

后殖民文学的 核心概念

Key Concepts in
Postcolonial Literature

Gina Wisker



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KEY CONCEPTS IN POSTCOLONIAL LITERATURE

Gina Wisker

Key Concepts in Postcolonial Literature covers all the important aspects of the exciting field of postcolonial literature and criticism. An introduction to the primary themes and issues of colonialism and postcolonialism, the book addresses the central contextual and cultural issues of postcolonial study while examining a full range of genres and texts readers will come across. Organised into three clear, concise and approachable chapters, the volume provides critically astute readings of major writers and their works as it explores the impact of colonialism and its legacy.

Features include:

- An accessible and full overview of the texts, contexts and criticism of the postcolonial era
- Sections organised alphabetically to enable readers to establish connections between the works, the period and the current critical thinking
- Cross-referencing and further reading suggestions that provide additional resources for study

Engaging and insightful, the volume is essential reading for anyone wishing to understand the complex connections between literature, history and culture in the modern postcolonial world.

Gina Wisker is Head of the Centre for Learning and Teaching at the University of Brighton, where she also teaches literature. Previously the Director of Learning and Teaching Development at Anglia Ruskin University, she publishes in both learning and teaching, and literature, and her titles include *The Postgraduate Research Handbook*, *The Good Supervisor* and *Postcolonial and African American Women's Writing: A Critical Introduction*.

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近年来,文学研究的理论和方法取得了不少新的进展。为了帮助文学专业学生及广大文学研究者、爱好者迅速而有效地掌握文学研究的核心概念和背景资料,外教社特从 Palgrave 出版社遴选引进了这套权威、实用的“原版文学核心概念丛书”。

本套丛书堪称浓缩的文学百科辞典,各分册大多按研究主题分为不同板块,每一册都按字母表顺序列出精选的核心词条,词条下大多附有补充书目,书后基本附有编年史、参考文献和索引,个别分册还根据实际需要设置了习题。丛书文献丰富,语言精炼,编排合理,查阅方便,是不可多得的文学类学术工具书和阅读参考资料。

相信本套丛书的引进将满足我国广大文学专业的师生及其他文学研究者、爱好者的需求,有力推动我国文学研究的发展与繁荣。

Key Concepts in Postcolonial Literature

Gina Wisker

General Editors' Preface

The purpose of **Palgrave Key Concepts in Literature** is to provide students with key critical and historical ideas about the texts they are studying as part of their literature courses. These ideas include information about the historical and cultural contexts of literature as well as the theoretical approaches current in the subject today. Behind the series lies a recognition of the need nowadays for students to be familiar with a range of concepts and contextual material to inform their reading and writing about literature.

The series is also based on a recognition of the changes that have transformed degree courses in Literature in recent years. Central to these changes has been the impact of critical theory together with a renewed interest in the way in which texts intersect with their immediate context and historical circumstances. The result has been an opening up of new ways of reading texts and a new understanding of what the study of literature involves together with the introduction of a wide set of new critical issues that demand our attention. An important aim of **Palgrave Key Concepts in Literature** is to provide brief, accessible introductions to these new ways of reading and new issues.

Each volume in **Palgrave Key Concepts in Literature** follows the same structure. An initial overview essay is followed by three sections – *Contexts*, *Texts*, and *Criticism* – each containing a sequence of brief alphabetically arranged entries on a sequence of topics. 'Contexts' essays provide an impression of the historical, social and cultural environment in which literary texts were produced. 'Texts' essays, as might be expected, focus more directly on the works themselves. 'Criticism' essays then outline the manner in which changes and developments in criticism have affected the ways in which we discuss the texts featured in the volume. The informing intention throughout is to help the reader create something new in the process of combining context, text and criticism.

John Peck
Martin Coyle

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It has been a fascinating exercise writing this book, and many thanks are due to my students over the years for asking the questions, indicating the kinds of need for clarification, and engaging with the arguments that led to many of the entries. I should like to thank Michelle Bernard most profusely for her tireless work on finding sources, tidying and editing the script, and Charlotte Morris for research and tidying at earlier stages. I started the book while working at Anglia Ruskin University and would like to thank the English department for their investment of RAE money in my work. I finished it while working at the University of Brighton and would like to thank senior colleagues who supported the time taken by its completion. My knowledge of ideas and texts would have been so much thinner without the guidance of a range of postcolonial scholar friends and colleagues in Australia, New Zealand, the Caribbean, South Africa and the UK, including Carole Ferrier, Ian Conrich, Pauline Dodgson-Katiyo, Mervyn Morris, and Clarke's Bookshop in Cape Town. Thanks to colleagues at Palgrave Macmillan for their continued support, and to John Peck and Martin Coyle for support and advice at crucial moments. Finally, thanks to my sons for putting up with the typing, and the trips abroad.

Gina Wisker

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General Introduction

The study of postcolonial literatures and the development of postcolonial literary critical practices are well established across the world, most particularly in the ex-British (and other) colonies. The writing from these is the main focus of this book, although there are many other postcolonial contexts relating to a diversity of powers who were also colonisers or imperial rulers. Also of interest is who has written back after the colonisers' rule has ended, by which I mean they have engaged with issues of power and representation which confront some of the established views. American writing in one sense is postcolonial, insofar as it is written after and against British colonial rule, while internationally there is a variety of postcolonial writing against and after a host of other periods of colonial rule.

According to noted postcolonial critics Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2000), postcolonial studies more broadly seeks to examine the experiences, processes and effects of European colonialism, and reactions to it, from the sixteenth century up to and including the contemporary responses of neo-colonialism. While many of the terms which appear in this book – such as 'nation', 'other', 'Orientalism' and 'hybridity' – would also appear in a book which focused on postcolonial studies in the broadest sense, the focus of this book on key concepts is on postcolonial literature which has been and is produced and written as a political, ideological engagement with the experiences of colonisation and imperial rule. Critic Stephen Slemon defines postcolonial literature as a 'category of literary activity which springs from a new and welcome political energy going on within what used to be called 'Commonwealth' literary studies (Slemon, 1994, pp. 16-17). In this book, we are looking in the main at literature, and at the key historical contexts and key concepts which inform and underpin that literature.

More specifically, the study of postcolonial literatures and critical practices has flowered in Britain, USA, Australasia and around the world since the 1980s, initially inspired by both the political resistance within once-colonial countries and by writers from those countries. These writers needed to explore and create literary expressions about their own and others' positions, histories and experiences as people who had lived under colonialism or imperialism and who were now able to assert or reassert their own world-views and positions in their own expressive

forms. The study of postcolonial literatures also developed as part of a postmodernist fundamental questioning of the established literary canon. This has been followed by recognition from the literary establishment, as well as the general public and college and university staff and students, of the literary and cultural worth of work by postcolonial writers and also by those who produce and perform oral literature from a range of cultural backgrounds. This recognition extends to a need for literary scrutiny of colonial and other texts, using postcolonial critical practices.

Much postcolonial writing springs from forms of questioning of, or opposition to, the established literary canon (in English literature, for example, this would include Shakespeare, Wordsworth and those other writers whose work appears on most literature syllabi). This is largely because of the ways in which many canonical texts imposed a version of worlds-views, values, perceptions and forms of writing which largely ignored, neglected or excluded the different experiences of colonised people and those under imperial rule. As readers and students, it is important to recognise that many people come to postcolonial literature from reading works from the canon. Links with and reactions against canonical writers make a useful initial bridge for readers. Indeed, such links are made in this book for a definite purpose. The interpretation of the word 'postcolonial' suggests both *after* colonialism and imperialism, and *in opposition to* colonialism and imperialism. However it is important to recognise that not *all* postcolonial writers are Black or Asian, and that those who have suffered under colonialism and imperialism also include the Irish and settlers from many different origins. Also, not all writers who write postcolonial-inflected texts, texts with postcolonial views, have themselves been colonised peoples. Writers who write some of the earliest literature with postcolonial elements often do so, as they do now, from their own established literary reputations (sometimes they, too, are part of that literary canon), as an enlightened and ideologically engaged reaction to the silencing and inequality caused by colonialism and imperialism. Recognising such critical attacks on the worldviews, mindsets and behaviour which established and maintained colonial and imperial rule, this book makes some initial links with modernism and those writers who are early postcolonial writers and (not exclusively but in the examples here) are English, European, or Irish, but who genuinely have a postcolonial viewpoint and arguments. Because a writer writes from a nation of imperialists and colonisers it does not mean they support that nation's oppressive practices; many have criticised from within. A number of writers really pave the way for a questioning of colonialism, and among them are some of the literary

modernists (experimental writers from the 1880s to around 1945) who also criticised the staleness of pre-modernist writing.

Postcolonial writing is a very rich, fascinating and ever-growing area of writing, and one gaining popularity for reading and study. However, appreciating postcolonial literature does require a certain amount of contextual, cultural and critical work on the part of the reader. As a field, or subject area of literary study, postcolonial literature involves readers in finding out about historical and cultural contexts in order to be able to read postcolonial texts with some insight about why they were produced, how, where and to what ends, what they might be arguing, why they are exploring or arguing about those issues in those ways, and even the forms which the texts themselves take.

A focus on postcolonial literatures raises issues about the differing ways in which literatures produced by writers from very different cultural backgrounds, geographies, religions and literary traditions can be classed together under the same identifying words. Our reading of the literatures of settler nations such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, ex-British colonies now nations, or independent republics such as Cyprus, Singapore, Jamaica, Pakistan, India, Nigeria and Ireland, will inevitably differ in relation to the different histories, geographies and contexts in which the writers write (or perform, or declaim) and are published, read, taught (or not). Some of these issues are picked up in the discussion of the different terms – Commonwealth literature, new literatures in English, post-colonial and postcolonial – in this book.

There are, however – surprisingly perhaps – some common themes which we might find across the works of writers from such different contexts, and these themes can serve to unite our explorations; they include identity, nationhood, finding a language, a discourse both creative and critical, issues of relations to the ex-colonial power, engagement, re-engagement, renewal and recuperation. Some of these themes focus on the development of different forms of expression, language and imagery, and emphasise writing that was in forms which were marginalised, devalued or even illegal under colonial or imperial rule. They are present in any kind of literary production moving on beyond being 'mimic' men, an idea developed by the critic Homi Bhabha, in which people are destined forever, somehow and always, to reference the colonial past.

The critical perspectives and frameworks which inform the reading of postcolonial texts are also many, including psychoanalysis (issues about identity formation; speaking out from oppression; and silencing), linguistics (the forms the writing takes; language and structure choice), feminism (ways in which women are represented; women's worldviews

expressed, specifically female-oriented forms of expression and language; a focus on constructions and representations of masculinities), queer theory (identification and rejection of the 'Othering' of those whose sexuality and sexual orientation does not fit categories and forms of heterosexual views, which question normalcy and see it as a construction and an imposition), Marxism (relating literary production and expression to modes of labour; relationships of power socially and politically in history; people in their historical and social context) and post-structuralism (recognising the constructedness of all representations and expressions; opportunities or otherwise for choices of expression and view).

These differing critical stances intersect with and inform each other in our reading from a postcolonial critical perspective, so that there could be said to be many postcolonialisms in terms of literary critical practices. You will no doubt settle on the approaches and interests which appeal to your own critical, analytical, informed views about ways of appreciating, reading and understanding literature and writing. Since the term postcolonialism is so widely used, we will use it here to include the whole range of perspectives and influences on our reading and to identify writing and oral production produced both in opposition to and after colonialism. Those other critical practices (feminism and Marxism – as above) inform as they intersect with the postcolonial in our reading.

There are very many postcolonial writers whose names are well known for their groundbreaking work, and there are others, many of whom are women writers, whose names are less well known. This book provides a critical introduction to the established, the lesser known and some of the emerging writers, to the writers who have won Nobel prizes and Booker prizes, such as V.S. Naipaul (Trinidad), Derek Walcott (St Lucia), Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), Salman Rushdie and Anita Desai (India) and Margaret Atwood (Canada), and those whose work is only now beginning to appear on reading lists or who have only recently gained an audience, such as Australian aboriginal writers including Sally Morgan and Doris Pilkington, or other writers who write with cultural perceptions and insights unfamiliar even to avid readers of postcolonial literature who have grown up reading Salman Rushdie and J.M. Coetzee. This might well include, for instance, writers famous in their own lands but often less well known on international literary class booklists, such as the Maori writers Patricia Grace and Witi Ihimaera, or writers from the Fiji islands such as Konai Helu Thaman and Vilsoni Hereniko. Indeed, in addition to introducing some of the very wide range of postcolonial writers whose work is rarely mentioned in other critical texts, there are in this book more women writers than one finds in some other more

conventional postcolonial critical texts. This, I would argue, is part of a reinstatement of significant writers, in line with the arguments about avoiding cultural marginalising of writers (an argument made by well-known critics such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak).

One of the exciting elements of working with postcolonial literatures is the ways in which we can reconstruct, reinterpret and create a range of new readings and new interpretations through our deployment of postcolonial criticism in all *its* variety in our reading of postcolonial literatures in all *their* variety. A key point to remember is that it is better to be engaged, exploring and questioning than to be silenced. Here, I find some of the advice of feminist critics Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Sara Suleri and Sneja Gunew most helpful, not only in giving us rights to engage with and appreciate that with which we are normally unfamiliar, decoding our own origins, but in generally indicating that *not* to so engage because of fear of ignorant blundering would be yet another form of silencing, a fate experienced by much precolonial and then anti-colonial writing (colonialists and imperialists frequently suggested that neither of these forms of writing, the precolonial or the anticolonial a) existed nor b) had any worth). In other words, the postcolonial critic's job has been to unearth and recuperate, re-read and revalue works which provide us with a rich sense of life, values and different world-views before colonialism. These critics also bring to a reading public the critical responses of early postcolonial writers, who criticised the suppression and misinterpretation which occurred under colonialism and who at the time were thought to be dangerously subversive.

Many of our established reading practices are challenged and reconstituted by reading postcolonial literatures which might deploy traditional literary forms to express experiences not usually found in these forms. For example, while a writer such as Derek Walcott might choose to use the classical forms of an English educated literary man, informed by the cadences of the Romantic poets and the well-established metre of iambic pentameter which runs throughout Milton, Shakespeare and Wordsworth, he will also transport his readers to a Caribbean context. In the poem 'The Schooner Flight' (1987), for instance, he creates the Caribbean islands, sensual relations and personal exploration in context, growing from his own origins and his English-educated, Caribbean-oriented journeying, while at the same time exploring a kind of epic journey itself influenced by the West, through the quests for origins and values explored in works inspired by classical Greek myths, notably Homer's *The Odyssey* and *The Iliad*.

Such a deliberately postcolonial text reflects the many influences of the Western coloniser and the literatures and values which earlier critics

and some contemporary readers believed to be the *only* ways of seeing and expressing personal and cultural responses. It adopts, adapts and translates them, both in terms of what is written about and how it is written. What Walcott does, in other words, is use the literature of Western Europe to provide him with a way of exploring Caribbean cultural differences.

More radically, as Edward Kamau Brathwaite has shown (*The History of the Voice*, 1984), other writers, such as the Caribbean oral performance poets, work with the oral influences of their origins and the sounds and experiences around them, so that while 'the hurricane does not roar in pentameters' (p. 19), the capturing of its roar, rather than the glow of Wordsworth's daffodils, is a major project.

This book also considers issues of context and history and the cultural perspectives through which we read and interpret postcolonial texts. Language is a key issue here. There could be a problem for postcolonial writers in terms of the language in which they express themselves. If they use the language of the coloniser, they are speaking perhaps of their own experiences but in someone else's imposed language. If they use the language of their origins, they cannot engage directly with the coloniser, nor can they find a wider audience outside their own language community. Perhaps this does not matter; in fact, it can be argued that the most important issue is to write of your life and country in the language of your own people because this is empowering, and so postcolonial writers might write using their own language to their own friends, family and country folk and by so doing establish the importance of the use of 'nation language' (as Caribbean performance poets such as Louise Bennett – 'Miss Lou' – term the use of the language of your origins). Indeed, the whole issue of writing or oral literature is raised here, especially in countries where the passing on of wisdom, the making of comments about life and the weaving of myth and stories is conducted in an oral rather than a written form, but also where written literary language rarely appears.

The issue of language is not just one of orality and valuing forms of expression – it is specifically concerned with cultural identity and world-view. Discourse, it is now accepted, relates to power, sex, identity and the way we see the world and ourselves in it. If a writer writes in his or her own language, it is possible to use traditional forms but necessary also to ask how far they have now been merged with or affected by those of the coloniser. It might not actually be possible to produce a response which ignores the influence of the coloniser and re-creates anew the years before colonial influence. Even writing in the mother tongue will be affected by events. Ngugi Wa Thiong'o (1938–, Kenya)

chooses to write in the very specific language of his home, and by doing so engages with complex literary thought to be expressed in his own language, moving it from the language of the merely day-to-day. The price is the potential loss of an audience beyond the language group, the achievement one of asserting nationhood, as indeed is the case when one chooses to write in Welsh, for instance, where readership is confined to those who understand Welsh.

Another key area about postcolonial literatures concerns when they are written and in what contexts. Are they written during the rule of the coloniser? Or after it? In opposition to it during this rule? Or celebrating its end? Is this a temporal construct or one of reactive or proactive change? This is an issue contested in postcolonial literature and criticism. In this book we have chosen the broader description of postcolonial, that is, identifying it as both a radical critique during colonisation (which would include contemporary Maori writing, and E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* [1924], for instance), and a critique after the end of imperialism and colonial rule. In this broad view we also need to take into consideration both new expressions of post-colonisation and the continuing effects of colonisation, for example, the influence of multi-nationals and any maintenance of racial and religious prejudices and hierarchies.

The choice of what postcolonial writers write about is always crucial. Perhaps they write about the colonisation process and a need to speak against it, seeking out and creating a sense of identity as they do so. If this is the writers' choice, they might well be re-playing at the level of their expression and exploring the kind of articulation of the imagination and mind which has held them and their forebears in a kind of colonised loop, unable to see beyond or express themselves beyond the constraints of the mind sets, languages and forms of the colonial masters. The writers lived and breathed these impositions and they had become embedded as part of their way of life. Whatever the choices, postcolonial writers and readers are engaged in constructing, expressing, interpreting, enjoying and debating ways in which text is produced by, reflections and comments on the contexts from which they spring, and in wrestling with ideologically infused issues such as identity, nationality, nationhood, language, power politics and human relations. The choices are many and the decisions difficult. Some of these choices and decisions the tensions, the contradictions and the possibilities – form part of this study of postcolonial literatures.