretical in its postcolonial embodiment because it participates in discourses which are politically informed: as such it is pragmatic and ethical, articulating a practical project that translates in the terms of Ernst Bloch, into the 'intention towards the possibility that has still not become'. This gives postcolonialism the possibility of being an anticipatory discourse, one which in the view of Patrick Williams, who uses the term in relation to the condition of hope which prevails among some subjects in Palestine, will help bring about a better world. Such a 'utopian postcolonial cosmopolitanism' offers

a conceptual basis for a new disciplinary framework which is required now that nations and states are no longer seen as stable and clearly demarcated identities.

GLOBALISATION

Finally I turn to the question of how postcolonial pedagogy might be reshaped by the new forces of globalisation. The new interrogation of the practice of postcolonial criticism within the institutional locations hinges on the issue of how one **performs** postcolonial studies (it is not what we do but how we do it, says Patrick Williams) given the discrepancy between the objects of enquiry and the institutional position from which the critique is being articulated (this has led to accusations of complicity, privilege and lack of representativity—which in the past have partly been addressed through theories of the subaltern).

Once again the ground is shifting with the expansion of the disciplinary base provided by globalization. Diana Brydon advocates a postcolonial epistemology in which research, and education are made ethically relevant, and she argues the previous postcolonial concerns with national liberation should be redirected into contemporary justice, educational and equity movements which operate at the scales below and beyond the nation state. This kind of politically oriented, pedagogically relevant knowledge enquiry can be brought about by judicious educational policies, which bring together diverse research practices, curricular choices and concrete areas of engagement. She offers the example of the Human Rights Museum in Winnipeg, Canada, to show how institutional knowledge acquired in schools and universities can both inform and be influenced by larger projects of public education.

Brydon's enquiry and recommendations are made against the backdrop of what she argues are accumulated 'cracks' in the world imaginary, partly due to the weakening of the national cultural imaginaries, and their underpinning structures of capitalism of the world system and the logic of liberal thought, one such example is the fall of the Soviet Union, and the rise of neoliberal globalization ; another is the rise to economic power of the BRIC group (Brazil, Russia, India, China), with a subsequent shift of economic power in other spheres and a reminder that postcolonial studies is not just an Anglophone endeavour; a third is the 'reverse colonisation' or 'reverse globalization' phenomenon, migrations to the first world nations necessitating consideration of the role of multi-faith and multicultural communities within the nation state. She sees such cracks as bringing the postcolonial into new spaces of thinking, and into closer alignment with the arguments of other disciplinary communities as well as different historical contexts and geographical spaces

Pedagogical practices are therefore in need of further development — for 'knowledge as emancipation'. Brydon advocates an education able to reconcile the desire to foster individual autonomy and the responsibility to critique entrenched systems of inequality at a collective global level. Postcolonial studies, she suggests might engage in more relational and transcultural forms of enquiry whereby distinct forms of individuation and political agency can enter the dialogue, And she reminds us that only by entering into uncomfortable dialogues both within and across disciplines can the postcolonial refashion itself as a rhizomatic paradigm, an interpretive framework that can come to inform

wider public projects such as education policies, or ethnographic or museological practices.

Future Directions?

The consolidation of the discipline has meant that there has been some undermining of the sense of historical urgency that came from the oppositional political energies that animated the decolonising intellectuals of the twentieth century. So, I wish to briefly outline a snapshot for the future, of areas where the postcolonial enterprise might develop new areas of enquiry and cross disciplinary modes of engagement

Widening the canon; 1. the postcolonial should reroute into a multi lingual field, because non-Anglophone writers and vernacular literatures are underrepresented, due to the favouring of a relatively small range of postcolonial 'cosmopolitan' writers whose work is published in largely metropolitan-based critical journals. The critique of Raymond Williams of the politics of modernism - that it is the metropolitan interpretation of its own processes as universals -- might be equally relevant to postcolonialism **(Menon)**. This entails a greater investment in translation studies and an embrace of languages other than English, Spanish or French. 2, Engage more with the visual arts, graphic art and design, photography and film. 3. Opening up to time frames earlier than the contemporary, and continue the project of cultural recuperation with a more historical awareness; seeking to recover erased voices and moments of rupture which have been written out of historical narratives.. 4. Continue to challenge the premises of regional or area studies, which often privilege national concerns and/or networks of empire as found in the concept of commonwealth literature,

by arguing for comparativist approaches, and the inclusion of minoritarian groups. 5. Strengthen the interface between environmentalism and globalisation: there is a need to reinvigorate the ethical and aesthetic engagement with questions that historically constituted postcolonial theory's theoretical and political strength, such as to develop an ethics of responsibility in relation to major issues like global warming, and essentialism in its various guises (e.g. terrorism and the war on terror). There is a need to decouple globalisation from its neo-liberal, neo-imperial structures and to embrace for example an alternative, social ecologically aware position in considering ecology, and the environment

CONCLUSION The beginning of the new millennium saw predictions of the death of postcolonialism; there were complaints about its exhaustion as a theoretical paradigm, or of a crisis in postcolonial studies as the MLA Roundtable addressed in 2007. I hope my discussion of the new directions—the discourse on terror, new urbanism, utopianism, postcolonial cosmopolitanism and pedagogy -- makes clear that postcolonialism is far from having expended its energies and in many cases these new concerns have entailed reconfigurations of its earlier preoccupation with resistance and liberation. It has a positive future, and one in which, postcolonialism should be able to speak about what it is **for**, rather than what it is against (although we should not be complacent about this). In the last decade it has begun to redirect its theoretical energies and its critical enquiry in ways that preserve its dynamism, flexibility, critical force and ultimately its cultural relevance; the critical project of regrounding of the discipline in a changing and increasingly globalized

contemporaneity, is ongoing, made with the view to strengthening and enhancing its theoretical and pedagogical impact in a comparative context.

