

Aula 3

THE TERM “POST-COLONIAL”

META

to demonstrate the way how postcolonial studies affected the Western historiographical traditional narratives, questioning some of their core concepts and values.

OBJETIVO

Ao final desta aula, você deverá ser capaz de:
Familiarizar o estudante com as polêmicas decorrentes da teoria pós-colonial.
Relacionar os aspectos históricos da colonização com suas consequências atuais do ponto de vista pós-colonial.

PRERREQUISITO

Notions about the formation and development of cultural studies;
Notions of the main concepts employed during the course;
Notions of twentieth century British and American culture.

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INTRODUÇÃO

If we think carefully enough, it is hard to recognize that the European empire colonized more than 85% of the rest of the globe by the time of the First World War, until its final disintegration after the Second World War, and even at the end of the twentieth century. Two of the most important periods of postcolonialism include the British disengagement from its second empire (of the 19th and 20th centuries) and the decolonization movements of the 1960s and 70s in Africa and elsewhere (see Aula 1). The processes provoked by those struggles were not only political, but also economic and cultural.

Like we did in another class of our course of Literatura de Língua Inglesa V (ver Aula 5), in this class we are going to read and interpret a summarized version of one of his famous articles, “When was ‘the post-colonial’? Thinking at the limit”, in order to understand the question of postcoloniality, as it was put at the end of the twentieth century by one of the most important intellectuals of our time, Stuart McPhail Hall (1932-2014), the Jamaican-born cultural theorist, political activist and Marxist sociologist who lived and worked in the United Kingdom from 1951 until his death, in 2014.

The article is available in the following link:
<http://readingtheperiphery.org/hall/>

HALL AND THE “POST-COLONIAL”

Hall begins his text questioning the term “post-colonial”: “if post-colonial time is the time after colonialism, and colonialism is defined in terms of the binary division between the colonizers and the colonized, why is post-colonial time also a time of ‘difference’?”

The reason is simple. Like the other ‘posts’ with which it is aligned, it collapses different histories, temporalities and racial formations into the same universalising category. ‘Post’ means past, definitively terminated, closed, but it also means a ruptural point between two epistemes in intellectual history.

However, there are important distinctions to be made: can the US be thought of as ‘post-colonial’ nation? What about Australia, which is also a white settler colony. Are they different from India? Is Latin America ‘post-colonial’, being its independence struggles fought long before the recent stage of ‘decolonisation’ to which the term more evidently refers? By these examples, we can easily notice that the term can be operated in different contexts, acquiring, thus, different meanings. One way of discrimination can be based on different social and racial formations, for Australia, Canada,

Nigeria, India, Jamaica and Brazil are not ‘post-colonial’ in the same way. But this does not mean that they are not ‘post-colonial’ at all. In terms of their relation to the imperial centre, they were all ‘colonial’ and are now ‘post-colonial’. What the concept may help us to do, Hall teaches us, is to describe the shift in global relations which marks the transition from the age of Empires to the post-independence or postdecolonisation moment, putting in evidence the new relations and dispositions of power emerged from each new conjuncture.

Thus, the term refers to a general process of decolonisation which, like colonisation itself, has marked the colonising societies as powerfully as it has the colonized, although in different ways, subverting the old colonizing/colonized binary in the new conjuncture. It was a process whose negative effects provided the foundation of anti-colonial mobilization and provoked the attempt to recover an alternative set of cultural origins, apart from the colonizing experience. However, as the Hall has pointed out in many of his writings, the historical and cultural effects of the ‘transculturation’ is always irreversible, for colonizing and colonized cultures never operated in a purely binary way. From this perspective, postcoloniality obliges us to re-read the binaries as forms of transculturation, or of cultural translation. Its theoretical value, he says, lies precisely in its refusal of this ‘here’ and ‘there’, ‘then’ and ‘now’, ‘home’ and ‘abroad’ perspective.

One thing that must be emphasized is that the ‘postcolonial’ is not a form of periodization, based on phases or ‘stages’. Colonization means direct colonial occupation and rule, and the transition to ‘post-colonial’ is characterized by independence from direct colonial rule and the formation of new nation states. Their economic development, afterwards, is dominated by the relations of neo-colonial dependency on the developed capitalist world, and the powerful local elites try to manage the contradictory effects of under-development. We can say that the postcolonial, thus, is characterized by the persistence of the effects of colonisation, but it also signals to the displacement from the colonizer/colonized axis to their internalization within the decolonized society itself. In other words, ‘the colonial’ is not dead, but its politics is not the same. What comes to the front now is the proliferation of histories and temporalities, as well as the intrusion of difference and specificity into the universalizing Eurocentric post-Enlightenment narratives. On the other hand, the deconstruction of core concepts, like the subject and identity, undertaken by the postcolonial discourses is followed not by their abolition but rather by their proliferation, although in a ‘decentred’ position. However, in terms of periodization, however, the ‘post-colonial’ retains some ambiguity because it also offers an alternative narrative, highlighting different key conjunctures to those embedded in the classical narrative of Modernity.

Taking that into account, 'colonization', in a postcolonial perspective, means something more than direct rule over certain areas of the world by the imperial powers. It encompasses the whole process of expansion, exploration, conquest, colonisation and imperial hegemonization which constituted the European and the Western capitalist modernity after 1492. The focus moves from its European centring to its dispersed global 'peripheries'; "from peaceful evolution to imposed violence", as Hall says.

A distinctive element of the postcolonial periodization, according to Hall, is the retrospective re-phrasing of Modernity within the framework of 'globalization', "from the Portuguese entry to the Indian Ocean and the conquest of the New World to the internationalization of financial markets and information flows". The 'post-colonial', from this perspective, marks a critical interruption into the whole Western historiographical narrative. Colonization, re-read in this sense, can only be understood as an event of global significance. Thus understood, it has made ethnic absolutism an increasingly untenable cultural strategy, making the 'colonies' always-already 'diasporic' in relation to what might be thought of as their cultures of origin. According to the author, the notion that only the multi-cultural cities of the First World are 'diaspora-ised' is a fantasy which can only be sustained by those who have never lived in the hybridized spaces of a Third World.

The way difference was lived in the colonized societies after the violent and abrupt rupture of colonization was completely different from how these cultures would have developed, had they been isolated from one another. As Bhabha (1994) points out, hybridity, syncretism, multidimensional temporalities and many other forms of translation and transculturation have characterized the 'colonial relation' from its earliest stages. The very notion of an autonomous, self-produced and self-identical cultural identity, like that of a self-sufficient, was discursively constructed through a system of similarities and differences. In a postcolonial perspective, there is no longer a term fixed in place and time external to the system of identification. The Enlightenment, in turn, represents a critical epistemic shift within the colonizing process, in which all forms of human life are brought within the universal scope of a single order of being, so that difference had to be re-cast and re-ordered into the Western grand narrative. We can say, thus, like Hulme (1995), that the 'post' in 'post-colonial' has two dimensions in tension with each other: a temporal dimension, in which there is a relationship in time between a colony and a post-colonial state, and a critical dimension, in which postcolonial theory comes into existence through a critique of a body of theory, or of discourse. Hall calls our attention to the fact that the terms which have been coined to refer to this process are apparently innocent descriptive, but carry a powerful epistemological, conceptual and political baggage: colonization, imperialism, neo-colonial, dependency, Third World. What is being now refused is the false distinction between

colonization as a system of rule, power and exploitation and as a system of knowledge and representation.

The postcolonial is a phenomenon which takes place in what some intellectuals call ‘late capitalism, something which includes the new international division of labour, the new global information technologies, the linkage provided by the transnational corporation, the transnationalisation of production, cultural fragmentation and multi-culturalism, as well as the rearticulation of native cultures into a capitalist narrative, provoking the weakening of boundaries.

One reason is that the discourses of the ‘post’ have emerged, and been (often silently) articulated against the practical, political, historical and theoretical effects of the collapse of a certain kind of economic, teleological and, in the end, reductionist Marxism. According to the author, the post-colonial critics are unwitting spokespersons for the new global capitalist order, for their discourses are marked by reductionism. He says that we all always knew that the dismantling of the colonial paradigm “would release strange demons from the deep”. He sees the twists and turns, leaps and reversals of their argument as an alert to the sleep of reason that is beyond or after Reason, or the way desire plays across power and knowledge in the dangerous enterprise of thinking at or beyond the limit.

As we could see in our previous class, Postcolonial studies is an academic field of study which is concentrated on the social, political and cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism. Like postmodernism, the term postcolonialism is thought, at first sight, of as a reaction to colonialism, in the same way postmodernism is thought of as a reaction to modernism. However, colonialism, like modernity, is not just a chronological label, but also a system of government and a system of ideas, concepts and practices which underly that system. Thus, in general, postcolonialism represents a response to colonialist thought, and not just another system which comes after colonialism.

As Hall (1996) puts it, if postcolonial time is the time after colonialism, and colonialism is defined in terms of the binary division between the colonisers and the colonised, why is post-colonial time also a time of ‘difference’? According to the author, questions like these haunt the concept of the ‘post-colonial’, simply because, like the other ‘posts’ with which it is aligned, it encompasses different histories, temporalities and racial formations into the same “universalising category”. This is what another author, Anne McClintock (1992), says about its linearity, in which the concept is used to mark the final closure of a historical period, as if colonialism, as a phenomenon, as well as its, were definitively over.

CONCLUSÃO

To conclude this class, we are going to use the key questions used by the website <http://www.decolonize.org> to introduce the students to Post-Colonialism, Post-colonial Theory and Post-colonial Literature published:

Where does it come from?

Post-colonial literature comes from Britain's former colonies in the Caribbean, Africa and India. Many post-colonial writers write in English and focus on common themes such as the struggle for independence, emigration, national identity, allegiance and childhood.

What is Post-colonial theory?

Postcolonial theory is a literary theory or critical approach that deals with literature produced in countries that were once, or are now, colonies of other countries. It may also deal with literature written in or by citizens of colonizing countries that takes colonies or their peoples as its subject matter. The theory is based around concepts of otherness and resistance.

Postcolonial theory became part of the critical toolbox in the 1970s, and many practitioners credit Edward Said's book *Orientalism* as being the founding work.

Typically, the proponents of the theory examine the ways in which writers from colonized countries attempt to articulate and even celebrate their cultural identities and reclaim them from the colonizers. They also examine ways in which the literature of the colonial powers is used to justify colonialism through the perpetuation of images of the colonized as inferior. However, attempts at coming up with a single definition of postcolonial theory have proved controversial, and some writers have strongly critiqued the whole concept.

Some Issues in Postcolonial Theory:

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RESUMO

The field of Postcolonial Studies emerged in the 1970s due to the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), but its success in the academy was consolidated with the appearance of *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989), by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. In the nineties, terms like "Commonwealth" and "Third World" were substituted by "postcolonial", which can be said to mean the study of the interactions between European nations and the

societies they colonized in the modern period. This explains why concepts and ideas which sustain cultural and intellectual marks of the Western worlds, such as modernity and enlightenment, are always criticized and/or questioned.



Based on the text you have just read, how would you explain the term “post-colonial”? Write a paragraph in English about it.

Esta atividade tem por finalidade principal fazer com que você construa uma síntese dos principais conteúdos desta aula, desenvolvendo o senso interpretativo e o senso crítico. Use um número máximo de 1000 (mil) caracteres com espaços.



Post-colonial Literature: Chinua Achebe

GLOSSÁRIO

Episteme is a philosophical term derived from the Ancient Greek word ἐπιστήμη epistēmē, which can refer to knowledge, science or understanding, and which comes from the verb ἐπιστάσθαι, meaning “to know, to understand, or to be acquainted with”. Plato contrasts episteme with “doxa”: common belief or opinion. Episteme is also distinguished from “techne”: a craft or applied practice. The word “epistemology” is derived from episteme.

Fonte: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Episteme>

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