

Aspects of Postcolonialism in the Fiction of Apartheid and Post Apartheid Context

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Introduction:

Post Colonialism is an important feature we find in the South African fiction and its tradition. The age of Post Colonialism was brought about by the new political, economic importance of former colonies after the Second World War. The local cultures undergoing the crisis of identity responded and resisted to the colonial 'icons'.

The English literature has changed radically, since 1960. Commonwealth literature gained importance but it continued to be under the wings of British literature. Many nationalists, Americans and cultural radicals regard 'commonwealth' as a passing phase of British neo-colonialism. New literatures indicate that Post Colonialism is a further development of the decolonization and the changed cultural perspective that followed the Second World War. Actually new literatures have long histories though their prominence on the world's cultural map is recent.

The new national literatures began with the first European explorations overseas-language, culture, literature and education developed along with trade, domination, administration and settlement. Explorers, travelers, settlers were some of the early European writers. This was a parallel literature written by non-Europeans who came into contact with European expansionism. Those who pull up their roots tend to become exiles, nostalgic about a now idealized culture of their origin. Many Commonwealth writers were conflicted by their internationalism and home love.

Postcolonial and New English literatures:

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The Second World War was followed by the collapse of the European empires. Many writers and artists returned home and worked on the home themes. Biculturalism, multiculturalism, universalism, cultural individualism produced different types of literature. The conflict of modernization and usable past remained central to most of the national literatures and postcolonial movements. Sometimes the tendencies of the writers overlap. A writer like Narayan who is located in the microcosm -Malgudi- shows the shades of Post Colonialism and Nationalism. Some writers, who are globetrotters, think they are world writers. Nationalism-Internationalism-- The new English literature/s or Post Colonialism is not just the Empire writing back. As English has become an international language, literatures in English are being written by Russian, Thais, and Japanese. Discussions of post colonialism and multiculturalism often miss this development. The internationalization of English literature overlaps commonwealth, post colonial, multicultural, global literature. For many writers question about nationalism, race, even colour are not very important as the arts have their own language, their own cultures and are international. Criticism has been unable to balance universalism and creative concern with national and political contexts of new literatures. However there were attempts to see the new national literatures in their uniqueness to see the common things in them.

'Colonisation' is generally mistaken as a political process, perhaps, because of the etymological associations with the word 'colony'. The word 'colony' in English, was borrowed from Latin and used in the sixteenth century to mean 'farm, settlement, landed estate, etc.' The word acquires the derivational form 'colonised' during the seventeenth century and with the European colonies all over the world, expands into 'colonised', 'colonial', 'colonist', 'colonisation'. Of late, it is used in other forms like 'postcolonial', 'neocolonial', decolonialising, anticolonialism etc. Postcolonialism is an important feature we find in the South African fiction and its tradition. The age of Postcolonialism was brought about by the new political, economic importance of former colonies after the Second World War. The local cultures undergoing the crisis of identity responded and resisted to the colonial 'icons'.

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South Africa and Apartheid:

We can reckon the history of South Africa from the times of the entry of the Dutch and the English in the seventeenth century. English domination of the Dutch descendents resulted in the Dutch establishing the new colonies of Orange Free State and Transvaal. The discovery of diamonds in these lands around 1900 resulted in an English invasion that sparked the Boer war. Following independence from England, an uneasy power sharing between the two groups held sway until the 1940s, when the Afrikaner National Party was able to gain a strong majority. Strategists in the National Party invented apartheid as means to cement their control over the economic and social system. Initially, the aim of apartheid was to maintain white domination while extending racial separation. Starting from the 60's, a plan of 'Grand Apartheid' was executed, emphasizing territorial separation and police repression. Grand apartheid involved an attempt to partition the country into separate states. "Petty Apartheid" referred to segregationist dimension. The National party clung to grand apartheid till the 90s. Petty apartheid was done away with during the 80s.

With the enactment of apartheid laws in 1948, racial discrimination was institutionalized. Race laws touched every aspect of social life, including a prohibition of marriage between non-whites and whites, and the sanctioning of 'white-only' jobs. In 1950, the Population Registration Act required that all South Africans be racially classified into one of the three categories: white, black (African), or coloured (of mixed decent).

In 1951, the Bantu Authorities Act established a basis for ethnic government in African reserves, known as "homelands". These homelands were independent states to which each African was assigned by the government according to the record or origin (which was frequently inaccurate). All political rights, including voting, held by an African were restricted to the designated home-land. The idea was that they would be citizens of the homeland, losing their citizenship in South Africa and any right of involvement with the South African Parliament, which held complete hegemony over the homelands. From 1976 to 1981, four of these homelands were created, denationalizing nine million South Africans. The homeland administrations refused the nominal independence, maintaining pressure for political rights within the country as a whole. Nevertheless, Africans living in the homelands needed passports to enter South Africa: aliens in their own country.

In 1961, when South Africa became a republic, the Asian and African Commonwealth states' body strongly criticized apartheid policies. When the UN criticized and took some action against the country, it severed its healthy relationship with the UN. The mandatory education in Afrikaans received much protest from students of the black areas. The government killed about six hundred people to suppress the civil protest (1976). In 1983, the white voters approved a new constitution that created separate chambers in the legislature for Asians and Coloureds. A national state of emergency was imposed following widespread strikes and riots. Security forces got unlimited powers and the laws requiring the blacks to carry passbooks for identity were scrapped. The US Congress imposed strict economic sanctions against South Africa.

The African National Congress drew back from talks urging the government to establish peace first, as about one thousand five hundred persons were killed in the first half of 1992. The government and the ANC agreed in 1993 to run the government by equal participation. Twenty-one of both Black and White political parties approved a majority rule constitution that provided fundamental rights to blacks. The US lifted sanctions against South Africa. In 1994, Mandela and his Congress won in the elections.

Literature of South Africa:

The first problem any student of South African literature is confronted with is the diversity of the. Olivier notes, "While it is not unusual to hear academics and politicians talk about a 'South African literature', the situation at ground level is characterised by diversity and even fragmentation".⁶ Mossman adds that "One of the enduring and saddest legacies of the apartheid system may be that no one - White, Black, Coloured (meaning of mixed-race in South Africa), or Asian - can ever speak as a 'South African' The problem, however, pre-dates apartheid significantly, as South Africa is a country made up of communities that have always been linguistically and culturally diverse. South Africa has eleven national languages:

1. Afrikaans
2. English
3. Zulu
4. Xhosa
5. Sotho
6. Pedi
7. Tswana
8. Vendi
9. Siswati
10. Tsonga
11. Ndebele

Any definitive literary history of South Africa should, it could be argued, discuss literature produced in all eleven languages. But the only literature ever to adapt characteristics that can be said to be 'national', is Afrikaans. Of all the literatures in South Africa, Afrikaans literature has been the only one to have become a national literature in the sense that it developed a clear image of itself as a separate entity, and that by way of institutional entrenchment through teaching, distribution, a review culture, journals. Political idealism proposing a unified South Africa (a remnant of the colonial British approach) has seeped into literary discourse and demands a unified national literature, which does not exist and has to be fabricated., etc. it could ensure the continuation of that concept.

Afrikaans as a literature of post apartheid view tends to be critical of the dominant ideologies and the government of the time, the society inhabiting this space and the people living within this society. From a European perspective, Afrikaans prose produces works of a high standard and is artistically and intellectually capable of engaging with the best European and American writers.

The state of African Literature in Post Apartheid Context

Naturally, racial friction is often depicted in South African literature of all languages. But there is a marked difference between how white writing depicts black characters and how some black authors depict whites: one emphasizes that people are not what the stereotype claims, the other argue that the stereotype is substantiated. It clearly provides a view of South African realities, of course ignoring Soviet involvement in the arms trade during the freedom struggle, the reality of poor whites (as depicted in Marlene van Niekerk's *Triomf*), and essentially the fact that South Africa in the years of was a more complex environment than the one often depicted in reductionist texts (literary and journalistic). Miriam Tlali, writes, "The Republic of South Africa is a country divided mainly into two worlds. The one, a white world — rich, comfortable, for all practical purposes organised — a world in fear, armed to the teeth. The other, a black world; poor, pathetically neglected and disorganised — voiceless, oppressed, restless, confused and unarmed—a world in transition, irrevocably weaned from all tribal ties." Modern South African writing in the African languages tends to play at writing realistically, at providing a mirror to society, and depicts the conflicts between rural and urban settings, between traditional and modern norms, racial conflicts and most recently, the problem of AIDS. Very little is known about these authors and their works, as they write mostly in languages not accessible to European scholars. An attempt has recently been made to make more information available about them, as can be seen in the external links section where the link to the website, *Literature in Context*, will provide more information about African authors than available on any other one website. There is also more information about Afrikaans and English writers.

Post Apartheid Literary Response:

When apartheid is an established evil as reckoned universally and morally, what kind of response can one have to it is the question that comes to our minds. Apartheid operates at two ends. At the one is the oppressor. At the other, the victim. Responses do take expression when the suffering of the victims is observed. Naturally, the resistance should act against the oppressor. In a multicultural situation, there could be many people with a change of heart in the oppressor's camp and subdued people who have accepted the victim's position helplessly. Mute victims of apartheid become instrumental in promoting the evil system with no end to suffering. Many whites may have crossed the colour bar. For instance, Gordimer realized after long trauma of guilt feeling and embarrassment, that whiteness is an attitude, not a skin colour and she set about abolishing it, in self and society, a process she has described as 'a third birth'. In such conditions the response and resistance have to work subjectively for the common improvement of the society. The literature on conflict and oppression generally advocates nonviolent resistance for its normative value or from historical accounts of its effectiveness. The examples of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., show that nonviolence is the most effective, and only justified, means to protest and publicize oppression. Unfortunately, it will not succeed many a time. Then the resistance gets accentuated to higher degree. It is a limitation in human history that has to be fought against vehemently. The process of response and resistance to apartheid in the context of the writers in this thesis has to be considered in its glaring and blurring background. It incorporates Postcolonial aspects like, ambivalence, appropriation, colonial discourse, counter discourse, counter hegemony, contraptual reading, essentialism, divided ethnicity, ethnopsychiatry, miscegenation, transculturation, relative autonomy, priori, langue, parole etc

