

# POST-COLONIAL WRITING AND LITERARY TRANSLATION

Exploring the Intersection of Culture, Power, and Language

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# WHAT IS POST-COLONIAL WRITING?

**Definition:** Literature written in response to the experience of colonization and its aftermath, often addressing the effects of imperialism on culture, identity, and history.

## Key Themes:

- **Identity and Belonging:** Exploring questions of selfhood, cultural identity, and alienation in a post-colonial context.
- **Power and Resistance:** Depicting struggles against colonial domination and the reclaiming of agency.
- **Cultural Hybridity:** Examining the blending of cultures, traditions, and languages resulting from colonial encounters.
- **Language as a Tool of Domination and Liberation:** Highlighting the role of language in both oppression and empowerment, often blending native dialects with the colonizer's language.
- **Reclaiming History:** Rewriting narratives to challenge colonial interpretations of the past.

## Notable Authors and Works:

- **Chinua Achebe:** *Things Fall Apart* – Explores the clash of cultures in pre-colonial Nigeria.
- **Salman Rushdie:** *Midnight's Children* – Examines post-colonial India through magical realism.
- **Arundhati Roy:** *The God of Small Things* – Highlights caste, colonialism, and personal stories in post-colonial India.
- **Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o:** *Petals of Blood* – Critiques post-independence neocolonialism in Kenya.

# CHARACTERISTICS OF POST-COLONIAL LITERATURE

- **Critical Perspectives:**
  - Focus on marginalized voices reclaiming agency.
  - Critique of Eurocentrism and imperial ideologies.
  - Use of literary devices like symbolism, allegory, and non-linear storytelling to convey complex histories.
- Focus on **marginalized voices** and reclaiming histories.
- Use of **local languages** and dialects.
- Exploration of **hybrid identities** and cultural intersectionality.

# WHAT IS POST-COLONIAL LITERATURE?

Literature has been affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day.

Post-colonial writing emerged in its present form out of the experience of colonization.

Foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and emphasizing differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre.

Maria Tymoczko, *Post-colonial writing and literary translation*

# BRITISH COLONIAL EMPIRE CA. 1900



# POST-COLONIAL LITERATURES: CONCERNS

## 1. Re-claiming spaces and places

- Colonialism as a means of claiming and exploiting foreign lands, resources, and people
- Enslavement
- Indentured labor
- Migration and „forced migration“

## 2. Revising history

Colonizers often depicted their colonial subjects as existing „outside of history“ in unchanging, timeless societies, unable to progress or develop without their intervention and assistance.

## 3. Language as instrument of power

# THE INTERSECTION OF POST-COLONIAL WRITING AND TRANSLATION

- Post-colonial texts often involve **multilingualism** and **cultural references**.
- Translation becomes a tool for:
  - **Making marginalized voices heard globally.**
  - Preserving **cultural identity** while adapting to new audiences.
- Challenges:
  - Translating culturally specific terms or metaphors.
  - Avoiding **Eurocentric interpretations**.

# POST-COLONIAL WRITING AND TRANSLATION

## Writing/Translation is an exile Genesh Devy

- “In Western metaphysics translation is an exile, and an exile is a metaphorical translation—a post-Babel crisis. The multilingual, eclectic Hindu spirit, ensconced in the belief in the soul's perpetual transition from form to form, may find it difficult to subscribe to the Western metaphysics of translation”
- The obsession with the original and the anxiety of not being able to capture the meaning is in some way connected to the theological concept of a paradise that has been lost and has to be regained. The Indian psyche that believes in the constant progression of the soul from one birth to the other is not concerned about an original state



# CHARACTERISTICS OF POST-COLONIAL WRITING

## 1. Resistant descriptions

Postcolonial writers use detailed descriptions of indigenous people, places, and practices to counteract or „resist” the stereotypes, inaccuracies, and generalizations which the colonizers circulated in educational, legal, political, and social texts and settings

# CHARACTERISTICS OF POST-COLONIAL WRITING

## 2. Appropriation of the colonizers' language

- India: more than 12 languages alongside English.
- Post-colonial writers choose to write in the colonizers' tongue

## 3. Strategies to liberate language and translation

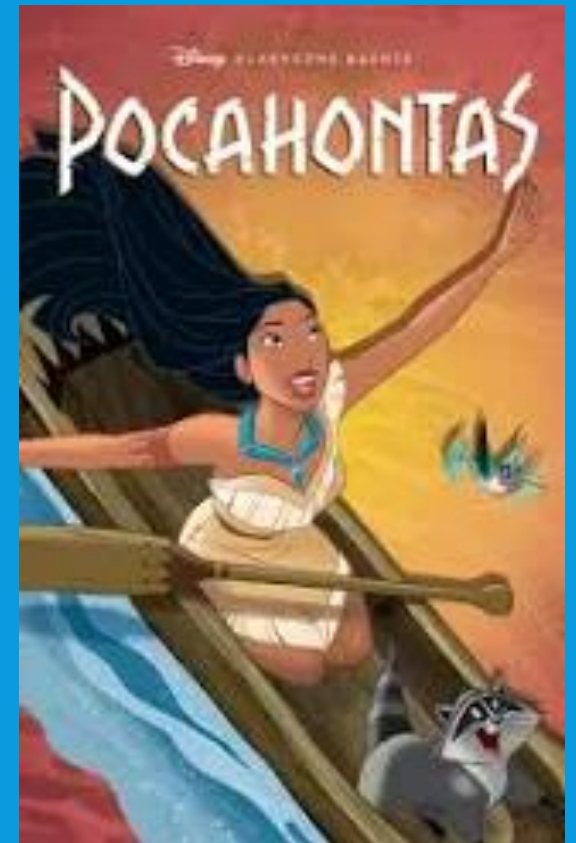
- 4. Writing/Translation as violence



# POCAHONTAS: A REAL POWHATAN WOMAN, DAUGHTER OF A TRIBAL CHIEF

## Stereotypical Depictions:

- Popularized in Western culture as a romanticized "princess" figure, often seen in films like Disney's Pocahontas.
- The story is oversimplified, focusing on assimilation and harmony while neglecting the complexities of indigenous culture and colonial violence.
- **Cultural Misrepresentation:** Highlights the "noble savage" stereotype, portraying indigenous people as exotic, passive, and eager to embrace colonial ways.
- Story erases the realities of colonization, oppression, and the struggles of indigenous communities.
- **Significance in Post-Colonial Discourse:**
  - A prime example of how storytelling can perpetuate colonial narratives.
  - Challenges translators and educators to address cultural authenticity and avoid perpetuating stereotypes in global contexts.

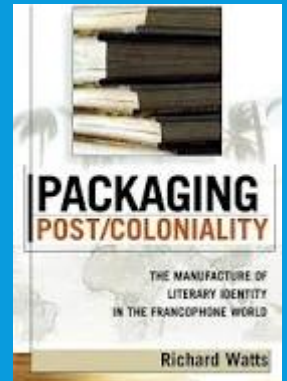


# THE INTERSECTION OF POST-COLONIAL WRITING AND TRANSLATION

- "The language of the colonizer was both a tool of oppression and a means of resistance."— Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (*Decolonising the Mind*)
- "To translate a post-colonial text is to engage in the politics of its identity."— Susan Bassnett & Harish Trivedi (*Post-Colonial Translation*)
- **Salman Rushdie on Indian English:**  
*"To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free."*  
— Salman Rushdie (*Imaginary Homelands*)
- *"Colonialism tried to control the language; translation seeks to restore its multiplicity."*  
— Homi K. Bhabha (*The Location of Culture*)
- *"The task of the translator is to bring out the foreignness of the text, rather than erase it."*  
— Lawrence Venuti (*The Translator's Invisibility*)

# CONCLUSION

- Post-colonial writing and translation are deeply intertwined, offering opportunities to challenge and reshape cultural narratives shaped by colonial histories.
- Translators play a pivotal role in bridging cultures by ensuring that marginalized voices and diverse perspectives are preserved and shared globally.
- The act of translation is not merely linguistic but also cultural and political, demanding sensitivity to the historical and social contexts of post-colonial texts.
- Translation can:
  - Foster a deeper understanding of post-colonial identities.
  - Amplify the global reach of literature from historically marginalized communities.
  - Resist the dominance of Eurocentric interpretations and promote linguistic and cultural equity.
- Post-colonial literature and translation remind us of the power of language as a tool for both domination and liberation.



# FURTHER READING

## 1. Edward Said, *Orientalism*

1. A foundational text that critiques Western representations of the "Orient" and highlights how colonial discourse shaped perceptions of the East.

## 2. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind*

1. Explores the relationship between language, culture, and colonial power, advocating for the use of indigenous languages in post-colonial literature.

## 3. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?*

1. Examines whether marginalized groups can articulate their voices authentically in a world dominated by colonial and Western narratives.

## 4. Susan Bassnett & Harish Trivedi, *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*

1. A collection of essays that explore the challenges of translating post-colonial texts and the politics involved in the process.

## 5. Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*

1. Investigates the hybrid identities created by colonialism and emphasizes the role of cultural translation in post-colonial discourse.

## 6. Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*

1. A collection of essays on post-colonial identity, hybridity, and the use of English as a medium for reclaiming cultural narratives.

## 7. Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*

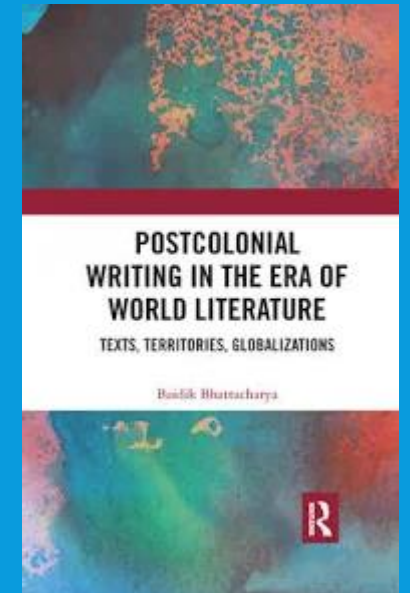
1. A critical exploration of translation practices and the tension between foreignization and domestication in literary translation.

## 8. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*

1. A seminal text on post-colonial literary studies, examining how former colonies respond to colonial narratives through literature.

## 9. Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*

1. An accessible overview of key concepts and debates in post-colonial theory.



# GROUP DISCUSSION

## Questions:

- What challenges might arise when translating a text rich in cultural references?
- Can translation ever fully capture the identity of a post-colonial text?
- Share examples of books you've read where cultural elements felt central to the story.

