The Post-Marked World

The Post-Marked World:
Theory and Practice in the 21st Century

Edited by

Krystyna Kujawińska Courtney, Izabella Penier
and Sumit Chakrabarti

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INTRODUCTION

THE POST-MARKED WORLD: THEORY AND PRACTICE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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It is a cliché now to claim that we live in a "post"-marked world, and indeed the "post-isms" are some of the most used, and abused expressions in the language. In a general sense, the various kinds of "post-isms" are regarded as a rejection of a prevailing number of cultural certainties on which our life in the so-called Western world has been structured since the eighteenth century. Postmodernism and its derivatives—poststructuralism, postcolonialism, post-communism, post-feminism, to name a few—have challenged our belief in "cultural" progress. In other words, the "post-isms," which are anti-authoritarian in their outlook, teach us to be invariably critical of universalizing theories, and embrace scepticism about what our cultures stand for. Engaging with the "post-isms" can be regarded as both a philosophical and political endeavour, which demonstrates, among other things, the instability of language, meaning, narrativity and generally any formal systems. In a continual search for paradoxes, instabilities, and the unknown, the "post-isms" are more concerned with the destabilizing existing theories and their pretensions to truth rather than with the positive construction of other grand narratives that could be applied over an entire scientific community.

In our publication the prefix "post" is used in two senses: temporal—as in the coming after, and ideological—as in replacing or superseding. Both of these senses seem to suggest different things to different critics. For

those who consider the "post" condition of the contemporary world to be first and foremost moving above and beyond the great narrative of modernity, the proliferation and purchase of various "posts" paradoxically bears witness to the continuing relevance of the Enlightenment idea of progress. The academic marketability of "posts" seems to suggest a type of progression that continues notwithstanding the eclipse of modernity itself. For example, just as postmodernism comes after modernism or postcolonialism comes after colonialism, all "posts" have the aura of being avant-garde, dethroning and transcending their predecessors. "Post-marking" seems to be a daring space-clearing gesture that makes room for conceptual innovation.

Debates on the theoretical have dominated the discourse on humanities for a few decades now. The surge of anti-humanism from the 60s of the last century had already given way to the hermeneutics of the "post" in the 80s, and the cult of the postmodern has launched us into the era of absolute de-territorialisation of theory itself. As Baudrillard wrote in *Symbolic Exchange*, "any theory can from now on be exchanged against any other according to variable exchange rates but without any longer being invested anywhere [. . .]"

In the wake of such theoretical aporia, the intended volume is an attempt to (re)think the implications of the term "post" in current theoretical parlance. Is there a politics always/already embedded within the "post"? Do we need the "post" any more? Did we, in the first place, need it at all? Is it possible to counter essentialism with the "post" prefix? These are some of the questions the volume intends to raise and explore by examining the "post"-marked terms in the theoretical market.

The editors were careful to select essays that address different and relevant issues related to the idea of the "post," and those that are representative of different parts of the globe. Thus a reader of the volume will not only have a bird's eye view of the various disciplines where the concept of the "post" is used, but also an eclectic range of contributions about issues that engage different socio-political dynamics from various parts of the world. The volume is thus an attempt not only to cut across disciplines, but also to bring together ideas of the "post" from different cultural and geographical perspectives, and try to find a common link between them theoretically and/or practically. The chief intention of the volume is to create a heteroglossial space where various disciplines and multiple representations meet to explore whether a Habermasian consensus is possible in a world split by differences.

While this volume does not attempt the impossible task of covering all possible post-theories and praxes, we hope that this selection of essays will

help to highlight some issues at stake at the outset of the 21st century. Rather than consider the current state of critical theory and its possible future developments, a topic which has received a lot of critical attention, this volume focuses on the type of work the post-theories have made possible. It shows how critical post-discourses intertwine with the cultural practice and social existence through productions of signs, myths and images that give meaning to everyday life. In other words, what interested us most was the intersection of critical thought and practice.

Many essays in this volume follow Friedrich Nietzsche, the iconoclastic nineteenth-century German philosopher, in calling for a "revaluation of all values" dwelling on dissimilarity, difference, differance (Derrida's neologism), and the unpredictability of analysing cultural phenomena. Marta Wiszniowska-Majchrzyk and Metin Colak's essays show that set against these views there are more cautious opinions that the "post" discourses imply not only the eclipse of theory, but also a great epistemological crisis at the heart of the modern world. These two sceptically-minded critics appear to anticipate both the end of a certain era and the passing of great critical theories of the 20th century. For them to label contemporary culture as a culture of "posts" means abandoning the concept of Western historicism and discarding most of the philosophical assumptions on which present theorizing has been based.

In Foucault's terms of reference the essays written by Agata Dąbrowska and Joanna Dyła-Urbańska undermine the insistence on the norm at the expense of the different or the Other, which is part of the authoritarianism associated with modern culture. The argument that gender identity, particularly female identity, is not something fixed, but instead a fluid process that cannot be reduced to any essence or norm of behaviour is present in Monika Sosnowska's and Marcia Olivera's work. Calling into question the assumptions of patriarchy, in particular the assumption behind the specifically male and female gender traits that have led to the gender stereotypes that our society still adheres to and employs as a basis for suppressing woman, as Luce Irigaray claims, these two essays constitute a valid analysis of the present social, political and cultural situation.

Following Lyotard's argument that knowledge is now the world's most valuable resource, which may well become a source of conflict between nations in the future, Piotr Podemski and Maria Łukowska show that whoever controls knowledge also controls ideology and politics. Since knowledge is seen to be communicated by means of narrative, the authors are critical of what Lyotard calls grand narratives: theories that maintain

that they can explain everything, resist any attempt to change their form (narrative).

The authors of this volume also face another crucial problem which we are left with in the "post-isms" reality: how to construct a value judgment that others will accept as just and reasonable, when we dispense with grand narratives or central authorities of any kind. Izabella Penier, Monika Kocot and Justyna Fruzińska explore the "cultural logic of late capitalism" (Frederic Jameson's expression), regarding it as being, willingly or unwillingly, in collusion with the authorities in helping to maintain the ideological and political status quo. Overall, the book is premised on the conviction that it is worth engaging in contemporary theories in an inter-disciplinary and cross-cultural fashion, and therefore the essays collected in this volume revolve around issues of ideology, politics, literature, art and culture.

The essays in the first section of the volume deal with different meanings and judgments of post-theories in humanities. The volume opens with Marta Wiszniowska-Majchrzyk's essay which looks at the contemporary cultural landscape reshaped by social, economic and technological changes of postmodern times and examines what culture and cultural studies have gained and lost in the process. It also tries to envision future prospects of postmodern ideologies, paradigms and praxes. Metin Colak's essay "Late Postmodernism—Are We Entering a New Era of Postmodernism?" recounts from a privileged standpoint of contemporaneity the key areas of the debate surrounding the philosophical history of current critical positions. It introduces readers to the genealogy of postmodernism and its complex relation to modernity, and deals with the most important theorists of postmodernism and anti-postmodernism and their diagnosis of the social crisis that gave rise to the postmodern era. The essay concludes with an outline of the major legacies of modernism in the 21st century.

Joanna Dyła-Urbańska's essay—"Postmodern Fireworks or Postcolonial Vengeance: the Strange Case of Salmar R." provides a link between postmodern and postcolonial literary practice by attempting to critically discuss Salman Rushdie's fiction against the backdrop of postmodern and postcolonial literary traditions. The essay sets out to show how these two critical paradigms can be used interchangeably with regard to one another producing divergent and competing readings. It also describes various strategies used by Rushdie to avoid being trapped in and defined by any of these two theoretical positions.

"Post-Indian Warriors of Simulation—Sherman Alexie's *Flight* as a 'Story of Survivance'" by Monika Kocot narrates a similar story of evasion of appropriation and quest for indeterminacy by another non-

western writer—Native American Sherman Alexie. The essay analyses the construction of the trickster narration in Sherman Alexie's novel *Flight*, but rather than look at it through the prism of western theories, it uses the indigenous trope of trickster (as outlined by Gerald Vizenor's theory on the Native American tradition in literature) and the theme of simulated knowledge/power, as a strategy of survival in the oppressive white world.

Monika Sosnowska and Marcia Olivera's texts deal with different theories of oppression by engaging in feminist cultural texts and concerns. Monika Sosnowska's essay "Irigaray's Critique of the Ocularcentric Paradigm: A Postmodern Feminist Perspective" investigates Luce Irigaray's feminist critique of the ocularcentric paradigm and discusses how this ocularcentric tradition circumscribed the construction of feminine subjectivity by privileging of the visual in Western theories, as for instance in Freud's theory of sexual difference. The essay also demonstrates how the marginalization and cultural evaluation of other senses (e.g. touch), contributed to the erasure of the feminine from literary works. On the other hand, "Art and Feminism from a Poststructuralist Perspective" by Marcia Olivera not only deals with visual arts but also discuses how poststructuralist anti-hegemonic discourses have engendered innovative readings and imaginative movements crucial in the contemporary analysis of feminist artistic practices.

The intersection of theory, literature and visual arts is also the main concern of Justyna Fruzińska's essay. "Has Postmodernism Really Reached the National? Appropriation and Interpretation in *Sita Sings the Blues*" examines the problem of appropriation and legitimacy in cross-cultural cinematographic art. Her essay provides an in-depth analysis of the animated film *Sita Sings the Blues*, which conflates the story of an average American woman and the traditional Hindu tale about Sita, the wife of the Hindu god Rama. The essay addresses the sensitive issue of how the postmodern practice of rewriting national mythologies and other canonical texts can touch a raw nerve in a culture which considers such texts to be their own cultural and intellectual property. It also raises the question of the ethical aspect of postmodernist playfulness.

The second section of the volume forges links between culture and politics showing how cultural texts in theatre or mass media can be put to revolutionary or political uses, and how these uses can be explicated by diverse post-theories. In the essay "The Pre- and Post-Holocaust Reading of *The Tempest* by Leon Schiller, or Polish-Jewish Relations" by Agata Dąbrowska the reception of two productions of *The Tempest* directed by Leon Schiller is examined. The essay illustrates how the staging of Shakespeare's play can be read as a commentary on Polish and Jewish

relations in various historical times and contexts. While the first staging, prepared by the Jewish troupe in cooperation with Polish artists, was a form of protest against racism and anti-Semitism, the second one, as Agata Dąbrowska argues, was treated as an attempt to come to terms with the awareness of Holocaust crimes. Piotr Podemski's essay "Silvio Berlusconi and the Second Italian Republic: a Model Post-Democracy?" tests the validity of Colin Crouch's theory of post-democracy in his interpretation of the relationship between politics and mass media in Silvio Berlusconi's Second Italian Republic—a "videocracy" for "*homo videns*"—where democratic practices such as free elections are only a mimicry of democracy.

Another kind of mimicry is analysed by Maria Łukowska whose essay "Postcolonialism and the Polish Colonial Dream" tells the little known story of Polish colonial, overseas explorations. The essay explains that the rationale behind the Polish colonial enterprise was quite different from Western-style colonialism, as the overall objective of Polish colonial entrepreneurs was the restoration of the Polish Commonwealth overseas.

Finally Izabella Penier's work—"Towards Post-ethnic American Studies? Postcolonial Interventions in the US Black and Minority Studies"—that closes the whole volume reviews the institutional conditions in which theories are created. The essay explores the impact of postcolonial studies scholarship on the research imperatives and practices of American Black studies, arguing that postcolonial, and in particular Black British cultural studies (the Black Atlantic), has contributed significantly to the "world-ing" of Black Studies (and, by extension, of ethnic and American studies), reconfiguring the American concept of ethnicity and expanding the American discourse on multiculturalism.

Though for some critics the force behind the theoretical revolution that took academia by storm in the latter part of the 20th century seems to be waning, time has not evidenced their belief that the significance of "post-ism" theories has diminished. On the one hand it is true that this theoretical revolution, so enthusiastically glorified in the past, has lost its impetus, and in many cases it no longer spreads beyond academia and a narrow circle of experts. On the other hand, its repercussions have, however, affected almost every section of daily life: we can see them in ideological formations, literary criticism, literature, comic books, films, art and in the majority of products and processes connected with social, political and cultural aspects of our present reality. It is our hope that this volume, by engaging with a plurality of theorized praxes, will help discover, trace and acknowledge the significance of the many post-theories, showing them nothing but an elitist, esoteric or arcane practice.

PART I

"POST" AND THEORETICAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

NEGOTIATING WITH THE "POST-WORLD": GAINS, LOSSES, PROSPECTS

MARTA WISZNIOWSKA-MAJCHRZYK

ABSTRACT: Having found ourselves in an utterly different reality, which often turns into hyperreality, with the rapidity of economic, social, technological progress, the so-called quality of life has taken a new turn. This paper strives to examine the consequences of the change in the three areas indicated in the title. There are many, such as the commercialization of culture and the triumph of mass culture over high culture, the end of the old style academia, the fiasco of ideologies and several others.

KEY WORDS: culture, civilization, consumer society, postmodernism, quality of life.

> To negotiate (OED Second Edition):
>
> To hold communication or conference (with another) for the purpose of arranging some matter by mutual agreement, to discuss a matter with a view to some settlement or compromise;
>
> To deal with, manage or conduct (a matter, affair, etc., requiring some skill or consideration)
>
> To transfer or assign (a bill, etc.,) to another in return for some equivalent in value
>
> To clear (a hedge, fence) to succeed in crossing, getting over, round or through an obstacle by skill or dexterity [. . .]

It can be argued that our lives are being negotiated by us or for us, as the case may be. On the surface, Baudrillard's (1983) exchange theory in which exchanges turn more and more problematic and the cherished superiority of the subject becomes ephemeral, seems close to the idea of negotiating, of compromise and settling for less instead of more.

This paper wants to examine gains, losses and future prospects in the areas of broadly defined culture and cultural studies, touching upon ideologies, politics, civilization, psychology, multiculturalism, feminism, and post-mutations of the above. To begin the inquiry requires a broad consensus as to what is understood by culture, cultural studies and by (post)modernism in these areas. It also requires a tentative acceptance of

various theoretical stands without redefining them, but recognizing the status quo and examining their consequences in the given fields. It may be expected that gains and losses intermingle, and the prospects are extremely difficult to envisage.

In order to anchor history for now a brief visit into the past may be instructive. A visit to the time when culture/civilization, nature/nurture entered public debates not to be ousted from them ever since. Arnold, Ruskin and Morris offered numerous opinions and much criticism of the existing state of affairs (Wiszniowska 2012). They were believed to have been offering the much needed solutions for society. Such voices as those of Jeremy Bentham, Thomas Malthus and J.S. Mill should also be noted. Even if at the time of the actual debate they did not seem universal, with hindsight their universality is striking. The evidence of women's suffrage and Emmeline Pankhurst presents such a case.

Soon the prevailing ideology of Victorianism gave way to the forces of modernism via Wilde, Hardy, Conrad, Yeats and others. Artistic manifestos began to negotiate such categories as truth, realism, verisimilitude, mimesis, the artist's role in the changing world and the place of art. Correspondences between the arts gained momentum with Ruskin's criticism, Turner's paintings and Conrad's modernist manifesto (Preface to *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus'*). Turner and Conrad, each in his own right, questioned the collective, mimetic and realistic tendency toward nondescript and sublime, from representable to u-representable (Faris 1989).

To visualize how modernity turned into postmodernity, an unlikely comparison may prove instructive. We need to juxtapose such seeming incompatibles as the industrial revolution, John Ruskin and the description of the Polish city of Lodz as depicted by Władysław Stanisław Reymont. The comparison extends from Ruskin's criticism of the consequences of the industrial revolution that could have unwittingly inspired the said Polish novelist (Krzyżanowski 1963: 235). Reymont was the Nobel Prize winner for Literature in 1924 and the writer who voiced "Ruskinian" sentiments in his industrial novel *The Promised Land* (1899). The passages from *The Promised Land* have an aura of universality, evidencing that Lodz was rightly considered the Polish Manchester, an enormous monster that crushes human lives, as the closing paragraphs of the book sum up:

> From distant plains, from mountains and godforsaken villages, from capitals and towns, from thatched houses and palaces, from the heights and gutters an unending procession of people was towing to "the promised land." They came to fertilize it with their own blood, bringing their

> strength, youth, health, freedom, hope and poverty, brains and work, beliefs and dreams. For that "promised land," for that polyp, villages were deserted, forests were dying, land grew infertile of its treasures, rivers were drying, people were born; and it took in everything, and in its huge jaws crushed and chewed people and things; heaven and earth, and instead gave useless millions to a handful of people and famine and strain to the whole rest.

A devastated landscape was not the only outcome of the industrial revolution. The devastation of human beings was evident in the change from a peasant to a factory worker, as the descriptions below show. In his regional/traditional attire, the worker-to-be looks healthy, spruce and dignified:

> [I]n white coat, embroidered along the seams with black ribbons, trousers in horizontal stripes red, white and green, his waistcoat dark blue with brass buttons. His shirt tied with a red ribbon. Standing straight at the door he put his sheepskin cap on his own hands now crossed across his breast he looked at Borowiecki with unsmiling blue eyes, time an again moving his head to prevent his hair, looking like braked hemp, from falling on his well shaven face. (Reymont 1965: 92)

Having worked in a factory for a time, the man looks utterly different, so much like the figures from Mrs. Gaskell's industrial novels or Emmeline Pankhurst's autobiography. Not only had the man discarded his regional costume for "cheap clothes and nasty" (as the famous title of Charles Kingsley's goes) but also lost his healthy look and most importantly his natural dignity:

> [I]nstead of a white coat he was wearing a black overcoat dripped with wax on the tails, short black trousers over black boots, a peaked cap, a rubber collar which revealed his dirty neck. He has grown a beard, which covered his jaws like a brush, at sides coming to his short pomaded hair. From his yellow, wrinkled and haggard face the same old blue and honest eyes stared. (Reymont 1965: 401)

The Europe of early capitalism saw more or less the same sad metamorphosis of those ousted from their traditional milieu. It can be summed up as shifting from barter or exchange of commodities (cf. the feudal social hierarchy based on the exchange of services as exemplified in *Piers Plowman*) via rates of exchange (as ironically exemplified in Bradbury's novel entitled *Rates of Exchange*) to virtual transactions that have been colonizing more and more areas of the contemporary world from virtual shopping to making online friends or dating, etc.

It has been accepted that mass culture was a product of changing social and economic relations. In Great Britain mass culture was created by the working class that came into being in result of the said industrial revolution. Towns became a natural milieu of culture. They offered a new experience to these crowds of people who lost experience, new surroundings, amorphous crowds who have lost their identity/roots, etc. (Piątkowski 2008: 11-24).

Other pan-European similarities are discernible. What was said about Lodz and about the emerging working class takes on another dimension when we realize that it was the same city, which had been visited several times by the great American black tragedian Ida Aldridge who had performed there and eventually met his unexpected death (Kujawińska 2009). Thus Lodz was not as exclusive as Reymont depicted it. Culture and civilization were trying to work out their uneasy compromise that we have been negotiating ever since. Ruskin insisted that beautiful surroundings, education and better living conditions are necessary for men to live decent lives. Culture made claims on civilization trying to humanize it. Yet, new developments were soon to shake the foundations of the industrial revolution. Nowadays, both Britain and Poland have been witnessing the collapse of heavy industry with the former shop floor likely to become a huge mega store or a shopping mall.

The progress of industrialization equals civilization, which corresponds with Richard Hoggart's assessment (in the 1950s) and his reassessment in 2004 diagnosing the gradual devaluation of traditional working class culture and giving way to mass culture, in which the former grass roots producers of culture become passive consumers of the imposed media culture. These tendencies were discerned and criticized from various theoretical stands from The Frankfurt School to Williams and Baudrillard. The process brought the demise of the modernist (or liberal) non-political view of culture, which was openly turning ideological and commercialized.

The spread of culture is a sure gain, though it happens at a cost. This cost is the demise of the traditional sources and transmitters of culture, the collapse of the academia, of the traditional hierarchy of cultural values, of the (no matter how tentative) stability that culture used to offer which coincided with the demise of grand narratives (giving culture ideological colours and legitimation which at the same time relegates culture from its former privileged position to one of many artefacts on a par with eating habits and sexual behaviours), to the Americanization of culture by means of Hollywood films, musicals, jazz or "the jeaning of America" (Fiske's phrase 1990:1) and not only America, truth to tell. What seemed a gain for Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall and others was the

creative role of the working class in producing their own culture, which indicated a grass roots movement, turned sour before our very eyes due to the spreading commercialization of culture, and the near demise of high culture.

Unlike F.R. Leavis, Williams (1971) secured no special place for art, including it into cultural practice or just another human activity. Williams's social definition of culture links it with a specific social group, anthropologically oriented (describing a way of life, values and understanding). Culture became not only class specific but transient and "lived," and that experience is shared by many. That brought Williams (1977) to develop (with a considerable difficulty in defining) the so-called "structure of feeling." Ultimately, it seems to denote the culture of a particular historical moment, a commonly accepted set of values, shared by a generation and reflected in particular artistic forms and conventions.

In view of later developments it should be stressed that the scholars of the nineteen fifties and sixties still saw individuals as active participants who helped create their own culture, while maintaining that cultural practices should be studied along with historically specific social relations associated with these practices.

Cultural Studies, emanating from the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University in the early 1960s, combined innovative zeal with shaky methodology or, as some opponents want it, no set of tools at all. Parasitic on literature, freely taking from other fields of research and highly politicized, the new discipline was fighting a winning battle with literature. The insistence on the political and class oriented vision of culture must be seen as ideological entrenchment, while the postulate to study popular culture was most desirable. Yet, criticism must not be confined to Marxist perspectives and stories of power relationships, it should take a vaster humanistic turn. By exploring cultural context simplified stories of hegemony or influence may be overcome (Schwarz 1993: 11).

The changing concept of culture and its nineteenth- and early twentieth-century milieu undoubtedly influenced the post-postmodern understanding of culture. Yet, to try to understand the present, several other conditions co-created what we have now. The problem is their rating that is our increasingly common and tricky problem today.

The relevance of the Freudian *Interpretation of Dreams* published in 1900 and the 9/11/2001 attack on the WTC almost prophetically encompass the developments of the last hundred years. Within these bookends, the neo- became post- with an interim stage of being itself.

Until the post- stage was reached, "splitting the atom" (a term popularized by H.G. Wells), quantum physics (Planck and Einstein) and the computerized web world overshadowed the humanities in the sixties, the mistake that comes back with a vengeance, as many ideas and studies had been discarded as unprofitable or politically incorrect or unattainable. God was declared dead. Marxism came under criticism from former supporters (Althusser). Two wars were fought, empires fell, the Iron Curtain dissolved, the world was fragmented, the universe became approachable. More and more dependent on science, the modern world came to distrust science. After all genocide resulted from pseudo-scientific research (Bauman 1995: 45–70). The nineteenth century witnessed revolutionary upheavals in the status of knowledge. The twentieth century pushed the development of sciences to unbelievable extremes.

Developments in new fields of knowledge split its more or less solid (even if in theory) paradigm of a uniform body of workable knowledge (for instance how to educate a gentleman as Cardinal Newman maintained). Bombarded with new ideologies, inventions, facing extreme situations in which accepted measures would be sadly lacking, our age offered alternative solutions in almost all spheres of human activity from ideological ones via political to cultural.

One of the theories of "the great change" states that the available modernisms were too self-centred and opinionated to break away from their own limitations and in consequence were to become post-modernisms. They were rooted possibly in the counterculture of the sixties or "the watershed of 1968" (Bertens 1995: 5). Leslie Fiedler (1965), John Barth (1992), Jürgen Habermas (1990), Ihab Hassan (1991) and Susan Sontag (1964), to mention but a handful of names, only added fuel to the ongoing discussion and attempts at defining the process. Jameson saw postmodernism as "an inescapable and schizophrenic condition imposed on us by late-capitalist society" (Jameson, quoted in Bertens 1991: 123). Sontag's campaign against meaning led to postmodern art becoming non-art to avoid being interpreted (Bertens 1991: 124). With the demise of grand narratives, commodification of arts and artists and rationalizing irrationality, literature's credibility was undermined together with its traditional liberal justification and epistemological transparency and ontological surety.

Further dispersion and fragmentation were inevitable, though opposite processes also surfaced. Culture and popular culture used to be kept apart, and their division was not only attacked from various ideological positions but also inexorably losing its relevance. At the moment we have moved to "the culture of the copy," in which the once admired originality, authenticity

and uniqueness are undermined by reproductions and fakes (Hawkes 1997, Schwartz 2000).

Once "modernist" meanings were discarded the ideological and the aesthetic became inseparable. Several developments helped this to occur. Besides commercialization and commodification of arts, the growing relativization of the truth (linguistically the truth was given the plural it never used to have) coincided with the ebbing support for ideological interpretations of the world. Howard Barker, one of the British avant-garde playwrights, shrewdly assessed the situation:

> We are living the extinction of official socialism. When the opposition loses its politics, it must root in art [. . .]
>
> The accountant is the new censor. The accountant claps his hands at the full theatre. The official socialist also hankers for the full theatre. But full for what? [. . .]
>
> We must overcome the urge to do things in unison. To chant together, to hum banal tunes, is not collectivity. A carnival is not a revolution.
>
> After the carnival, after the removal of the masks, you are precisely who you were before. [. . .] (1993: 17)

The distrust of fossilized formulas or formulas just declared fossilized, in genres and ultimately, paradigms reached its height in the rise of feminist writings, criticism and theories. As before, there were and still are several feminisms differing because of cultural, geographical and ideological anchoring. What seems undisputed is the new perspective on literary heritage, what may be called "reading and writing as a woman," offering alternative discourse to the prevailing patriarchal vision. With truly revolutionary progress made in printing techniques, several half-forgotten or neglected women writers of the past came into focus.

Feminism has travelled colossal distances from early grass roots of Women's Lib, from much ridiculed bra burning and unshaven legs to the protest at Greenham Common (does anybody remember what it was all about?), from propagating sex education, discussing sexuality, pregnancy, abortion, IVF, to gender mainstreaming. As Showalter (1990:1) once rightly observed, the rise of gender as a category of analysis has been one of the most striking changes in the humanities of the eighties. By offering an alternative reading of literary her-story, feminism challenged received literary canon, relativized and legitimized studies of the peripheral and neglected. Truth to tell, ideology often got the upper hand over artistic value, which became more and more difficult to agree upon.

Feminism has been less successful in preventing the spread of attitudes considered demeaning or counterproductive and upholding the patriarchal and capitalist power structures. This, undoubtedly is the case of popular

literature, romances, films, TV serials and commercials, let alone pornography and violence on the Internet.

Besides, the rise of feminism encouraged cultural and political activities, another truly revolutionary occurrence was the rise of postcolonial studies. The "empire writes back" trend legitimized what was already going on—the former colonies finding their own voice, largely (an irony in history) via their representatives, who were educated in the British education system, first at home and later in Britain, mainly via the British Council (the case of V.S. Naipaul) and who were capable of expressing themselves in the language of the former colonizers. Again, new alternatives were offered. These were other versions of the official history, most inventive in the field of language.

Postcolonial literature is not good because it is postcolonial (meaning politically correct) but because it neither tames nor domesticates its otherness. "Making the exotic comfortable" (Todd 2006: 13) for marketing purposes only trivializes otherness, ignores non-mediagenic writers, and those whose works make us distinctly uncomfortable. To support the above view, "dissensus" (as opposite of consensus) Lyotard's coinage obligingly demolishes the pretence of ideological and commercial innocence as governing in the world of culture:

> The real political task today, at least in so far as it is also concerned with the cultural [. . .] is to carry forward the resistance that writing offers to established thought, to what has already been done, to what everyone thinks, to what is well known, to what is widely recognized, to what is "readable," to everything which can change its form and make itself acceptable to opinion in general. (Lyotard 1988: 302)

Paradoxically enough, the vitality of postcolonial literature bridges cultural divides, moving in and out of traditions, appropriating them in a novel way (Wiszniowska 2011). But the long shadow of history can also be a hindrance. As Derek Walcott observed:

> In the New World servitude to the muse of history has produced a literature of recrimination and despair, a literature of revenge written by the descendants of slaves or a literature of remorse written by the descendants of the masters. Because this literature serves historical truth, it yellows into polemic or evaporates in pathos. The truly aesthetic of the New World neither explains nor forgives history. It refuses to recognize it as a creative or culpable force. (Walcott, quoted in Szuba 2011:102)

The insistence on keeping the label of postcolonial or feminist literature seems ultra entrenching and self defeating in view of the merging of genres, traditions, etc. In both cases there are historical and

ideological reasons for doing so. Yet, in the long run, the oppositions of centre/peripheries and colonizers/colonized must appear simplistic and outmoded in the globalizing world. Ideological supportive should not be taken as absolutely trustworthy, neither should several lists of must-reads that are thinly camouflaged best-seller lists.

By analogy, Wilde's pun may come in useful. Still, Wilde certainly had it easier to decide which book to praise and which to discard. After all he was not living in the world of aporia, in a maze of choices. He stated (1974: 138) in the Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: "There is no such thing as a moral or an immoral book. Books are well written or badly written. That is all."

That is obviously not all. Over the years, we have turned from the former affluent society into a consumer society with almost infinite options to choose such as views, religion, the country we want to live in, the way we want to dress, even gender, etc. But to accept these options as unbiased would be a mistake. Here comes the downside of our civilization. We are being constantly prepared to buy this and not that, to think this and not that. The freedom of choice has been more and more illusory.

The abundance of artefacts creates an illusion of stability, which in turn necessitates further acquisition of commodities and stimuli (discussion in Hoggart 2004, Kubisz 2009). TV sets, computers, mobile phones, iPods and the Internet allow for little or no solitude or contemplation. Personal freedom is endangered if one can be located all over the world via mobile operators.

There are far reaching implications of cultural exchanges due to the world wide mobility, of psychological, social and political nature. So unsurprisingly, modern anthropology, sociology and recently cross-cultural psychology are investigating psychological problems of long-term residence in foreign countries. Yet, early studies used to devote little attention to the cultural clash experienced by immigrants encountering foreign customs, religion, language, living conditions etc. Indeed, the notion that human behaviour depends very much on cultural traditions that human beings carry with themselves (in other words "culture-bound nature of most human behaviour") is comparatively new and the relationship between psychology and culture dates back to World War II (Jahoda 1999: X). It is only recently that it has been accepted that human behaviour is culturally specific.

Psychology has launched itself to the position that philosophy, theology and literature used to occupy. It appears that literary studies has got yet another competitor besides cultural studies. However, cross-cultural psychology may, surprisingly, be an ally to cultural studies.

Psychology, which as with culture is non-experimental (though it has experimental psychology as its offspring) but looks for interactive meanings (to appropriate Geertz's formula, 2003: 35–58) and makes judgments ex post. Literature functions in a similar manner, but it takes a great writer to explore the problem of otherness in the collision of cultures. It is not only Naipaul's protagonist who can become one of his *Mimic Men*, but collision of cultures makes it necessary to re-examine one's identity.

The term "cross-cultural psychology" is by no means the only new compound that uses the root *culture.* Such new compounds as multiculturalism, interculturalism and acculturation have become part of scientific debates held in many disciplines. Since the 1970s the psychologist John W. Berry had been researching and ultimately striving to explain how individuals and groups adapt or disadapt to another culture, whether they maintain their own, borrow from another, integrate or separate, which leads to integration or assimilation, segregation or marginalization. Berry's acculturation model (Berry 1999: 7, Chika Assai 2006) accounts for several choices and consequences that follow. Individuals may either participate in another culture while maintaining his/her own and in result get either assimilated or marginalized. The problem of marginalization has become a burning issue in various parts of the world. Properly defined areas of research should allow for scientific and systematic approach to how human behaviours are shaped and influenced by social and cultural forces, studying individuals from more than two cultures and finally, how they are influenced by culture and how it leads to changes in existing culture (Berry 2008).

Multiculturalism seemed a desirable way out of several difficulties and challenges at the end of the twentieth century. Europe had to adjust to the changing political, economic and cultural occurrences. There was a conference organized by the International Society for the Study of European Ideas that gave due attention to those problems. In 1996 the right to preserve one's cultural identity in increasingly polyethnic societies was perceived as a challenge and a common phenomenon:

> The Summit of the Council of Europe, 1993, brought forward that Europe is being confronted with a challenge that has to do with national minorities which the "upheavals of history have established in Europe." The challenge has not decreased in hand with a revival of a search for national identities, in particular, but not only in Eastern Europe. Besides, during the second half of this century many migrant workers from Mediterranean areas and refugees have come to various, in particular Western, European countries, with the result of these countries becoming poly-ethnic. So, almost every European country can be called multicultural, be it multi-

> national or poly-ethnic or both, containing various cultural groups that want to preserve their cultural identity and that express their demands for recognition. In this context many advocate a right to preserve their cultural identity. (Buitenweg 1998)

Until recently multiculturalism was one of the sacred and undisputable favourites of public relations. W.J. Burszta, an eminent cultural anthropologist, already considered multiculturalism a demographic fact that such governments as the US, Canada or Australia try to institutionalize. But there is another aspect of multiculturalism that has dwarfed itself to "boutique multiculturalism," to cultural tourism and global reification of cultural differences, where exotic goods are offered and traded with no understanding of history and tradition (Burszta 2008: 57–59). The danger of banalization becomes real when given culture is used without thorough understanding of its workings and striving for commercial success is also the shortest way to create cultural nonsense.

Some twenty years later, multiculturalism has been considered misleading and dangerous for promoting cultural absolutism. The link with politics is obvious when one offers the following comment:

> Multiculturalism is, therefore, a deeply misleading term in that it depends on a notion of cultural absolutism, which supposedly exists before the many varied aspects of the 'multi' are brought into contact. But this is not how culture works. Cultures are already multicultures in that they always consist of difference and sameness. It is only ever culture in the singular in discourses of power or in naive discourses of resistance. Moreover, what should be regarded as something positive, something to celebrate, is often presented as a negative, something to constrain and control. Overt and organised racism is only one aspect of this negativity. It is nevertheless an irrational and damaging aspect, one that brings despair and destruction to the lives of many British people. (Storey 2010: 23)

Storey's (2010: 24) criticism, which also turns against the legacy of the Empire was considered a source of xenophobia and racism, owing to the natural link that developed between the skin colour (white) and nationality (also cf. Eagleton 2000: 46–47). Multiculturalism as an idea and a programme suffered from a multitude of inadequate or broad definitions, and from being considered as a panacea for the problems migrants and migration create for their host countries and their inhabitants.

Thus, celebrating equal value of all cultures has been giving way to interculturalism resting on the observance of common fundamental obligations, on preserving one's religious, cultural, and other identities. As yet, it seems a recent and "long-distance" project (as follows from Cushner 1998, Gundara 2000), obviously geared to educating societies and

upholding a belief in democracy, as democratic governments are to become guarantors of individual rights. However, present day democracies find such obligations difficult if not impossible to fulfil and equally difficult for societies to take on trust.

In the long run, the intercultural approach may offer a welcome alternative to the "empire writes back" fears of losing one's identity, cancellation of individual rights, cultural and religious discrimination. Another much feared and discussed idea is that of globalization. It is feared because it professes various connections transcending nation-states (implying also societies). It is a process of world-wide consequences, in which we become intertwined with distant people and places economically, politically and culturally (Berry 2008).

There are several problems we face in our post-world democracies or quasi-democracies. The issues of equal rights for all, personal freedoms, free press, etc. have been guaranteed by various international bodies, national governments and politicians, which is especially true during election campaigns as they make us painfully aware of fundamental problems. Democracies in their pursuit of equality (numerous resolutions of the European Parliament) do not pursue the truth with equal eagerness. Relativity in judgments and morals in the name of tolerance has already spread over politics leading to political correctness or downright manipulation.

The challenging problem is whether "dictatorship of relativism," which is easy to foresee, will make it possible for culture to flourish. In the periods of moral permissiveness and decay in political and social spheres, as antiquity testified, the most advanced and established democracies had fallen prey to barbarians.

Postmodern individual identities have undergone a decisive shift. Such fashionable catch words as psychological well-being and quality of life are accompanied by the decline of tradition, demise of values, growing awareness of individual rights to attain personal aims regardless of the so-called social well-being that is functioning in society. Collecting experiences, readiness to trade anything for a more desirable commodity, capability of quick change to start yet anew—all these have been associated with "man chameleons" or, as psychologists want it, "the unencumbered I." That is a personality without identity, constructed by the subject itself, independent and autonomous. Such individuals are unable or unwilling to take responsibilities for others, to show affection and friendship (Majchrzyk 2010).

On both a personal and international level, attitudes toward multiculturalism, globalization, individual and national identities remain liquid (Bauman 2005). The prospect of the clash of civilizations,

Huntington (1996) eloquently described and Brooks (2011) equally forcefully denied, remains open to investigation if the third opinion is presented. Gellner's insightful observation that "modern man is not loyal to a monarch or a land or a faith, whatever he may say, but to a culture" (Gellner 1983: 36) may be considered a challenge, one of many; it may also offer hope for culture which is something we like to believe we can manage, though Eagleton's warning (2000: 131) that culture cannot fulfil all expectations directed at it these days should also be noted.

By summing up gains, losses and prospects only a mixed message can be offered:

- The post post-modern world is more of a project than a finished product.
- In the time of ideological shifts, culture, history and tradition provide minimum continuity and stability.
- Colossal gains in the quality of life, living and working standards, technological progress, etc., coincide with unheard-of challenges and tremendous human cost.
- Culture and culture-related issues are becoming more and more significant. There are no monolithic (closed) cultures. All cultures enter into some relations with other cultures.
- Commodification of such ideas as freedom of expression, tolerance, political correctness etc. almost killed critical (including academic) debate and the so-much-advertised freedom of choice is being constantly restricted.
- And lastly, if the world seems like "a heap of broken images" (T.S. Eliot) that we must "only connect" (E.M. Forster) but whatever happens, another poet realistically states: "Between extremities/Man runs his course" (W.B. Yeats).

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