Chapter 1

Mapping the Postcolonial

Postcolonial studies refer to the analysis of all modes of discourse that are specific to the former colonies of the European imperial powers. These discourses include history, culture and literature. The term “Postcolonial” is usually used to refer to the study of works written at any point after colonisation first occurred in a given country. It is sometimes used more specifically to the analysis of literary texts and other cultural discourses that emerged after the end of colonial period. Some scholars like Aijaz Ahmad and Arif Dirlik have pointed out that the term “Postcolonial” is confusing and even misleading because it has been used to refer both to works written during and after the colonial period in various countries. These studies have focussed especially on the Third World countries in Africa, Asia and Caribbean Islands and South America. Critics like Bill Ashcroft and others, however, extend the scope of such analysis also to the discourses of such countries as Australia, Canada and New Zealand which were white-settler
colonies and which achieved independence much earlier than the Third World countries. Sometimes Postcolonial studies include some aspects of British literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries viewed through a perspective that reveals the colonial motives in the social and economic life represented in the literature.

The breadth of topics postcolonial criticism addresses, however, enables it to encompass a variety of approaches and critiques. On the one hand, it covers the pan-national movement seeking to celebrate Negritude in postcolonial nations and cultures. On the other hand, the attacks on pan-nationalism levelled by Frantz Fanon are also deemed postcolonial.

The rapidly expanding field of postcolonial studies, as a result, is not a unified movement with a distinctive methodology and approach. The heavily post-structuralist influence on the major exponents of postcolonial theory, Edward Said (Foucault) Homi Bhabha (Althusser and Lacan) and Gayatri Spivak (Derrida) give it a poststructuralist bias. But there are other critics who take the historical approach and
Marxist methodology such as Aijaz Ahmad, Talpade Mohanty and Benita Parry. Postcolonialism is now used in wide and diverse ways to include the study and analysis of European territorial conquest, various institutions of European colonialisms, the discursive operations of the Empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourses and the resistance of those subjects. In short, it analyses the colonial legacies in both pre and post independence nations and communities.

Bart Moore-Gilbert points out that recently there has been a growing divide between postcolonial theory on the one hand and the rest of the postcolonial criticism on the other (1). He defines postcolonial theory as work which is shaped primarily or to a significant degree by methodological affiliation to French post-structuralist theories of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan. In practice this will mean the work of Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha. It is the affiliation to post-structuralist theories that has generated heated critical debates provoking extremes of both approval and disapproval. Robert Young’s
White Mythologies (1990) announces a new logic of historical writing in the works of these postcolonial theorists. Young argues that Said, Spivak and Bhabha have enabled a radical reconceptualisation of the relationship between nation, culture and ethnicity which has major cultural and political significance. However, Derek Walcot, Talapade Mohanty, Aijaz Ahmad and others disapprove of this bias towards theory. However, Bart-Moore Gilbert admits that he does not wish to essentialise the distinction between the two kinds of analysis because the distinctions between them cannot be made absolute. There are thematic and methodological convergences between these two fields.

In order to understand the significance and the range and variety of this recently developed discipline, we have to trace its history back to the beginning of this century. We need to discuss cultural formations as diverse as the Harlem Renaissance of 1920s and the Negritude movement of 1940s and 1950s. Such a history would need to address figures as geographically, ideologically and culturally varied as C.L.R. James (Trinidad) Frantz Fanon (Martinique) Chinua
Achebe (Africa) and Ranajith Guha (Indian Historiographer based in Australia). We will also have to examine the claims of some Latin American criticism, Commonwealth studies of 1960s and 1970s and various kinds of aesthetic theory in non-European languages considered as precursors to what is now regarded as postcolonial criticism.

As John Mcleod has suggested, in order to understand the range and variety of the term postcolonialism, we have to place it in two contexts (6-13). The first regards the historical experiences of decolonisation that have occurred chiefly in the twentieth century. The second concerns the relevant intellectual developments in the later part of the twentieth century, especially the shift from the study of commonwealth literature to postcolonialism.

At the turn of the twentieth century European colonial rule covered a vast area of the earth that included parts of Africa, Asia, Australia, Canada, the Caribbean and Ireland. As a result of widespread national liberation movements during twentieth century, all colonial empires started crumbling. In short, twentieth century has been the century
of colonial demise and decolonisation for millions of people who were once subjected to the authority of the imperial power. Yet, the material and imaginative legacies of both colonialism and decolonisation remains fundamentally important constitutive elements in a variety of contemporary disciplines, such as Anthropology, Economics, Literature and Global Politics.

At this point we can refer to the nature and role of colonialism of the modern times. Colonialism is a specific form of exploitation of subject countries that developed with the expansion of European capitalism over the last four hundred years. Colonialism was part of the commercial venture of the western nations that developed from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Colonialism was a lucrative commercial operation bringing wealth and riches to the western nations through economic exploitation of others. It was pursued for economic profits, reward and riches. Hence, colonialism and capitalism share a mutually supportive relationship with each other. Colonialism is sometimes used interchangeably with imperialism, but, in truth they mean
different things. Edward Said offers the following distinction:

“Imperialism means the practice, theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; colonialism which is almost always a consequence of imperialism is the implanting of settlement on distant territory” (Said Culture 8). Imperialism is an ideological concept which upholds the legitimacy of the economic and military control of one nation by another. Colonisation is, however, one form of practice which results from the ideology of imperialism, and specifically concerns the settlement of one group of people in a new location. Imperialism is not strictly concerned with the issue of settlement; it does not demand the settlement of different places. In these terms, colonialism is an historically specific experience. It shows how imperialism can work through the act of settlement, but it is not the only way of pursuing imperialist ideals. Hence it could be argued that while colonialism is virtually over today, imperialism continues apace as western nations such as America are still engaged in imperial acts securing wealth and power through the economic
exploitation of other nations.

Now let us turn our attention to the process of decolonisation. Mcleod finds three distinct periods of decolonisation (9). The first was the loss of the American colonies and declaration of American independence in the late eighteenth century. The second period spans the end of the nineteenth century to the first decade of the twentieth century and concerns the creation of “dominions.” This was the term used to describe the nations of Canada, Australia, Newzealand and South Africa. These nations consisted of large European populations settled there. The settler people of these nations agitated for self-government which they achieved as dominions of the British Empire. The third period of decolonisation, occurred in decades immediately following the end of Second World War. Unlike the self-governing settler dominions, the colonised lands in South Asia, Africa and the Caribbean did not become sites of mass European migration and tended to feature larger dispossessed population settled by small British colonial elites. The achievement of independence in these locations occurred mainly as

Moving from the history of decolonisation to the intellectual context of postcolonialism, we find the emergence of two discourses: Commonwealth literature and theories of colonial discourses. These are the bedrocks on which post colonial studies developed and assumed its present form.

Commonwealth literature is broadly the literature of former British empire and the commonwealth. The term has sometimes included literatures written in local languages. The rise of the study of national literatures begins with the study of American literature but those literatures that came to be collectively studied as literature of the Commonwealth began from the late 1940s onwards. They were beginning to be considered within their own national contexts.
Contemporary postcolonial studies represent the intersection of commonwealth literary studies and what is now usually referred to as colonial discourse theory. Commonwealth postcolonialism remains primarily committed to the literary text but it has increasingly turned as well, to imperial documents and discourses of Empire. Commonwealth literary studies incorporated the study of writers from the predominantly European settler communities as well as writers belonging to those countries which were in the process of gaining independence from British rule such as African, Caribbean and South Asian nations. Literary critics began to distinguish a fast growing body of literature written in English which included such figures as R.K. Narayanan (India), George Lamming (Barbados) Katherine Mansfield (New Zealand) and Chinua Achebe (Nigeria). The creation of the category of the commonwealth literature as a special area of study was an attempt to identify and locate this literary activity and to consider by a comparative approach the common concerns and attributes that these many-fold literary voices might have. Significantly neither American nor Irish
literature was included in the early formulations of the field. Commonwealth literature then was associated exclusively with selected countries with a history of colonisation.

As a result of the change in relationship between Britain and dominions in the first half of the twentieth century, a different meaning of commonwealth emerged. Britain held no political authority over other commonwealth nations, and the term "British" was abandoned altogether.

This shift from colonial to Commonwealth, as Mcleod suggests, is a particular version of history in which the status of the colonised countries changes from subservience to equality (12-15). The identification and study of commonwealth literature certainly echoed the tenor of the specifically benign usage of commonwealth. But it also had its own problems. In general, the term suggested a shared literary inheritance between disparate and variable nations. It distinctly promoted unity in diversity. However, that common inheritance arguably served to reinforce the primacy of Britain among Commonwealth nations. Commonwealth literature may well have been created in an attempt to bring
together writings from around the world. Yet the assumptions remained that these texts were addressed primarily to a western English speaking readership. The "commonwealth" in Commonwealth literature was never fully free from the older, more imperious connotations of the term.

One of the fundamental assumptions held by the first western critics of Commonwealth literature concerned the relationship between literature and nation. Many agreed that the "novel" ideas and new interpretations of life in Commonwealth literature owed much to the ways that writers were forging their own sense of the national and cultural identity. This was certainly one of the functions of the text regarded as Commonwealth literature.

However, the attention to the alleged nationalist purposes of commonwealth literature had only a secondary role, to more abstract concerns which distracted attention away from specific national contexts. Many critics were primarily preoccupied with identifying a common goal shared among writers from many different nations that went beyond more "local" affairs. Just as the idea of a Commonwealth of nations
suggested diverse communities with a common set of concerns, commonwealth of literature whether produced in India, Australia or the Caribbean was assumed to reach across national borders and deal with universal concerns. Commonwealth literature certainly dealt with national and cultural issues but the best writing possessed the mysterious power to transcend them too. Since the texts studied as Commonwealth literature were written ostensibly in English, they were to be evaluated in relation to English literature, with the same criterion used to account for the literary value of the age-old English "Classics." Commonwealth literature at its best was comparable with the English literary canon which functioned as the means of measuring its value. Commonwealth literature then, was really a sub-set of canonical English literature, evaluated in terms derived from the conventional study of English that stressed the values of timelessness and universality. National differences were certainly important, but ultimately these national specifics were secondary to the fundamental universal meaning of the work.

Today this kind of critical approach that makes
secondary, the historical contexts that inform a work of literature is often described as liberal humanist. For Liberal humanists most 'literary' texts always transcend the local contexts of their initial production and deal with moral preoccupations relevant to people of all times and places. In retrospect, many critics of commonwealth literature appear very much like liberal humanists. Unlike later critics, they did not think about examining how the texts they read might resist their reading practices and challenge the assumptions of universality and timelessness that legitimated the criteria of "good writing." Indeed, one of the fundamental differences that many postcolonial critics today have from commonwealth predecessors is their insistence that historical, geographical and cultural specifics are vital to both the writing and the reading of a text, and cannot be easily bracketed as secondary in nature or mere background. But to many critics of commonwealth literature, these texts conformed to a critical status quo. They were not considered especially radical or oppositional nor were they seen to challenge the western criteria of excellence used to read them. Their experimental elements, their novelty
and local focus made them exciting to read and helped depict the nation with which they were concerned. But their potential differences were contained by the identification within them of universal themes that brand texts safety inside the aesthetic criteria of the West. But, for postcolonial critics the different preoccupations and contexts of text were to become more important than their alleged similar abstract qualities. In the late 1970s and 1980s many critics endeavoured to discard the liberal humanist bias, and to read the literature in new ways. Contemporary postcolonial studies represent the intersection of Commonwealth literary studies and what is usually now referred to as colonial discourse theory. Aschroft Bill et al put it thus:

In fighting for the recognition of postcolonial commonwealth writing within academies whose roots and continuing power depended on the persisting cultural and political centrality of the imperium, and in a discipline whose manner and subject matter were the local signs and
symbols of that power--British literature and its teaching constantly reified, replayed and reinvested the colonial relation--the nationalist critics were forced to conduct their guerilla-war within the frameworks of an English critical practice. In so doing they initially adopted the tenets of Leavisite and/or new criticism, reading postcolonial text within a broadly Euro-modernist tradition. But one whose increasing and inevitable erosion was ensured by the anti-colonial pressures of the literary texts themselves. Forced from this new critical hermeticism into a socio-cultural specificity by such local colonial pressures, Commonwealth anti-postcolonialism increasingly took on a localised orientation and a more generally theoretical one, bringing it closer to the concerns of what would become its developing ‘sister’ stream, colonial discourses theory. (Key Concepts 53-54)
Colonial discourse theories are of prime importance in the development of postcolonialism. Colonial discourse theory analyses the discourses of colonialism and colonisation which demonstrates the way by which such discourses obscure the underlying political and material aims of colonisation and which points out the deep ambivalences of that discourse, as well as the way it constructs both colonising and colonised subjects. In other words, they explore the ways that representations and modes of perception are used as weapons of colonial power to keep colonised peoples subservient to colonial rule. Colonial discourse is the complex of signs and practices, that organise social existence and social reproduction within colonial relationship. Colonial discourse is greatly implicated in ideas of the centrality of Europe. It operates by persuading people to internalise its logic and speak its language. It is the system of knowledge and beliefs about the world within which acts of colonisation take place. Although it is generated within the society and cultures of colonisers, it becomes that discourse within which the colonised
may also come to see themselves. A particular value system is taught as the best, truest world view. Colonial discourse hinges on notions of race that begins to emerge at the very advent of European imperialism. Colonial discourse tends to exclude statements about the exploitation of the resources of the colonised. Rather it conceals these benefits in statements about the inferiority of the colonised. The cultural values of the colonised people are considered as lacking in value or even as being "uncivilized", from which they must be rescued. Since the colonised societies are in the barbaric depravity, it is the duty of the imperial power to advance the civilization of the colony through trade, administration, culture and moral improvement. Such is the power of colonial discourse that the colonised subjects are not consciously aware of the duplicity of the colonisers' position. The colonial discourse constructs the coloniser as much as the colonised.

In the 1950s there emerged much important work that attempted to record the psychological damage suffered by colonial peoples who internalised these colonial discourses. Prominent was the psychologist Frantz Fanon who wrote widely and passionately about
the damage French colonialism had wrecked upon millions of people who were subjected to its power.

Frantz Fanon was born in French Antilles in 1925 and educated in Martinique and France. His experience of racism while being educated by and working for the French affected him deeply. Influenced by contemporary philosophers and poets such as Jean Paul Sartre and Aime Cesaire, Fanon’s publications include two books, *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* that deal with the mechanics of colonialism and its effects in those it subjected. *Black Skin, White Masks* examined the psychological effects of colonialism drawing upon Fanon’s experience as a psychoanalyst. Fanon looked at the cost of the individual who lives in a world where due to the colour of his or her skin, he or she is rendered peculiar. Fanon’s narrative is both inspiring and distressing at once. *Black Skin, White Masks* explains the consequences of identity formation for the colonised subject who is forced into the internalisation of the self as an “other”. The negro is deemed to epitomise everything that the colonising French are not. The colonisers are civilised,
rational and intellectual. The negro remains “other” to all these qualities against which colonising peoples derive their sense of superiority and normality. *Black Skin, White Masks* depicts those colonised by French imperialism as doomed to hold a traumatic belief in their own inferiority. One response to such trauma is to strive to escape it by embracing the civilising ideals of French motherland. However hard the colonised try to accept the education, values and languages of France they are never accepted on equal terms. For Fanon the end of colonialism meant not just the political and economic change but psychological change too. Colonialism could be destroyed only when this way of thinking about identity is successfully challenged.

The split between the coloniser and the colonised is further forcefully analysed in *The Wretched of the Earth*. Fanon says that the colonising subject also finds himself in a condition of ontological ambivalence: the coloniser and the colonised, the empowered and disempowered are locked in a symbiotic relation in which the first cannot escape the consequences of
his relationship with the other. In *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon, as the spokesman of the fighters, calls for the unity of the African continent against all the discords and all the particularisms.

Aime Cesaire’s *Discourse on Colonialism* is indisputably one of the key texts in the tidal wave of anti-colonial literature produced during the post-war period. In this book Cesaire demonstrates how colonialism works to decivilise the coloniser. The so-called civilised colonisers resort to torture, violence, race hatred and immorality to perpetuate their power over the colonised. The instruments of colonial power rely on barbaric, brutal violence and intimidation and the end result is the degradation of the coloniser himself. Cesaire’s book is a discourse on the material and spiritual havoc created by colonialism and it anticipates the explosion of work which we call now postcolonial studies. *Discourse* made some critical contribution to our thinking about colonialism, fascism and revolution. This helps us to locate the origins of Fascism within colonialism itself and within the very traditions of
humanism. *Discourse* goes one step further by drawing a direct link between the logic of colonialism and the rise of Fascism. Cesaire points out that Europeans tolerated “Nazism before it was inflicted on them, that they absolved it, shut their eyes to it, legitimized it, because, until then it had been applied only to non-European peoples; that they have cultivated that Nazism, that they are responsible for it, and that before engulfing the whole edifice of western Christian civilization in its reddened waters, it oozes, seeps and trickles from every crack” (*Discourse* 36). He says that at the end of capitalism which is eager to outlive its day, there is Hitler, at the end of formal humanism and philosophy of renunciation there is Hitler (37). Surprisingly few assessments of postcolonial criticism pay much attention to the contents of *Discourse* besides mentioning it in a long list of pioneering works. Aime Cesaire was an older contemporary of Frantz Fanon. Born in Martinique, educated and settled in France, he met a number of like-minded intellectuals most notably Senghor. Meeting Senghor and another Senegalese intellectual Ousman Sose aroused in Cesaire an interest in
Africa and their collaborations eventually gave birth to the concept of Negritude.

While Postcolonial theory customarily traces its intellectual and political origins through more recent theoretical developments back to Fanon, Memmi, Du Bois and Gramsci, the historical as well as the theoretical significance of Jean Paul Sartre's role and influence remain undervalued and unexamined. Sartre represents a major theoretical pivot between the so-called divide between postcolonialism and anti-colonial movements by demonstrating the basis for their common political inheritances. Sartre was most conspicuously involved in the politics of anti-colonial movements in his own personal activism and in his writings. Sartre was extensively concerned with colonial and Third World issues from 1948 onwards, from his first engagement with racism and Negritude, the colonial wars in Indo-China, Morocco and Algeria. The implications of his involvement can only be fully addressed in the wider context of his other writings in these areas: the famous preface to Senghor's collections of poems (1948), the chapter on colonial violence in the Critique of
Dialectical Reason which inspired Frantz Fanon to write The wretched of the Earth. His two prefaces to Mammi’s The Coloniser and the Colonised and Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth points to the fundamental weakness of European humanism. Sartre in his preface to Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth denounces the collusion of humanism with European Colonialism:

What empty chatter: liberty, equality and fraternity, love, honour, country and who knows what else? That did not prevent from holding forth at the same time in racist language: filthy nigger, filthy Jew, filthy North-Africans. Enlightened, liberal and sensitive souls— in short, neocolonialists--claimed to be shocked by this inconsistency; that is an error or bad faith. Nothing is more consistent among us than racist humanism, since Europeans have only been able to make themselves human beings by creating slaves and monsters. (Sartre 151)
In *Orientalism* (1978) Edward Said focussed on the way the colonising First World has invented false images and myths of the Third World. These images and myths, stereotypical in nature, have conveniently justified western exploitation and domination of Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures. For Said, the discourse of Orientalism was very widespread and endemic in European thought. It was a form of academic discourse as well as a style of thought based on the ontological and epistemological distinction between the "Orient" and the "Occident" (Said, *Orientalism*). Said looked at the divisive relationship between the coloniser and the colonised from a different angle. Like Fanon, he explored the extent to which colonialism created a way of seeing the world. *Orientalism* draws upon developments in Marxist theories of power, especially the Political Philosophy of the Italian intellectual Antonio Gramsci and Michel Foucault of the French post-structuralism. Said examined how the knowledge that the western imperial powers formed about their colonies, helped to justify their subjugation. Western powers like France and Britain produced a wealth of knowledge about the locations
they dominated. He looks at imperial representations of Egypt and the Middle East in a variety of texts and points out that Western travellers in these regions scarcely did ever try to learn anything about or from the native peoples they met. Instead of that, they recorded their observation based on common assumptions about Orient as a mystic place of exoticism, moral laxity, sexual degeneracy and so on. *Orientalism* had a great impact on incipient postcolonial thought, and the Western metropolitan academy fell under its spell for decades to come. As Leela Gandhi says:

Commonly regarded as the catalyst and reference point for postcolonialism, *Orientalism* represents the first phase of postcolonial theory. Rather than engaging with the ambivalent conditions of colonial aftermath -- or indeed with the history and motivations of anti-colonial resistance -- it directs attention to the discursive and textual production of colonial meanings, and concomitantly the consolidation of colonial
hegemony. While colonial discourse analysis is now only one aspect of postcolonialism, few postcolonial critics dispute its enabling effect upon subsequent theoretical improvisations. (64-65).

The success of *Orientalism* encouraged new kinds of study on the operations of colonial discourses. A new generation of critics turned to more theoretical materials in their work. It marked a major departure from earlier humanist approaches which characterised the criticism of Commonwealth literature. This was probably the beginning of postcolonialism as we understand it today. In 1980s there emerged a host of excitingly new forms of textual analysis notable for their eclecticism. They combined interdisciplinary approaches taking the cue from the insights of feminism, philosophy, psychology, politics and many other disciplines.

Moreover, one witnesses a fundamental reassessment of modes of knowledge production, in a whole range of academic disciplines. The issues of race, colony, empire and
nationhood were becoming central intellectual concerns, even as the very modes of knowledge production and the politics of intellectual work were under scrutiny. These issues were addressed with a new interest in representation and discourse. This attention to the contingency of representation led to an analysis both of the ways in which disciplines constructed their own authority as well as the material circumstances of intellectual production. The earlier anti-colonial critique had foregrounded western constructions of the coloniser and colonised, of centre and periphery and had challenged the dualism that shaped knowledge in areas such as literature, psychoanalysis and history. But these texts remained in many ways dependent on the very structures of thought they were interested in dismantling. These texts inverted the structure of binary distinctions between master and slave for instance but without necessarily questioning the validity of dualism itself. They projected the narrative of nationalism as a challenge to colonialism and it served as a crucial function for decolonisation. But the postcolonialists assert that the idea of the modern nation state relied on the
narrative of modernity and Enlightenment notions of freedom and democracy. Postcolonial theory on the other hand problematises the nation state and its ideologies. It rejects both the Western imperialism and the nationalist project.

Postcolonial theory contends that the political concepts that have shaped modern history no longer seem adequate for coping with contemporary realities. The profound changes such as decolonisation and the distribution of global power have led to instabilities which have revealed that old narratives of progress and reason are inadequate for addressing contemporary realities. The rise of new social movements around such issues as race, gender and ethnicity have revealed the limits of older conceptions of community, individual and nation. Postcolonial theory have been formed as a response to those pressures. As Padmini Mongia says:

The rise of postcolonial theory in metropolitan academies must also be understood, in part, in terms of the debates that have raged since the 1980s which go under the broad rubric of 'multiculturalism'. The challenges now posed to
traditional disciplines and canons have been built on the space cleared by struggles of 1960s and 1970s, primarily those of Black Studies and Women Studies. Further, the multiplying constituencies of the First World together with the cross disciplinary challenges posed by the contemporary theory have created the space for a new opposition. Within this space, postcolonial theory finds a niche in the western academy (6).

We can identify three forms of postcolonial textual analysis that became prevalent in Anglo-American academy. One involved the re-reading of canonical texts in order to examine the complicity of a large part of Western culture and English literature in the attitudes and values underpinning colonisation. The writers who dealt manifestly with colonial themes such as Defoe, Kipling and Conrad are analysed with a view to find out whether they were supportive or critical of colonial discourses. From the more obvious figures like Defoe, Conrad and Kipling, attention has now spread to writers who were traditionally conceived as of having no
immediately apparent connections to questions of empire, such as Jane Austen and Charlotte Bronte. Attention is being devoted to considerations of the interconnections between empire and literary production in the whole periods and movements. For example, in *British Romantic Writers and East*, Nigel Leask analyses the recent turn to political and historical readings of Romantic writers. Here, Nigel Leask sets out to study the works of Byron, Shelley and De Quency along with other minor writers in relation to Britain's imperial designs over the Orient. Combining historical and theoretical approach with detailed analysis of specific works, it examines the anxieties and instabilities of Romantic representation of the empire. It argues that these anxieties were not marginal but central to the Romantic writers. As far as Renaissance studies are concerned Stephen Greenblatt's *Marvellous Possessions: The Wonder of the New World* and Ania Loomba's *The Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama* can be cited as examples of postcolonial interpretations of Renaissance drama.

Critics like Ellek Boehmer extend the scope of this kind
of reading and goes to the extent of telling that the empire was itself at least in part a textual exercise. The colonial officers filing a report on affairs in his district, and administrators who consulted Islamic and Hindu sacred texts to establish a legal system for British India, they also understood colonisation by way of text. The empire in its heyday was conceived and maintained in an array of writings. The literature of the time apart from popular verse were infused with the ideology of empire such as race-pride and national superiority. Empire was shaped by military conflict, the unprecedented displacement of people and the quest for profits. "The business of colonization meant gamble and experimentation, with lives, with funds, above all with meaning" (Boehmer 13).

Another form of textual analysis is based on the post-structuaralist thought of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan. Post-colonial criticism with poststructuralist orientation began to enquire in particular into the representation of colonial subjects in a variety of colonial texts. The West produced knowledge about other peoples in order to prove the truth of their
inferiority. The question naturally arises whether the colonised subject resisted being represented in terms of colonial values. This issue was pursued in different ways during 1980s by two of the leading and most controversial postcolonial theorists Homi K. Bhabha and Gayathri Chakravorti Spivak. Although the study of the controlling power of representation in colonised societies had begun in the late 1970s with texts such as Said's *Orientalism*. What came to be called colonial discourse theory was developed in the works of Spivak and Bhaba. The actual term "postcolonial" was not employed in their early studies of the power of colonialist discourse to shape and form opinion and policy in the colonies and metropolis. Spivak first used the term "postcolonial" in her collection of interviews and recollections published in 1990 called *The Post Colonial Critic*.

Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak is a leading postcolonial critic who closely follows the lessons of deconstruction. Her reputation was first made for her translation and preface of Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1976) and she has since applied deconstructive strategies to various theoretical engagements
and textual analyses: From Feminism, Marxism and Literary Criticism to most recently postcolonial criticism. Spivak is widely cited in a range of disciplines. Her work is nearly evenly split between dense theoretical writings with flashes of insight and published interviews in which she wrestles with many of the same issues in a more easy and immediate manner. What Edward Said calls contrapuntal reading strategy has to be used as her ideas are continually evolving and resist a straight textual analysis in true deconstructive fashion.

Gayathri Chakravarthi was born in Calcutta in 1942 to metropolitan middle class parents. She belonged to the first generation of Indian intellectuals after Independence. She took her M.A in English from Cornell and taught at the university of Iowa while working on her PhD and was supervised by Paul de man. Apart from her translation of Grammatology her work consist in poststructuralist literary criticism, deconstructive reading of Marxism, Feminism and post-colonialism. She is currently the Avalon foundation professor at Columbia. Spivak’s chief concern can be
summarised as a dissatisfaction with the limitation of cultural studies. A uneasy marriage of Marxism, Feminism and Deconstruction underlies her critical work. Her major works on postcolonial issues include *The Post Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (1990), *Outside In The Teaching Machine* and *A Critique Of Post Colonial Reason: Towards The History Of The Vanishing Present*. Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) gave her a certain notoriety. In it she describes the circumstances surrounding the suicide of a young Bengali woman that indicates a failed attempt at self-representation because her attempted "speaking" outside normal patriarchal channels was not understood or supported. Spivak concluded that subaltern cannot speak. This essay perhaps demonstrates her concern for the process whereby postcolonial studies ironically re-inscribe neo-colonial imperatives of political domination, economic exploitation and cultural erasure. In other words, is the post-colonial critic unknowingly complicit in the work of imperialism? Is postcolonialism a specifically first world, male, privileged, academic, institutionalized discourse that
classifies and surveys the East in the same measure as the actual modes of colonial dominance it seeks to dismantle? These are the questions raised by Spivak in the essay. The term “subaltern” meaning “inferior rank” is adopted by Antonio Gramsci to refer to those groups in society who are subjected to the hegemony of the ruling classes. The subaltern classes may include peasants, workers and other groups denied access to hegemonic power. The notion of the subaltern became an issue in postcolonial theory when Spivak critiqued the assumptions of the Subaltern Studies group in the essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”. This question, she claims, is one that the group must ask.

Homi Bhabha’s mode of postcolonial criticism deploys a specifically post-structuralist method for his exploration of colonial discourse. His writing collected as The Location of Culture (1994) are characterised by his promotion of the ideas of “colonial ambivalence” and “hybridity”. For Bhabha the colonial discourse is split and flawed. The project of domesticate and civilizing indigenous population is
founded on the ideas of repetition, imitation and resemblance.

In the essay "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse", Bhabha probes the psychic mechanism of the process of representation to bring out the ambivalence of a project that produces colonial subjects.

The term "ambivalence" was first developed in psychoanalysis to describe a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite. It also refers to simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action (Young, *Colonial Desire* 161). Homi Bhabha adopted this term into colonial discourse analysis to characterise the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. The relationship is ambivalent because the colonised subject is never simply and completely opposed to the colonised. In Bhaba 'ambivalence' suggests that complicity and resistance exist in a fluctuating relation within the colonial subject.

The concept "mimicry" has been crucial in Homi Bhabha's view of colonial discourse. For him mimicry is the
process by which the colonial subject is reproduced as almost
the same but not quite the same. When the colonial discourse
encourages the colonial subject to mimic the coloniser by
adopting the coloniser’s cultural habits, the result is never a
simple reproduction of those traits. Mimicry by the colonised
contains both mockery and a certain menace. Ambivalence de-
scribes this fluctuating relationship between mimicry and
mockery. In this respect it is not necessarily disempowering
for the colonial subject. The effect of this ambivalence is to
produce a profound disturbance of the authority of colonial
discourse.

Homi Bhabha’s analysis of the relationship between the
coloniser and the colonised stresses their interdependence and
the mutual constructions of subjectivities. Bhabha argues that
all cultural statements and systems are constructed in a space,
that he calls the third space of enunciation (Location 37) cul-
tural identity always emerges in this contradictory and am-
bivalent space which for Bhabha makes the claim to a hierar-
chical purity of cultures untenable. Bhabha used the term “hy-
bridity” to refer to this kind of cross cultural identity —
formation. Since then "hybridity" has frequently been used in postcolonial discourse to mean cross cultural exchange. This use of the term has been widely criticised since it usually implies negating the imbalance and inequality of the power relations it refers to.

Another mode of literary study which became widely popular by the turn to "theory", is the analysis of new literatures from countries with a history of colonialism in the light of the work of Fanon, Said, Bhabha and Spivak. These works were looked upon as concerned with "writing back" to the centre. According to this argument these works are actively engaged in a process of questioning colonial discourses in their work. With this shift of focus, the term "Commonwealth literature" was replaced by "postcolonial literatures." This reading is in stark contrast to the liberal humanist reading of earlier Commonwealth critics. The new reading engendered by postcolonial theory is regarded politically more radical and situated locally rather than universally. According to this perspective, postcolonial literatures begin to pose direct challenges to the colonial centre from the margins.
Postcolonial literatures were actively engaged in the act of decolonising the mind. This new approach was inaugurated in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures* (1989) co-authored by three Australian authors Bill Aschroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin. It expresses the view that literature from, the once colonised countries was fundamentally concerned with challenging the language of colonial power, unlearning its world view and producing new modes of representation. Surveying the fortunes of English language in countries with a history of colonisation, the authors note how the writers were expressing their own sense of identity by refashioning English. The contemporary art, philosophy and literature produced by postcolonial people are in no sense a continuation or adaptation of European models. *The Empire Writes Back* argues that a much more profound interaction and appropriation had taken place. The process of literary decolonisation has involved a radical dismantling of European codes and a postcolonial subversion and appropriation of dominant European discourses:
This dismantling has been frequently accompanied by the demand for an entirely new or wholly recovered pre-colonial reality. Such a demand, given the nature of the relationship between coloniser and colonised, its social brutality and cultural denigration is perfectly comprehensible. But as we have argued, it cannot be achieved. Postcolonial culture is inevitably a hybridised phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the ‘grafted’ European cultural systems and an indigenous ontology, with its impulse to create or re-create an independent local identity. Such construction or reconstruction only occurs as a dynamic interaction between European hegemonic systems and peripheral subversion of them. It is not possible to return or to rediscover an absolute pre-colonial cultural purity, nor is it possible to create national or regional formations entirely independent of their historical implications in the European colonial enterprise. (Ashcroft et al. The
Feminist and postcolonial theory alike began with an attempt to simply invert prevailing hierarchies of gender, culture and race. Said in his *Orientalism*, as he himself concedes, fails to theorise adequately the resistance of the non-European world to the material and discursive onslaught of colonialism. In his *Culture and Imperialism* Said insists that a comprehensive dismantling of colonial hierarchies and structures need to be matched by a reformed and imaginative reconception of colonised society and culture. It requires an enlightened intellectual consensus. In other words, the intellectual strings of anti-colonialism can only be properly realised when nationalism becomes more critical of itself. It must prove itself capable of directing attention to the abused rights of all oppressed classes including women. This concept of postcolonialism urges to reconsider the significance of all those other liberational activities in the colonised world such as those of the women’s movement which triumphantly interrupt the complacent rhetoric of anti-colonial nation state. Until recently feminist and postcolonial theory
have followed a parallel evolution. Both have concerned themselves with the study and defence of marginalised others within the repressive structures of domination. In doing so, both have followed a similar theoretical trajectory. With Gayatri Spivak and Julia Kristeva, the two parallel projects have come together in a tenuous partnership. In a sense, this partnership is informed by a mutual suspicion where each discourse constantly confronts its limits and exclusions in the other. According to Leela Gandhi, there are three areas of controversy which fracture the potential unity between postcolonialism and feminism: the debate surrounding the figure of the ‘third-world women’; the problematic history of the “feminist-as-imperialist”; and finally the colonialist deployment of feminist “criteria” to bolster the appeal of the “civilising mission”. The most significant collision of postcolonial and feminist theory occurs around the contentious figure of Third World woman. Some feminist postcolonial theorists have argued that the Third World woman is a victim of both imperial ideology and native and foreign
patriarchies. The gender blindness of anti-colonial nationalism is now challenged by feminist and postcolonial theories. The union of postcolonial and feminist theories helped the Third World woman to be salvaged from the sentimental and often opportunistic concept of marginality. (91)

The feminists working within social sciences invoke the narrative of “double colonisation” principally to contrast the political immaturity of Third World women with the progressive ethos of Western Feminism. Hence the representation of average Third World women as ignorant, poor, uneducated and tradition-bound whereas the representation of Western Women as educated, modern, and having control over their own bodies and sexualities. At the level of theory postcolonial feminist critics have raised a number of conceptual and methodological and political problems involved in the study of representations of gender. These problems are at once specific to feminist concerns such as the possibility of finding a fraternity between First World and Third World women and there is the general problem concerning who has the right to speak for whom and the relationship between
the critique and their object of analysis. It would be fair to say that some of the most ground-breaking, thought-provoking and influential work within postcolonialism has come from debates concerning the representation of gender difference in postcolonial context.

Feminism is of crucial importance to postcolonial discourse for two major reasons. Firstly both patriarchy and imperialism can be seen to exert analogous forms of domination over those they render subordinate. The experience of women in patriarchy and those of colonised subjects can be paralleled in a number of respects. Both feminist and postcolonial politics oppose dominance of men and the coloniser. Moreover, the empire was a man's world much more emphatically than in a patriarchal society. The masculinity of the Empire determined the character of colonial activity including writing in so many ways. There have been vigorous debates in a number of colonised societies over whether gender or colonial oppression is the more important factor in women's lives. This sometimes kept western feminists and political activists from oppressed
countries at logger heads.

Feminism like postcolonialism has often been concerned with the ways and extent to which representation and language are crucial to identity formation. For both groups, language has been a vehicle for subverting patriarchal and imperial power, and both discourses have invoked essentialist arguments in positing more authentic forms of language against those imposed on them.

Many feminist critics such as Talpade Mohanty and Sara Suleri began to argue that Western Feminism which had assumed gender overrode cultural differences to create a universal category of the feminine was operating from hidden, universalist assumptions with a middle-class Eurocentric bias. Feminism was therefore charged with failing to account for the experiences of Third World women. The overlap between patriarchal, economic and racial oppression has always been difficult to negotiate and the differences between the political priorities of First and Third World women have persisted to the present. These critics argue that colonisation operated very differently for women and for men.
There is "double colonisation" when women were subjected to both general discrimination as colonial subject and specific discrimination as women. Even post-independence practice of anti-colonial nationalisms are not free from gender bias in portraying women as passive and subordinate.

Since the term postcolonial is used in such wide and varied connotations, some critics have raised doubts as to its usefulness as an analytical category. The problem derives from the fact that the term "postcolonial" has been applied to different kinds of historical moment, geographical region, cultural identities and reading practices. As a consequence, there has been bitter contestations of the legitimacy of seeing certain regions, periods, socio-political formations as genuinely postcolonial. There has been violent disagreement over the proper object of postcolonial analysis. As a reading practice, some argue, its object should not be only postcolonial culture. But it should focus on the culture of the colonizer too.

Apparently subversive thinkers such as Terry Eagleton, Aijaz Ahmad and Arief Dirlik have serious objections to the
fundamental tenets of postcolonialism as it is practised by Said, Bhaba and a host of others in the metropolitan academies. Terry Eagleton in his recently revised *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (1996) defines postcolonial discourse as confirming its derivation from global historical developments such as the collapse of the European empire and its replacement by American hegemony, alongside an increase in mass migrations, and the creation of multicultural societies. But he argues that the presence of this discourse has led to a politics in which issues of race, language and identity obscure the vital material conditions which different ethnic groups have in common.

The problems involved in postcolonial theory is addressed in detail by Aijaz Ahmad in his *In Theory* and in his essay ‘The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality’. Aijaz Ahmad’s attacks on postcolonial theory can be summarised as follows. *In Theory* explores the implication of the institutional location and affiliations of postcolonial critics. Ahmad interprets postcolonial theory as the activity of a privileged and deracinated class fraction, which is cut off from the Third
World struggles. Ahmad points out that the favoured field for analysis in the work of Said and his followers are identified as colonial discourse. This privileges the Western canon-over Third World culture and moreover represents a politically disabling shift of attention from the facts of current neocolonialism to the less contentious area of fictions produced in an era of formal imperialism now safely past.

Ahmad then points out that postcolonial theory favours the work of the migrant intelligentsia of Third World origin based in the West. Said and his followers are taken to task for assuming that writers like Salman Rushdie represent the authentic voice of their countries of origin. Instead, Ahmad locates them within the politically dominant class fraction of their host society. Then Ahmad turns his attention to the methodology adopted by postcolonial critics. Their methodological procedures are derived from contemporary Euro-American critical theories, which are politically regressive in many ways. He says that western cultural criticism in general has become increasingly detached from any concrete connection with popular political struggle whether at home or abroad.
since the 1960s. Poststructuralism is then represented as the most striking and debilitating instance of this divorce, especially, in its American versions. Here material forms of activism are replaced by a textual engagement, which sees reading as the appropriate form of politics. Aijaz Ahmad puts this idea thus:

A theoretical position that dismisses the history of materialities as a 'progressivist modes-of-production narrative', historical agency itself as a 'myth of origins', nations and states (all nations and all states) as irretrievably coercive, classes as simply discursive constructs, and political parties themselves as fundamentally contaminated with collectivist illusions of a stable subject position-- a theoretical position of that kind, from which no poststructuralism worth the name can escape, is in the most accurate sense of these words, repressive and bourgeois. It suppresses the very conditions of intelligibility within which the fundamental facts our time can
be theorised and in privileging the figure of the reader, the critic, the theorist, as the guardian of the texts of this world, where everything becomes a text, it recoups the main cultural tropes of bourgeois humanism – especially in its Romantic variants, since the dismissal of class and nation as so many ‘essentialisms’ logically leads towards an ethic of non-attachment as the necessary condition of true understanding, and because breaking away from collective socialites of that kind inevitably leaves only the ‘individual’- in the most abstract sense epistemologically, but in the shape of the critic/theorist concretely--as the locus of experience and meaning, while the well-known poststructuralist scepticism about the possibility of rational knowledge impels the same individual to maintain only an ironic relation with the world and its intelligibility (*In Theory* 35-36).
Aijaz Ahmad attributes the prestige of postcolonial theory to its emergence in the wake of poststructuralist theory which itself reached the peak of its influence at a particularly conservative historical and cultural conjecture, the period supervised by Reagan and Thatcher.

Arif Dirlik in his essay "Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism" says half in earnest and half in jest that postcolonialism began when Third-World intellectuals have arrived in First World academy. He says that his goal in this essay is to review the term ‘postcolonial’ and the various intellectual and cultural positions associated with it in the context of contemporary transformation in global relations. "Postcolonial is the most recent entrant to achieve prominent visibility in the ranks of those ‘post’ marked words (seminal among them postmodernism) that serve as sign posts in (to) contemporary cultural criticism. Unlike other post marked words ‘postcolonial’ claims as its special provenance the terrain that in an earlier day used to go by the name Third World" (15). He contends that the popularity of the term postcolonial in
the last few years has very little to do with its rigorousness as a concept. Postcolonialism has acquired respectability dependent on the conceptual needs of the social, political and cultural problems thrown up by this new world situation. The themes now claimed for postcolonialism, according to Arif Derlik, resonate with concerns and orientations that have their origin in the new world situation. The new world situation is created by transformation within the capitalist world economy by the emergence of what has been described variously as global capitalism, flexible production, late capitalism and so on. Arif complains that postcolonial critics have been silent on the relationship of the idea of postcolonialism to its context in contemporary capitalism. They have suppressed the necessity of considering such a possible relationship by repudiating a foundational role to capitalism in history.

Postcolonial theory repudiates all master narratives and since the most current master narratives are the products of post-Enlightenment history and therefore Euro-centric, postcolonial criticism takes the critique of Euro-centrism as
its central task. Foremost among these master narratives to be repudiated is the narrative of modernization, in both its bourgeois and Marxist incarnations. The crucial premises of postcolonialism such as the repudiation of post-Enlightenment meta-narratives were enunciated first in poststructuralist thinking and the various postmodernisms it has informed.

A number of concerns unify the recent postcolonial studies, the most prominent being a commitment to ground the analysis of aesthetic culture in historical, social and political realities of its production. In postcolonial studies as practiced within metropolitan academies culturalist approach bypasses a consideration of material conditions or else subsumes materiality into textuality. The recent exponents of postcolonial studies argue for an understanding of culture as materially produced and they emphasise the need to foreground and extend the exploration of materiality not only to socio-economic, macrological processes but also the physical materiality; human bodies (Philips) or the spatial materialities of domestic interiors and local environment (Sandhu, Quayson). A number of studies stress the importance
of reassessing, nationalist, liberationist writing and attests to the oppositional power held by anti-colonial national movement, a power that may be neglected today within postcolonial studies, but was not ignored by imperial practices. Vilashini Coopan urges the inclusion within postcolonial curricula of theorists like Cuban Jose Marti and the African-American W.B Dubois, advocating that such analysis should embrace not only literary but also polemical and sociological writings, not only the academic but the activist elements of their nationalism. Similarly, Premnath argues for a rehabilitation of Frantz Fanon within the decolonizing project which animated his writings and which perceives his vision of national liberation movement (57-63). These accounts offer a corrective to poststructuralist interpretations of nationalism, which see it as inescapably hierarchical in both its anti-colonial and post-independence forms. As Coopan points out race and nation continue to be invoked in the formation and organization of postcolonial identities, their significance resisting poststructuralist allegations of essentialism. (9)