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Introduction

Following Edward Said's pioneering *Orientalism* (1978), a substantial body of scholarship was produced in the field of postcolonial studies. Like the influential *Orientalism*, most of the works in this area of research centre on nineteenth-century imperialism, with little or no reference to former ideological formations to assess modern colonial ideology. While they remain on the whole heavily indebted to Said's insights, these studies tend to move from *Orientalism's* sweeping, often monolithic representations of colonialism to stress the heterogeneity and ambivalence of imperial discourse and rule. Elleke Boehmer in *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* (1995), Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler in *Tensions of Empire* (1997), and Antoinette Burton in *At the Heart of the Empire* (1998), to name a few, insist on the interactions and interpenetrations of colonial cultures.

The postcolonial emphasis on the polyphonic character and 'indeterminacy' of colonial discourse has been instigated by Homi Bhabha's postmodernist approach to colonialism in *The Location of Culture* (1994) where he tackles among other things the notions of hybridity and mimicry which are his main contribution to the postcolonial debate. In 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse' (1997) Bhabha considers mimicry and ambivalence as the defining features of colonial discourse. He states: 'The discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*' and 'the authority of that mode of colonial discourse . . . is therefore stricken by indeterminacy' (153). Bhabha's and generally the middle ground theorists' focus on the 'transactional' nature of colonialism and permeability of colonial cultures intends to highlight the extent to which the colonies and metropolis influenced and shaped each other. As they try to uncover a neglected imperial reality, these scholars seek to challenge the centre-periphery model of analysis of the

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colonial fact, which they consider unfit to render the complexity of the colonial encounters.

Central to the middle ground theorists' emphasis on exchange and collaboration between colonisers and colonised is the issue of hybridisation – cultural, political and linguistic – resulting from colonial encounters. A widely discussed concept, hybridity as a theoretical tool has been associated with Bhabha who dealt at length with this issue in *The Location of Culture* and in such essays as 'Cultural diversity and Cultural Differences'. In both he insists on the interdependence of the colonisers' and natives' structures of power and meaning. He argues that cultural systems and discourses are articulated from the 'third space of enunciation' where the subject can speak of itself and the Other in terms that transcend 'the politics of polarity'.

In keeping with Bhabha's theory, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin write: 'Hybridity and the power it releases may well be seen to be the characteristic feature and contribution of the post-colonial, allowing a means of evading the replication of the binary categories of the past and developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth' (1995, 183). The deployment of the concepts of hybridity and 'third space of enunciation' to question binary interpretations of the colonial fact has become the model of analysis in postcolonial and anthropological studies. The restitution of colonial hybridity is no doubt useful to counteract Manichean readings of colonialism along with the myths of purity and essentialist discourses sustaining both colonialist and nationalist narratives. Yet, in order for the term hybridity to release its full historic, metaphoric and ideological implications, we should refrain from viewing it merely in terms of competition with the contested centre-periphery model of analysis it is meant to dismantle.

My argument is that hybridity as both a theoretical tool and historical and cultural occurrence is not a linear, flat narrative of cultural exchange and balanced competition, as we tend to think, but a twisted, multi-layered imperial tale of forced encounters and unequal relationships. Strictly speaking, hybridity concentrates multiple, contradictory forces involved in shaping cultures and identities. It represents a site of incorporation and rejection in which cultural difference is at once inscribed as sameness and continually disavowed. Within this dynamics of incorporation and denial, which is the essence of colonial relationships, métissage takes the shape of a burdensome imperial legacy, rather than a happy reunion of the Same and Other 'developing new anti-monolithic models of cultural exchange and growth'. Given the violence, racism

and imbalance of colonial relationships hybridity is perhaps more fittingly defined as the space of the impossible, since imperial encounters can at best produce alienated, schizophrenic subjects, and at worst turn the colonised into a sub-humanised, commodified mass. Manifestly, for most half-caste characters, métissage often represents less the materialisation of a harmonious polyphonic culture and an assumed multiple identity than the manifestation of a deep alienation resulting from the impossible reconciliation of their mixed legacy. Both for these métis in particular and in the imperial world at large hybridity articulates therefore around lack, crisis and fragmentation instead of balance and plenitude.

Rethinking Postcolonialism analyses colonialist discourses in modern literary and non-literary texts and explores key philosophical concepts informing colonialism. It is divided into two main areas: first, a discussion of the ways in which classical writings influenced colonialist discourse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; second, an examination of the relationship between modernist literature and empire. In each section I investigate the ways colonial discourses construct, or produce, the colonised by adopting an array of strategies that draw inspiration from immediate as well as remote sources. In studying imperial intellectual history in the context of classical discourses and literatures, I offer a challenge to the conventional categories of analysis in the field of postcolonial studies, which tend to study colonialism as a synchronic phenomenon and mere product of modernity.

Colonialism is an immemorial phenomenon. All through history it has taken various forms and has been highly parasitic. When Egypt came under Greek domination in 146 BC, the Greeks incorporated into their culture the Egyptian religions, myths and arts. When Greece became a Roman protectorate the Romans imitated the Greeks. They adopted their strategies of expansion, arts, gods, rituals and even dress, establishing continuities between the Hellenic and Latin worlds (Bernal 1987; Pagden 2001; Isaac 2004). Similarly, in America the Mayans inspired the succeeding Toltec and Aztec empires which adopted their arts, legends and religions. The Aztecs were in turn influenced by the Toltecs. They regarded them as ideal fighters and their arts were highly valued. The Inca Empire was also built on the achievements of former civilisations, embracing the Aztec and Toltec legends and religions which they fused into their own culture to build a centralised state (Davies 1987). In the sixteenth century the Spaniards, who vanquished the Incas and Aztecs, took after the ancient European empires which they viewed as models (Ramírez 1996; Mabry 2002). The Ottoman empire, too, imitated the

Greeks and Romans. Sovereigns such as Mehmet Fatih (1451–81) and Suleiman Kanuni (1520–66) posed as continuers of the empires established in the Mediterranean by Alexander the Great and furthered by the Romans. Likewise, in the nineteenth century both Britain and France displayed continuities with the classical powers, adopting their ideas and instigating their methods of conquest and rule.

From the ancient to modern times colonialism has thus been a synergetic phenomenon. Colonial powers drew on their predecessors to achieve their imperial motives and consolidate their domination. The British and French empires imitated the Greek and Roman empires. They incorporated tropes, modes of representation and myths of supremacy. The classical writers who backed them were revered by modern writers and colonial ideologues. Their themes and thoughts were assiduously rehearsed and the image of ancient Greece and Rome was reinvested and idealised by eighteenth and nineteenth-century Western writers and scholars, particularly the British and French.

Rethinking Postcolonialism probes the interconnections between ancient and new imperialism. It examines modern colonial British and French literatures in the light of ancient Greek and Latin texts. It focuses on the Colonial Idea and attempts to chart the impact of classical thought on modern colonial cultures. In the main, I intend through the exploration of colonial historiography to trace the ways in which the classical models were re-inscribed and re-imagined, in an idealised form, in European metropolitan cultures in the period of imperial expansion. The aim in teasing out the conceptual and ideological links between ancient and modern colonialism is to place the discussion of empire in a wider historical and ideological arena. This necessary contextualisation serves to demonstrate how far modern colonial ideology forms an historical, ideological and narcissistic continuum whereby new theories of domination build upon ancient myths of grandeur and supremacy.

By focusing on colonialism's diachronicity and multi-faceted nature of imperialist ideology, I primarily seek to resituate colonialist discourse's historical and ideological denseness which is often neglected in postcolonial studies. My assumption is that the scholars' study of colonialism from a strictly synchronic dimension provides only a partial insight into imperial ideology. To get a fuller picture of this ideology requires re-examining it in connection with the former narratives of domination, notably the classical ideological formations from which it drew inspiration. The recovery of this neglected trans-epochal dialogue should help us grasp the multi-dimensional, palimpsestic (that is stratified and cumulative) character of modern colonialist discourse. This genetic approach,

which sets the ancient and the modern in a productive dynamics, intends to shed light on these conceptual and ideological ramifications. It aims to uncover the legacy of the classical assumptions of linguistic, cultural and racial supremacy on modern writers and colonial ideologues. Such a historicisation, which invites consideration of the archaeological structure of imperialist discourse, is a prerequisite to mapping out the complex ideological network that shaped modern colonial representations. It enables us to trace the interface between colonial metropolitan ideological formations and classical imperial production of stories of power and supremacy.

The idea of modern colonialist discourse as palimpsestic is the main line of argument in the book's first part. Through examination of a range of modern texts, literary as well as non-literary, I show how concepts and assumptions borrowed from Greek and Roman literatures were integrated into modern colonialist rhetoric, forming a stratified site of knowledge and power. Linked to the idea of imperialist discourse as a palimpsestic formation is the notion of colonialism-as-grafting which is discussed in connection with the writings of Ernest Renan (1823–92), Captain John Moresby (1830–1922), Rider Haggard (1856–1925), Joseph Conrad (1857–1924), Albert Sarraut (1872–1962), and Robert Delavignette (1897–1976). Grafting is a fitting metaphor for the colonial fact; all the more so as colonialism has been a long story of borrowing and appropriation. Similar to the Greeks who incorporated the Egyptian heritage or the Romans who adopted many aspects of the Greek civilisation, modern imperial cultures were built on classical foundations. The incorporation of ancient ideas and thoughts is combined with hijacking the indigenous stories and canonical texts. In the same way as modern colonialist ideology generated much of its conceptual power from ancient Greece and Rome, colonial rule grafted itself on existing indigenous structures of power. A key feature of both colonial rule and discourse, grafting was a crucial component of the Western civilising mission. It contained in germ the idea of transplanting the European spirit onto the stagnant natives in order to regenerate them, culturally and racially.

The modern representation of the colonised peoples as stagnant and degenerate entailed in the colonial metaphor of grafting echoes the description of foreign peoples in Greek and Latin texts. In the works of Lysias (440–380 BC), Isocrates (436–338 BC), Plato (427–327 BC), Aristotle (384–322 BC), Cicero (106–43 BC) and Sallust (86–34 BC), the Persians as well as the Scythians and Egyptians were cast as backward, racially and culturally inferior, and effeminate. There is continuity between these classical representations of the barbarians and the depiction of modern

Europe's Others, which leads me to argue that the ancient rhetoric of Othering served as a model for modern colonialist depictions of the natives. Identical stereotyped images recur in most modern colonial texts in terms that testify to the modern writers' blending of the ancient and new in shaping difference. While demonstrating the impact of classical Orientalism on modern construction of Otherness, I reveal the dialectics of repetition and challenge pertaining to the definition of colonial subjects.

This manifest ambivalence makes the discourse of Othering appear as a fluid system of representation based on a multi-level differentiation. As reflected in both imperial politics and colonial literature, the natives were often set in a hierarchical relation that obeyed a horizontal distinction based on skin colour as well as a vertical differentiation that encompassed the indigenous cultural and social layers. Exploring the arcane of these strategies of producing difference should allow us to grasp the colonisers' ambivalent, protean attitude to the colonised. It is, above all, intended to uncover the colonisers' manipulation of the indigenous peoples' identity in order to serve immediate imperial ends. Most importantly, probing the category of the Other in the colonial context aims to demonstrate the tautological character of the colonial ethic of differentiation; that is the incapacity of the imperialist subject to engage in a genuine, non-appropriative relationship with difference. The British who ranked the Pathans higher than the Bengalis, or the French who considered the Kabyles superior to the Arabs did not value these ethnic groups in their complexity, but simply according to their affinity with the colonial culture and the imperial self which were used as the yardstick of accomplishment. Most modern texts including Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901), Joseph Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900), André Gide's *Voyage au Congo* (1927) or Graham Greene's *Journey Without Maps* (1936) dramatise the colonial solipsistic view of the self and reveal how the natives were perceived by the respective protagonists mainly as a means of self-aggrandisement.

Modern construction of Otherness, which posits Western subjectivity as the human norm, derives much of its substance from classical representations of the barbarians. The Greek and Roman racist depictions of non-Europeans provided a useful reservoir of ideas for modern colonial writers and supporters of empire. As Benjamin Isaac notes in *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity*, the Greco-Roman 'proto-racism' 'served as prototype for modern racism which developed in the eighteenth century' (2004, 2). The Greeks' belief in cultural and racial supremacy, their chauvinism and disdain for non-Greeks, generated by Greece's rise into an

imperial power in the fifth century BC, provided an impetus for modern colonial ideology. This phase of Greek victory over Persia was perceived by many modern writers, including Condorcet (1743–94), Rider Haggard and Albert Camus (1913–60), as an ideological matrix. Several modern interpreters of the battle of Salamis (480 BC) saw the defeat of the Persians, which Isocrates identified with a ‘total war’, as a conflict between Europe and Asia, rather than merely a struggle opposing Greece and Persia. According to these authors and scholars, this period of Greek history corresponds to the birth of a European colonial consciousness, whereby the new binary ‘Europe–Asia’ replaced the former opposition ‘Greece–Persia’. Fifth century BC Greece, which was regarded as a redeemer of human civilisation from Oriental barbarism and despotism, may be said to have originated a polarised view of culture and race that paved the way for modern colonial Manichean representations of the world.

Many nineteenth and early twentieth-century writers and imperial ideologues appropriated the classical myths of supremacy which they used to bolster empire’s confidence and rightness. As in the classical discourse of barbarism which inspired it, in modern colonialist rhetoric, too, language, race and culture formed key ideological components. Authors and scholars such as Gerald of Wales (1146–1223), Juan Gines de Sepulveda (1494–1573), Jonathan Swift (1667–1745), Abbé Grégoire (1750–1831), Matthew Arnold (1822–88) and Ernest Renan were manifestly inspired by the Aristotelian view of racial supremacy based on linguistic superiority. Following the Greek philosopher, these writers linked language and race, persuaded that colonised peoples including the Amerindians, Irish, Scots, Bretons, Basques and Corsicans were savage and inferior because their idioms were unfit for high culture and elaborate thought.

Classical linguistic racialism, which deemed backward, if not bestial those who did not speak Greek, was adopted by the moderns to confirm the natives’ inferiority and their inhumanity. Authors such as Armand Dubarry (1836–1910) in *Voyage au Dahomey* (1879) or Rider Haggard in *Cetywayo and His White Neighbours* (1882) repeat Aristotle’s racist views of the barbarians. In these narratives Africans are shown confined to a life of sensation, incapable of transcending the present’s literalism. The dehumanisation of the natives, recurrent in colonial literature and politics, served to legitimise their economic exploitation and political marginalisation. On a symbolic level, the reduction of the colonised to beasts entailed denying them existential substance and moral significance. The natives were, in short, dismissed as abnormal species and cautiously kept at a distance in order to prevent disorder and degeneracy – an anxiety which was prominent in the works of Aristotle, Isocrates

and Plato, as much as it was central in colonial literature and politics. The fear of mixing with non-Europeans is predicated on a belief in purity, racial and cultural, that formed the driving force of imperialist ideologies, ancient and modern alike. Even anti-colonialist modernists such as Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) tend to espouse the myths of purity and eugenic theories that were the engine of imperialist ideology.

The relationship between literary modernism and imperialism has gained momentum in the last five years. Howard Booth and Nigel Rigby in *Modernism and Empire* (2000) offer an illuminating analysis of the modernist writers' convoluted attitude towards colonialism and imperial ideology. Elleke Boehmer in *Empire, the National and the Postcolonial* (2002) and David Adams in *Colonial Odysseys, Empire and Epic in the Modernist Novel* (2003) also point out the modernist writers' ambivalence towards colonialism, without, however, probing adequately these writers' ideological inconsistencies in relation to imperialism. Elaborating on the modernists' ambivalence about empire, I offer a wider conceptual and historical perspective in an analysis that integrates the discussion of modernist literature with a critique of European post-Enlightenment philosophical concepts.

The second part focuses on the writings of Joseph Conrad, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster (1879–1970), James Joyce (1882–1941), André Gide (1869–1951), Graham Greene (1904–91) and Albert Camus. The approach consists of assessing these modernists' critique of imperialism in the light of the old Western tradition of self-scrutiny, initiated by such anti-colonial humanists as Bartolome de Las Casas (1484–1566), François Rabelais (1494–1553), Michel de Montaigne (1533–92) and Jean de La Bruyère (1645–96). These writers are remembered for their indictment of Europe's abuses in America and explicit endorsement of cultural relativity as a means of rehabilitating the natives' humanity that colonialism denied them. Their humanism inspired later generations, notably the modernists who criticised Western abuses in Africa and Asia. Just like their predecessors, however, the modernists were markedly ambiguous about empire. For rather than contesting the colonial idea or envisioning a post-imperial world, they merely projected into their fiction a humanist empire. The question is: what does the modernists' alternative form of empire entail? How is it articulated and to what end? How does it fit into the overall colonial idea? These are some of the salient preoccupations that will be tackled in Part II.

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