

Postmodernism in Literature
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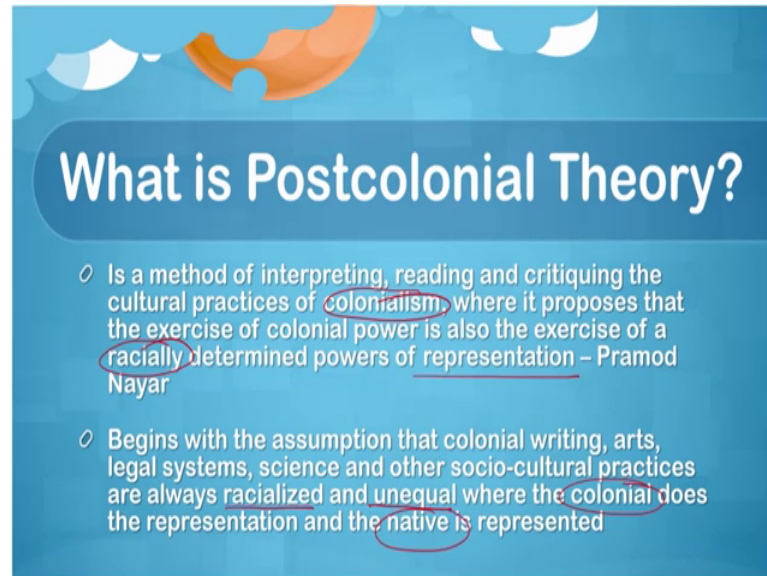
Week - 06
Lecture – 15
Situating the Postcolonial in the Postmodern

Good morning everyone I am happy to welcome you to yet another session of the NPTEL course post modernism in literature. We begin this weeks discussion with a discussion of post colonialism and today's lecture is titled situating the postcolonial in the postmodern. Keeping in tune with the frameworks that we had been following it is very important to see the ways in which postmodernism responds to and reacts to the various of the kinds of critical frameworks in conceptual ideas which are available in the twenty in the 20th and the early 21st century.

In that context we begin talking about the postcolonial and the postmodern with the possibility of identifying confluences between the two both can be considered as two of the most influential frameworks in the contemporary and there are also a number of critical theories literary theories and our cultural theories which have which could be identified as off shoots of these two events these two phenomena known as postcolonialism and postmodernism.

Just like postmodernism postcolonialism also has historical positioning and I the postcolonialism is also concerned with specific kinds of artistic and intellectual inquiries and in that sense we can say that there is a historical prominence within the field of critical theory in the context of both postcolonialism and postmodernism. Many of the issues that we have been highlighting in the context of our discussions of postmodernism could be extended to the discussions related to post colonialism as well.

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What is Postcolonial Theory?

- Is a method of interpreting, reading and critiquing the cultural practices of colonialism, where it proposes that the exercise of colonial power is also the exercise of a racially determined powers of representation – Pramod Nayar
- Begins with the assumption that colonial writing, arts, legal systems, science and other socio-cultural practices are always racialized and unequal where the colonial does the representation and the native is represented

So, we begin this lecture by taking a look at what postcolonial theorist Pramod Nayar very aptly sums up. The concepts of postcolonial theory in these words it is a method of interpreting reading and critiquing the cultural practices of colonialism, where it proposes that the exercise of colonial power is also the exercise of a racially determined powers of representation.

So, here are some of the terms may look familiar it is also talking about the ways of interpretation the multiple ways of reading and also about how post colonialism gives is a method to critique certain cultural practices which read result of colonialism.

So, just like we spoke about how a postmodernism was now calling for a new kind of at a framework away from the ideas of modernity. Here we find a theoretical framework in post colonialism asking us to move away to depart from the ideals which were propagated and which were legitimized by colonialism.

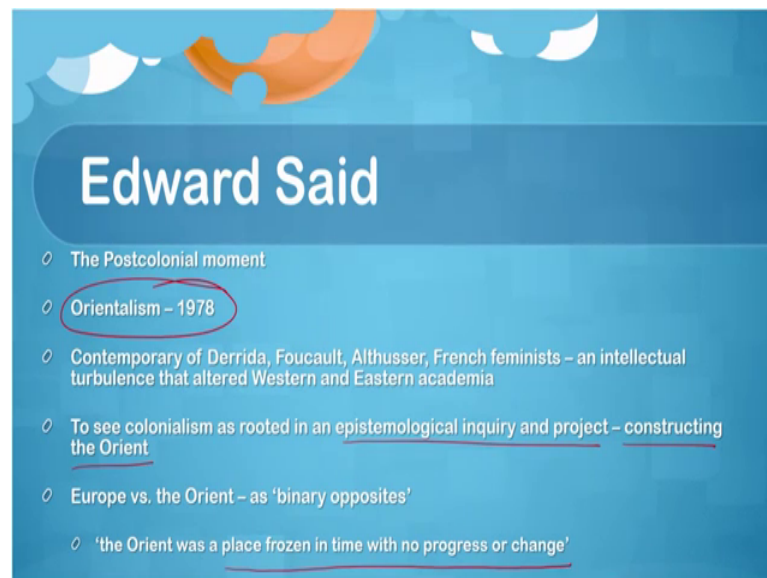
Just like postmodern theories and the postmodern frameworks are based on certain assumptions postcolonial theory also begins with the assumption that colonial writing, arts, legal systems, science and other socio-cultural practices are always racialized hence unequal and where the colonial does the representation and the native is represented.

So, in certainly it is also about subverting the relationship between the colonial and the native and also talks about a certain hierarchical relationship a certain binary

representation of the colonial who represents and the native who is represented by the colonial.

So, postcolonial theory gives us frameworks to reject these binaries to question these hierarchies and to move away from some of the ways in which colonial writing or a colonial art forms have resulted in the subjugation of certain marginalized communities and groups.

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When we make in talking about post colonialism it is only appropriate that we begin with it, but side and the postcolonial moment that he inaugurated in nineteen seventy eight with the publication of his work orientalism.

Orientalism in multiple ways it sums up the essence of postcolonial theory it also inaugurates the ways in which the postcolonial worlds, the postcolonial nations could write back to talk back to the empire with a renewed sense of legitimacy. And I would say it was also publishing his works during the same time when the works of Derrida, Foucault, Althusser, and the French prime minister becoming available in the western academia.

He is also said to inaugurated when intellectual turbulence that altered the shape and canon of western and eastern academia. In that sense just like postmodernism challenger and thwarted many established our traditions of culture and literature post colonialism

also went on to challenge question and de establish the many literary and cultural traditions which were in place during the time of our colonialism.

Among the many things that Edward said encouraged us to do was to see colonialism as rooted in an epistemological inquiry and project which the project was constructing the orient.

So, through his a very influential work orientalism he illustrated and argued that the colonial project was also a project through which a certain epistemological understanding certain knowledge systems about the orient was getting constructed so in that sense we also had as a result of colonialism a certain kind of a construction in which we or the Europe and the orient operated as binary opposites to each other.

So, by an extension looking at the orient and the and your represented perspective it would not be wrong to say that the orient was constructed in such a place that it was it figured as a place frozen in time with no progress or change and in binary opposition Europe and the many nations and the many communities and the many cultures that it represented it they were also fore grounded as icons have changed as icons of progress.

So, this kind of I would say it is a postcolonial moment, but say its orientalism gave us a tools to respond to this kind of a figuration of the orient in which the orient was frozen in time without any, without any inkling of progress or any kind of change.

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Orientalism

- A style of thinking, a form of representation that created opinions, ideas and images of the non-European culture in racialized ways so that
 - i. The East was always contrasted negatively with Europe and
 - ii. It justified the colonial presence in the East

If we try to define orientalism further it could be defined as a style of thinking a form of representation that creates an opinions, ideas, and images of the non-European culture in racialized ways. So, why was this done? This was done to the, to bring into effect two major things. One the east was always contrasted negatively with Europe and secondly, it justified the colonial presence in the east.

In this context we can also recall the phrase white man's burden which seemed to justify the many things that we that the colonial masters were doing in various colonies during the 17, 18th and 19th centuries.

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He also now take a very quick look at some of the key concepts and texts which inform the study of postcolonial theory. And some of the terms which are very imperative in our understanding are imperialism and colonial discourse and this was also used talk about the literature of the empire.

So, here we were also given insights into a different kind of literature which was able to talk back to the empire such as the Walton studies or the literature of the subaltern and or to the post colonialism also gave us a new language to talk about nation nationalism and even the post national on the contemporary.

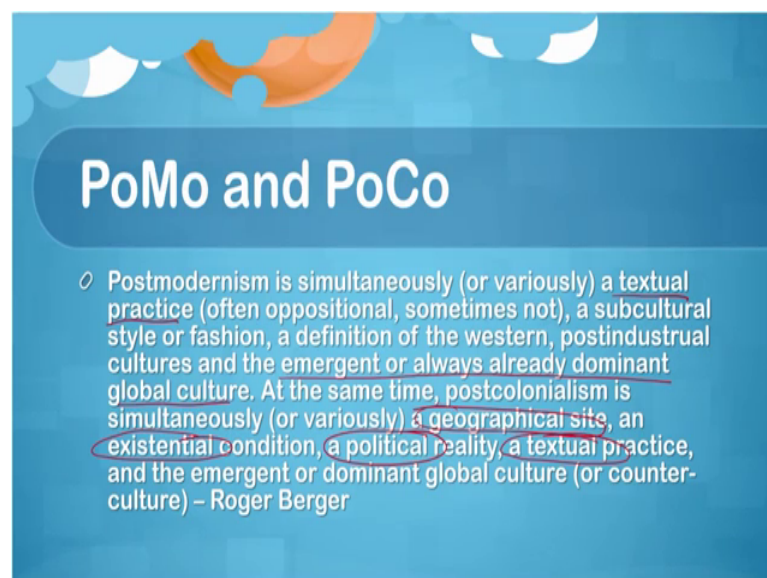
And it also gave rise to certain kinds of a distinctions within history where we were also taught in certain ways to respond to a dominant nationalist historiography with the many

histories from the margins with the many histories which were written from below and it also gave rise to the concepts and definitive of meanings associated with it as it is the third world and the third space, or the idea of the Diaspora.

All the various ways in which certain cultures were seen as cosmopolitan than the other and they were also particular works which could be identified as seminal to our understanding of post colonialism such as heart of darkness, which was a very seminal novel which radically redefined the ways in which we think about fiction and the writings from particular nations and masks of conquest by Gowri Vishwanathan which enquiry into the ways in which English education played a very seminal role in altering the face of modernity in India.

And Homi Bhabhas location of culture Gayatri Spivaks can the subaltern speak these are some of the seminal text and concepts which were influential in defining and redefining postcolonialism in the 20th century. The objective of this lecture is to foreground certain ways in which postcolonial theories and postmodern theorists come together to talk about the contemporary.

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PoMo and PoCo

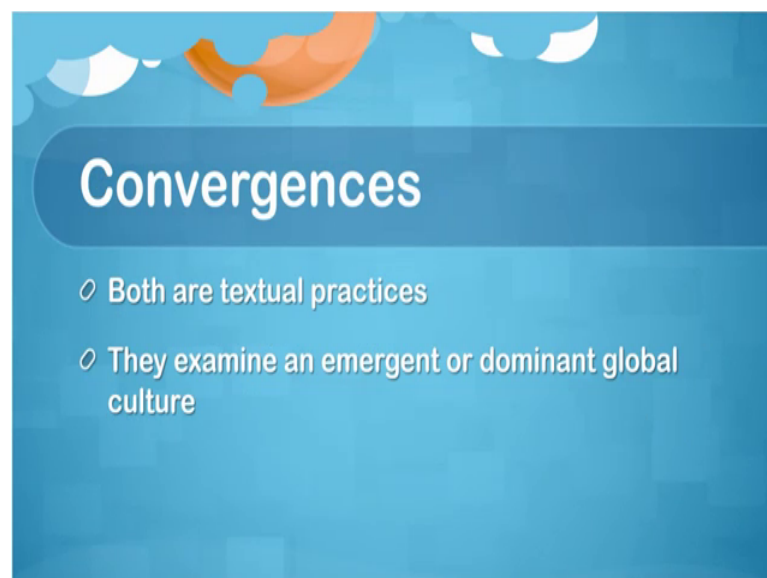
- o Postmodernism is simultaneously (or variously) a textual practice (often oppositional, sometimes not), a subcultural style or fashion, a definition of the western, postindustrial cultures and the emergent or always already dominant global culture. At the same time, postcolonialism is simultaneously (or variously) a geographical site, an existential condition, a political reality, a textual practice, and the emergent or dominant global culture (or counter-culture) – Roger Berger

In that sense well one of the first things that we would be doing is to identify the ways in which post postmodernism meets with post colonialism. So, I am Roger Bergers words postmodernism is simultaneously or variously a textual practice of an oppositional

sometimes not, a sub cultural style of fashion, a definition of the western postindustrial cultures and the emergent are always already dominant global culture.

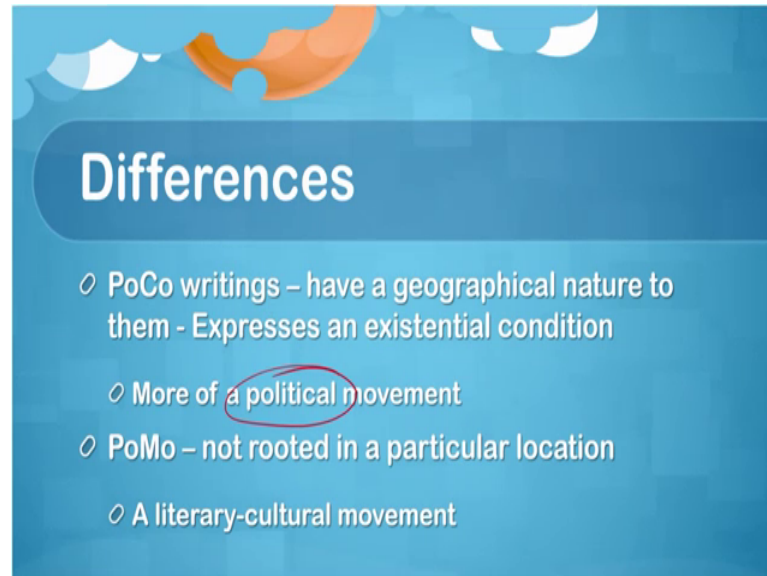
At the same time, postcolonialism a simultaneously or variously a geographical site, an existential condition, a political reality, a textual practice, and the emergent or dominant global culture. So, here were being drawn into two ways in which one could talk about postmodernism as well as postcolonialism. And here Roger Berger is drawing our attention to how both these both these phenomena postmodernism and postcolonialism could be seen as textual practice.

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But there are also certain ways in which they diverge both are textual practices. and they also examine certain emergent or dominant global cultures. The ways in which they converge does not necessarily mean that they do they are not a essentially different from each of them.

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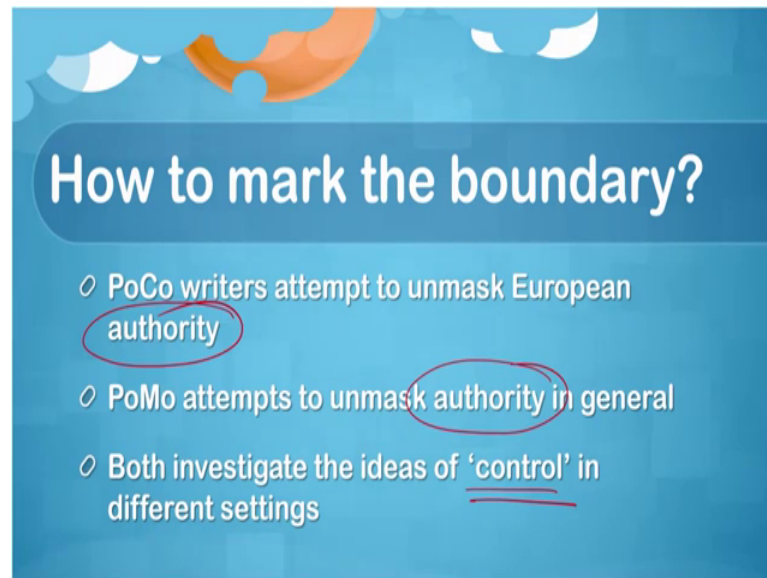


There are also very particular very identifiable differences postcolonial writings have a geographical nature to them and they also express an existential condition. In that sense since they are rooted in particular nations, particular communities, and also they are talked back against certain kinds of projects which were part of the colonial enterprise where they could be considered more of a political movement and just if we recall some of the discussions that we had in the context of Marxism, feminism, and postmodernism.

It was also underlined with a lot of emphasis that postmodernism is not a political movement though there is a certain political element an ambivalent political element, which could be associated with it. So, postmodernism as against postcolonialism is not a political movement and postcolonial writings though there are aesthetic elements associated with it, it could be seen as predominantly a political movement.

A postmodernism again is not rooted in a particular location we serve a postcolonial writings which have a geographical nature to them and postmodernism in that sense could be seen as a tree and cultural movement which would have a more global universal appeal than any kind of rooted literary cultural or a political phenomenon.

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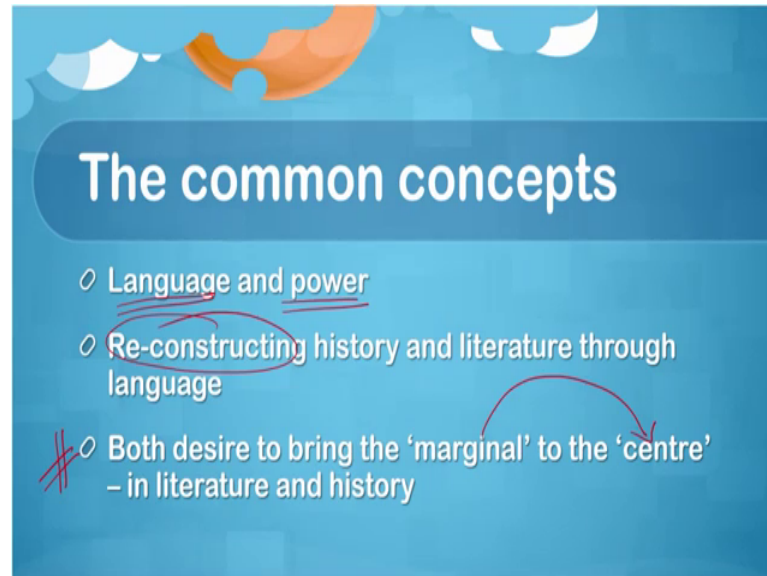
And how do we mark the boundaries of post colonialism and postmodernism. So, it is important to locate the ways in which they converge and diverge in order to see how even the points of divergences is have certain kinds of similarities in the way in which they diverge.

For example, postcolonial writers attempt unmasked European authority and postmodernism attempts to unmask authority in general, and both in that sense both post colonialism and postmodernism they attempt to investigate the ideas of control in different settings.

So, are we have also noted in the multiple discussions that we had in with respect to postmodernism that there is a way in which postmodern theories whether they come from artistic frameworks, or from political frameworks or from the frameworks related to media.

There is a way in which the postmodern theory is always challenged all for all kinds of authority. There is a way in which they also try to move away from the market ways in which authority had been defined during the modernist or tradition during the during the time of modernity. Here once we begin to locate the similarities based on the ideas of authority and control. It also leads us to certain common concepts that was colonialism and postmodernism share.

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First of all they are both engaged with the aspects of language and power. And the way in which postmodernism response to a linguistic turn especially at the turn of the post structuralism is something that we have noted in the earlier sessions and we also noted how post structuralist drew a lot of inspiration from the linguistic turn where certain discussions related language and power became very seminal in the understanding of the post-industrial capitalised societies.

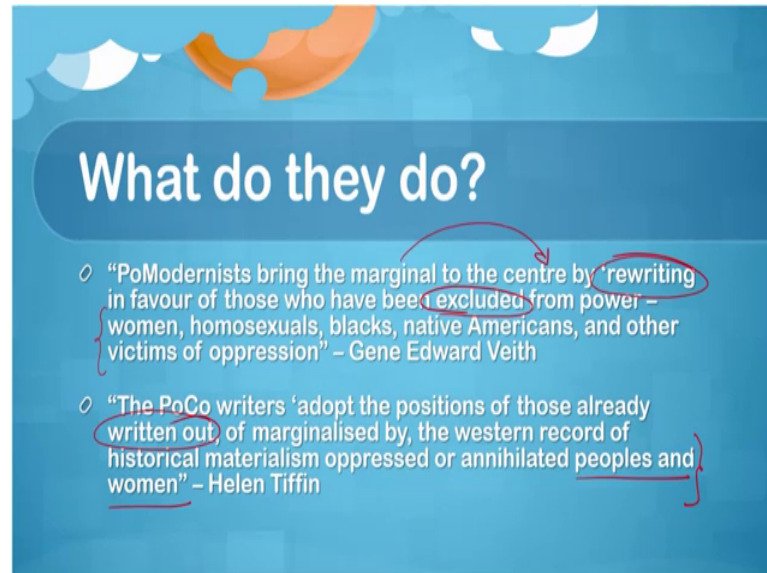
And here language and power they need to be seen at a in a larger framework because they also allow us to reconstruct history and literature through language. The term reconstruction is very important over here because through language when it becomes possible to reconstruct our history or reconstruct literature it also gives us a possibility to reconstruct different forms of identity and also to question different kinds of authority.

And in these ideas of language power and the reconstruction through (Refer Time: 13:13) and literature they operate to reach of a common end. Both desire to bring the marginal to the centre in a literature as well as in history.

To sum up when we talk about post colonialism and post modernism regardless of the boundaries within which the of the operate regardless of the are frameworks from which they emerge it is important to notice that the desire in both postcolonial and postmodern frameworks is to bring the marginal to the centre. It is this transformation this is it is this

move from the marginal towards the centre is what becomes a interesting when we talk about both of these concepts.

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So, what do they essentially do in order to make this possible in order to make this moved from the marginal towards the centre are to quote a gene Edward Veith postmodernists bring the marginal to the centre by rewriting in favour of those who have been excluded from power such as women, homosexuals, blacks, native Americans, and other victims of oppression.

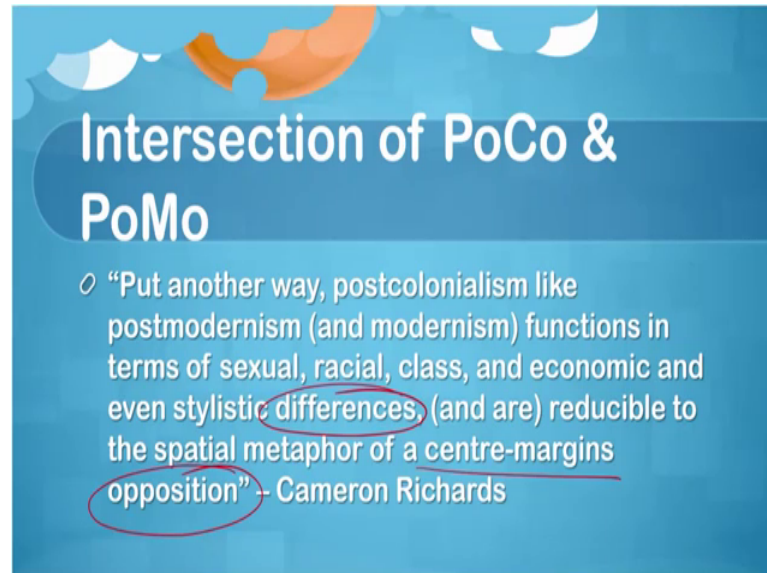
So, the keywords over here are the move from the marginal to the centre, the active rewriting and how there is a way in which one can focus and the focus on the categories who were otherwise excluded and there is a list of these are marginalized excluded ones which are being keeping.

And Helen Tiffin one of the postcolonial theorists she writes the postcolonial writers adopt the positions of those already written out, of marginalized by, the western record of historical materialism oppressed or annihilated peoples and women.

So, there are certain common ideas that we can see over here while the postmodernist focus on the active rewriting in favour of those who have been excluded the postcolonial writers do pretty much the same. They adopt positions of those who are already written out, and that also includes the same set of peoples such as the marginalized people and

women. So, this is sort of a corollary that we can identify the sort of a confluence that we can identify in what the postmodernist and postcolonial writers do.

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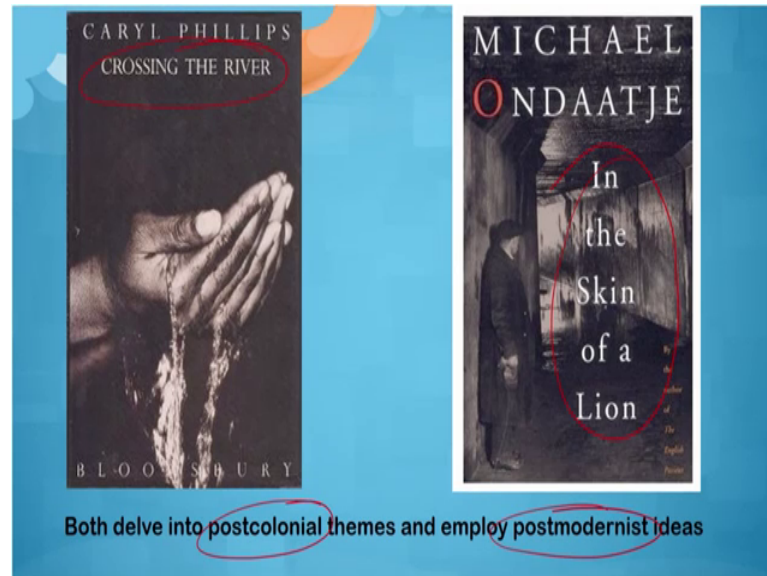


Also brings us to another intersection of the postcolonial and the postmodern moment in the words of Cameron Richards. Put another way post colonialism like postmodern, postmodernism, and modernism functions in terms of sexual, racial, class and economic and even stylistic differences and are reducible to the spatial metaphor of a center margins opposition.

So, these are also some of the terms that we had been visiting and revisiting in the course of far discussions related to postmodernism. We spoke about differences we spoke about how the center margin dichotomy the center margin binary needs to be thrown out in order to talk about postmodern our theories and frameworks.

In terms of difference in opposition and also when we reject these binaries it becomes possible to identify the places where postmodernism intersects with postcolonialism.

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As an example we can also talk about some of the postcolonial writers who have delved deeper into the postcolonial themes by employing postmodernist ideas. So, here within the framework of a single novel we can see that the postcolonial and the postmodern are not elements which are radically in opposition to each other, but it can also coexist. There can be a confluence of them not just in theoretical terms, but also in the ways particular narratives are produced ah.

For example when we talk about these two novels crossing the river by Caryl Phillips or in the scheme of a line by Michael Ondaatje we begin to see that they are they deal with predominantly postcolonial themes the characters the setting, the plot, the conceptual ideas are all related to predominantly to postcolonialism, but the narrative techniques which are being used could be seen as very pronouncedly post modernist.

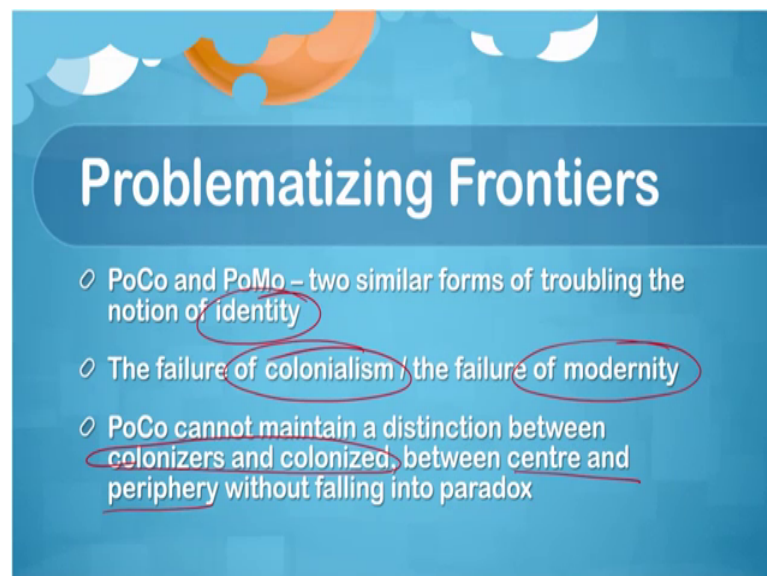
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And in this context having said that there is a confluence between post colonialism and post modernism it is also imperative to identify certain links and connectors which would also give us a an outline to go through this a discussion and these terms and concepts have also been used extensively in our discussion of post modernism.

The first common aspect that one could identify is problematising frontiers, secondly problematising grounds, thirdly problematising destinations, fourthly performativity, fifthly self reflexivity, and finally repetitions of the same.

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When we talk about problematizing frontiers we begin to see how post colonialism and postmodernism are two similar forms of troubling the notion of identity. And we have already seen how post modernism challenges the ideas of identity and how it also makes it possible to move away from the modernist and limiting conceptions of identity.

While postmodernism deals with the failure of modernity as we have already noted postcolonialism deals for the failure of colonialism and the similarities do not really end over them post colonialism just like postmodernism it cannot maintain a distinction.

And in this in this way it becomes to problematize the frontiers in such a way that it becomes impossible for postcolonial writers, for postcolonial theory is to maintain a distinction between colonizers and colonized and the distinction between center and periphery.

And once we begin to do that just like in postmodern a theories there is also a tendency to fall into a paradox, the idea of marking boundary is the idea of having proper compartments for different concepts and different kinds of identities it is something that is inherently a problematic in both a post colonialism as well as postmodernism.

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Just like postmodernism, postcolonialism is also based on problematizing grounds and these grounds could be the grounds of all kinds of exclusions and inclusions and how they operate it could include notions it is a foundations, origin, beginning.

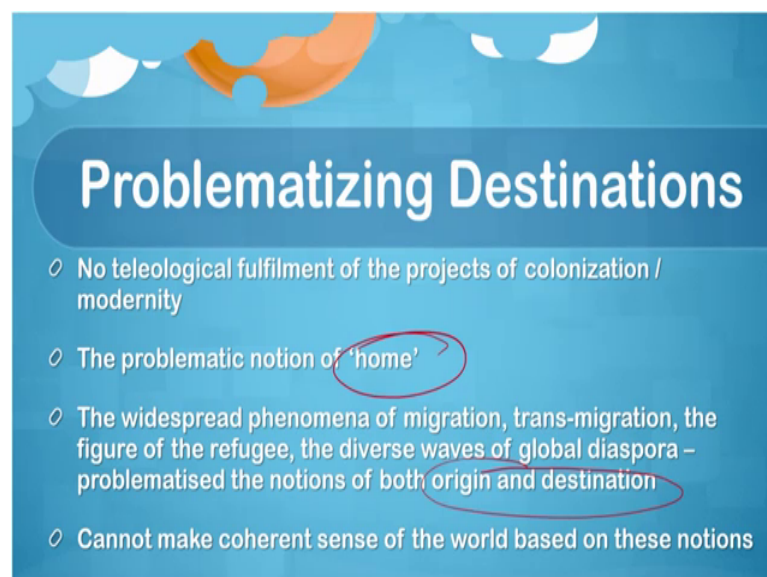
And we already seen how historically these have become impossible elements when we talk about postmodernism and this was also one of the major complaints that the Marxist critics raced against postmodernism that there are no grounds on the basis of which one could make a judgement.

There are no grounds on the basis of which one could make a judgment there are no grounds on the basis of which one could very legitimately, and effectively historicize. And just like the grounds of the grand narratives of western modernity were problematized by the postmodernists or the postcolonialism we begin to see a different kind of problematization of grounds happening.

Because orientalism can be identified with a wide range of cultural registers this could include science, knowledge, art, culture, bureaucratic administration, even trade and on orientalism talks about post colonialism, talks about moving away from the ways in which these set of narratives that serve to support and maintain the western orientalist views have been considered as grand narratives.

So, just like a post modernism moves away from the grand narrative of western modernity. Post colonialism moves away from the grand narrative of the western colonial and orientalist impulses. Here the grounds or the basis for the formulation of the ideas of modernity all the orientalist views have been extremely problematized to the extent that they even begin to challenge and reject these dominant views.

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Problematizing Destinations

- No teleological fulfilment of the projects of colonization / modernity
- The problematic notion of 'home'
- The widespread phenomena of migration, trans-migration, the figure of the refugee, the diverse waves of global diaspora – problematised the notions of both origin and destination
- Cannot make coherent sense of the world based on these notions

Post modernism began to argue that there is no teleological fulfilment of the project of modernity that one could identify and from that rejection began the ideas of post postmodernism. In the same way there is a problematizing of destinations which happen with postcolonial with the postcolonial moment as well. There is no teleological fulfilment of the projects of colonization that one could identify it problematize is not just the notion of home.

But it also talks about the widespread phenomena of migration transmigration, the figure of the refugee, the diverse ways of global Diaspora, and here we find not just the notion of origin, but also the origin of, but also the notion of destination getting challenged and problematized.

Post colonialism also leads instant to being convinced that one cannot make any coherent sense of the world based on these notions, these are grand narratives related to origin and destination which were also offshoot of certain colonial projects.

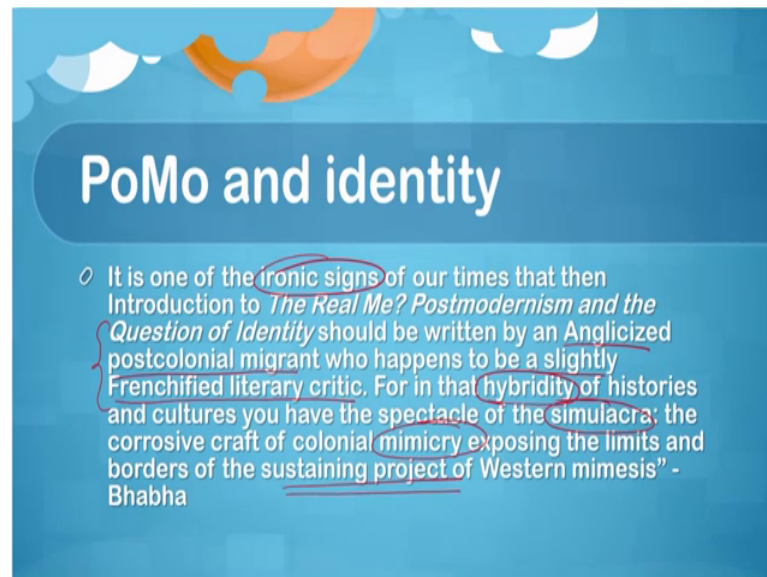
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This also takes us to the next idea of performativity and this is something we we have already noticed in the discussions of postmodernism. Particularly with the influx of the feminist moment and our performativity can be defined as that aspect of a text or institution that can be revealed at the level of its functioning or acting it is institution in act.

So, the so the focus is on the roles that one performs and not on the kind of definitions or meanings which are inherent in a Homi Bhabhas words the terms of cultural engagement whether antagonistic or affiliative are produce performatively. To further problematize this notion of performativity which we find both in postmodernism and postcolonialism.

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One of Homi Bhabhas remarks would be extremely useful when he talks about postmodernism and identity. It is one of the ironic signs of our times that then introduction to the real me? Postmodernism and the question of identity that is a book published by a Homi Bhabha it should be written by an anglicized postcolonial migrant who happens to be a slightly Frenchified literary critic that is a description that he uses to talk about himself.

For in that hybridity of histories and the cultures you have the spectacle of the simulacra; the corrosive craft of colonial mimicry exposing the limits of and borders of the sustaining project of western mimesis. So, here he talks about how identity can be located only in the level of performance just like gender performativity operated in the words of Judith Butler a it becomes impossible to locate an identity which is away from any kind of performance.

So, post colonialism like postmodernism draws our attention to the various aspects of performativity and how they constitute certain a how they constitute identity and making of identity.

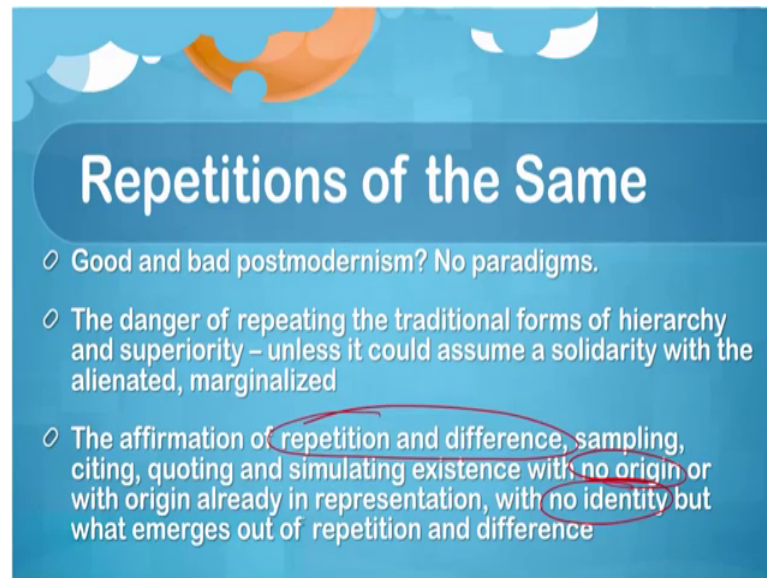
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This brings us to the next element self reflexivity which is a very very postmodern idea and interestingly we find the self reflexivity of the postmodern in the postcolonial as well. So, this constitutes of doubling of the selfawareness, which is the awareness of modernity it is own doubling of identity in the empty repetition of cultural science and here we also introduced a certain words it is a hybridity where the hybrid is explicitly focused upon performed and inscribe in it is performance.

So, we find that the idea of performativity goes hand in hand with the idea of self reflexivity just like it happens in the case of a number of postmodern instances.

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Repetitions of the Same

- Good and bad postmodernism? No paradigms.
- The danger of repeating the traditional forms of hierarchy and superiority – unless it could assume a solidarity with the alienated, marginalized
- The affirmation of repetition and difference, sampling, citing, quoting and simulating existence with no origin or with origin already in representation, with no identity but what emerges out of repetition and difference

And we come to the final aspect a repetitions of the same in the postmodern in the discussions related to postmodernism we have already noticed that it becomes difficult to talk about good and bad postmodernisms. Because there are no paradigms, there are no grounds on which we could make such an evaluation or a judgement.

So, post colonialism just like postmodernism it alerts us to the danger of repeating the traditional forms of hierarchy and superiority unless it could assume a solidarity with the alienated other marginalized.

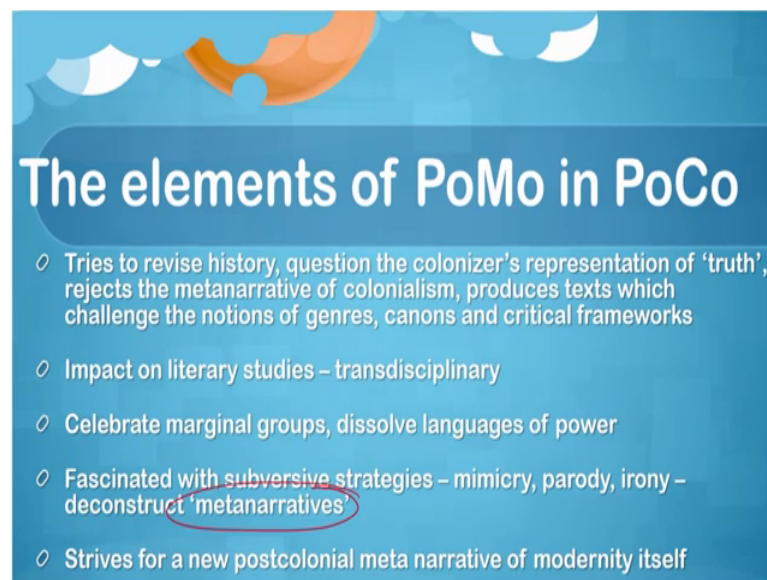
So, one of the ways in which we can tie of all of this discussions in the context of post mode postmodernism and postcolonialism this is a ways in which they reject the traditional forms of hierarchy and the ways in which the one themselves, they alert themselves to not repeat the same sort of hierarchical binaries.

And on the contrary instead of focusing again on those binaries in hierarchies which are put in play a certain kinds of certain kinds of superiority or inferiority are the focuses on the affirmation of repetition and difference.

And a the identity which gets formed through difference and through opposition is something that postmodern is also focused upon and postcolonial is in the same way they talk about sampling citing quoting and a simulating existence with no origin or with origin already in representation with no identity.

But what emerges out of repetition and difference most of these elements were also part the discussions related to postmodernism and here we begin to see how post how the postcolonial moment could be located even within the discussions related to postmodernism.

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So, when we talk about the elements of postmodernism in postcolonialism we can identify again a few more particular aspects the ways in which suppose colonialism tries to revisit history or question the colonizers representation of truth, rejects a meta narratives of colonized a metanarratives of colonialism, and produces a text which challenge the origins of genres, canons and critical works.

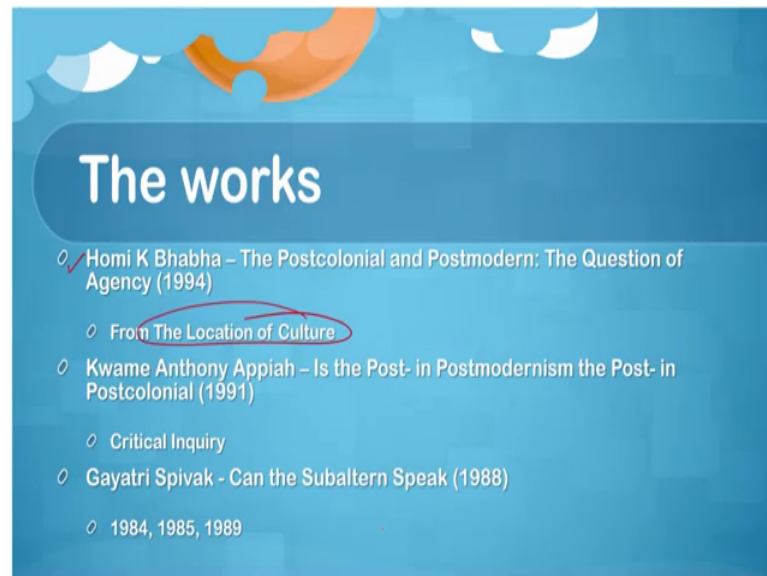
It could be seen as a very very postmodern impulses in within postcolonialism and it is also important to underscore the fact that a just like postmodernism, postcolonialism also has an impact on literary studies which is also transdisciplinary in nature.

And our postcolonialism also celebrates marginal groups they also dissolve the language of power through the various interventions, and like postmodernism post colonialism is also interested and fascinated with the subversive strategies which they use as part of narrative techniques as well such as mimicry, parody, and irony.

And these forms of subversive techniques, subversive strategies are also used to deconstruct the metanarratives in the case of postmodernism, it is a metanarrative of

modernity and in the case of a post colonialism it is a metanarrative of colonialism. And by using these very postmodern strategies and techniques postcolonial some also strives for a new postcolonial metanarrative of modernity itself. So, there are these various convergences which become interesting in this discussion of post colonialism and postmodernism.

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So, in the next class where we shall be taking these discussion forward with an emphasis on particular works a we shall be focusing particularly on Homi Bhabhas the postcolonial and postmodern, the question of agency and excerpt from his seminal work the location of culture.

And Kwame Anthony Appiah's is the post on the post modernism a post and post colonial an essay published in the eternal particular inquiry in 1991. And also Ggayatri Spivaks a can the subaltern speak an essay originally published in 1984 and revised in 1985, and 88, and 89 we shall be looking at how these works together Bhabhas, Appiahs, and Spivaks works together.

The informers of the ways in which the postcolonial operates in the contemporary within the postmodern a (Refer Time: 27:53) and also focusing on the various paradigms from which they operate in case of Gayatri Spivak it is gender in case of Kwame Anthony Appiah it is the particularity is of the theoretical frameworks used from within the African literary and artistic context.

And in Homi Bhabha it is a general theorization of the frameworks which are being used in the contemporary to talk about both the postcolonial and the postmodern. Alongside discussion of these words which will also be talking about set another seminal a fictional, and nonfictional and literary and artistic texts which have also provided a ground for bringing together these discussions that is all we have for today.

Thank you for listening and I look forward to seeing in the next session.