

De-colonizing the British ex-colonies: The Demise of the British Empire through the subaltern voices in *Time For A Tiger* and *The Jewel in The Crown*

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Abstract

The demise of the British Empire led many novelists and critics to try to dig deep into the stories of the unheard voices of the ex-colonized countries to trigger the truth about colonization and more importantly (de)colonization as being put into question. In fact, the British withdrawal from India and later on from Malaya and Pakistan formed a radical change in the world map and led to a sense of nostalgia for the loss of power. Fiction played a substantial role in unveiling the truth about the dark sides of the (de)colonized nations. Furthermore, novelists tried to shed light on the subaltern and give them space to speak about their stories; the stories that could not find a place in official history. Indeed, post-colonial novelists tried to narrate the nation through the voices of ordinary people in order to elucidate their suffering and their struggle whether physical, mental, or emotional.

Keywords: decolonization, British colonies, empire, post-colonial, subaltern, Literature, history, mise en intrigue, metaphor.

Introduction

The end of the British Empire led many novelists and critics to try to dig deep down the stories of the unheard voices of the ex-colonized countries in order to trigger the truth about colonization and more importantly (de)colonization as being put into question. In fact, British withdrawal from India and later from Malaya and Pakistan formed a turning point in the world map and led to a sense of nostalgia for the loss of power. Fiction played a crucial role in unveiling the truth about the dark sides of the (de)colonized nations. Furthermore, novelists tried to shed light on the subaltern and give them space to speak about their stories; the stories that could not find a place in the official history. Indeed, post-colonial novelists tried to narrate the nation through the voices of ordinary people in order to elucidate their suffering and their struggle whether physical, mental or emotional.

Hence, this paper will tackle mainly the issue of rewriting history through the unheard voices of the (de)colonized. It will deal with two major works of fiction, which treated the issue of the British Empire in two different ways but similar goals: *The Jewel in the Crown* by Paul Scott and *Time for a Tiger* by Anthony Burgess. The two novels are a good incarnation of the British awkward retreat from India and Malaya as they give the reader a new view of the end of the British Empire through the serious representation of the British Raj in India in Scott's *The Jewel in the Crown* and the comic and sarcastic representation of the social decay and loss of dignity and morality in Burgess's *Time For a Tiger*. Although they used different tones in their writings, Scott and Burgess had common motives. In other words, their endeavor was to criticize the British withdrawal from India and Malaya and its effects on people and wanted to convey the true story that lies beneath the surface of the official writings of history. They did not deal with numbers and dates or with great names, they dealt with ordinary people, ordinary names but great events. Their motives lie in their interest in the British Empire, use of English language and more importantly use of metaphors. Yet, this does not deny the fact that they used different genres of writing and attempted to convey the embeddedness of the decolonization experience in a different way.

Therefore, this paper will first deal with the role played by literature in interrogating history. Then, it will shed light on the common motives of Paul Scott and Anthony Burgess in writing these works of fiction and finally it will differentiate *The Jewel in the Crown* from *Time for A Tiger* in terms of Genre.

Literature interrogating history

1. Gap filling:

When a civilization does not have writing, when it has only an oral memory, there is also no History. Hegel equates the birth of history with the birth of a will for "duration in memory." Thus, writing fixes and preserves the past. When fiction writes history, it reveals beneath History a whole mosaic of stories. In the novel, history does not appear as something which is complete, but as an open space that draws man towards his future, towards new possibilities of being including the very possibility of existing.

Poets and especially novelists felt the urge to narrate “true” and to write down historical reality as it is. At the same time, historians felt obliged to satisfy the expectations of the contemporary reading public. Yet, as the two groups of writers started mixing facts and fictions and kept on claiming that they both were telling “true stories,” it was no longer possible to tell factual (historiographic) from fictional (literary) narration. By this means, a reciprocal relationship between the two forms of writing was achieved so that fictional and factual writing could now be identified “relatively” to one another, as “factual” or “fictional” or as “true” or “false.”

Works of fiction unquestionably possess a referential level (that of “events”), even though it may not be in the form of a given factual reality, but rather in the mode of a fictional reality, itself implicated in the narrative of the fictional work. As far as *The Jewel in The Crown* and *Time for A Tiger* are concerned, they both handle the last days of the colonial era, legacies of colonisation and decolonization. They explore the hidden realities of the post-colonial countries. Hence, unlike the official writing of history, these novels explore the unexplored areas and trigger a whole mosaic of stories from people like Daphne, Kumar and Victor Crabbe. In fact, the focus is not on the whole; it's rather on the particular, they link those voices that haven't been recorded in official history. “Les petites histoires” are more important than the official historical writing because they display the effect of the colonial experience on their little lives. As Paul De Mann argues in *Blindness and Insight*:

“The theme of the novel is thus necessarily limited to the individual and to this individual's frustrating experience of his own inability to acquire universal dimensions”¹

Henceforth, the historical novels work as gap filling for the official history and this is the meeting spot between post-modernism, which focuses on the rewriting of the official history, and post-colonialism where “les petites histoires” are favoured upon the big narratives. These novels are not like the official historiography of decolonization as they do not represent a unique set of events from a single perspective. Yet, they do not work as separate from the official history but as complementary to them through interrogation and questioning.

2. Mise en intrigue:

To talk about “la mise en intrigue” one needs to talk about the “continuum” first. In fact, the “continuum” is associated with history as a discipline and has to do with events that are unified. According to Karl Löwith it's:

“A systematic interpretation of universal history in accordance with a principle by which historical events and successions are unified and directed toward an ultimate meaning”²

Writing a historical account in a fictional form needs a lot of work and a collection of information. This act is a hard task to do as it needs selection, arrangement and outlook. Actually, to write such an account, one needs to have a certain ideology, to make a personal stance in order to see things from a different perspective, an angle that differs from that of the official historical writings. This seems to be objectivity but in reality it is not, because selection, arrangement and outlook kill

objectivity. The writer is involved in a way or another. The fact of selecting and arranging the data with an outlook is subjective in itself. One can't speak about unconscious writing, there's always a deliberate will in the part of the author to retrieve stories. As states Paul Scott in *The Jewel in the Crown*:

"To make the preparation of any account a reasonable task he would have to adopt an attitude towards the available material. The action of such an attitude is rather like that of a sieve. Only what is relevant to the attitude gets through. The rest gets thrown away. The real relevance and truth of what gets through the mesh then depends on the relevance and truth of the attitude..." (357)

Undeniably, in reproducing history, narration is inescapable. Explaining this further, it is worthy to mention the "Alienated Gaze"³ of Balzac. That is, according to John Rigull "narration seems to be simply a matter of observation," and as for Balzac:

"It is observation that he singles out as one of the two essential powers of the writer, that sagacious and curious genius who sees and registers everything"⁴

That is, for Balzac, the writer has a divine nature, which enables him to see everything and to see the truth everywhere. According to him, the poet or philosopher is endowed with:

"A sort of a second sight which allows them to divine the truth in all possible situations; or, better still, some power, which takes them where they ought and want to be"⁵

In this respect, the truth is told through narration and history must be a narrative rather than a mere event because if it can't be narrated, it can't be called an event. Furthermore, history is related to a series of stories, the author has a collection of scattered events, a lot of documented materials, scripts for testimonies that he ought to gather together and unify them to form a well established story with a beginning, middle and end and make it accessible and understandable. Stating as an example the question told by Sister Ludmila in *The Jewel in the Crown* into which she questions the intelligibility of a historical event:

"...there is also in you an understanding that a specific historical event has no definite beginning, no satisfactory end? It is as if time were telescoped? Is that the right word? As if time were telescoped and space dovetailed?"⁶ (133)

This means that generally, history can never be precise and limited to a certain account and a certain perspective for there are various accounts that cannot be ended and that can, in themselves, be a beginning. Therefore, arrangement of such events is a hard task, yet it gives the reader a glimpse about the silenced voices and the dim areas denied in the official historical writings.

Common motives of Paul Scott and Anthony Burgess

1. The British Empire:

The Jewel in the Crown and *Time for a Tiger* are two historical novels that share multiple characteristics. In fact, while handling these two novels, there's a clear interrelatedness between them that lies in the heart of the British Empire. Theoretically speaking what connects them is not the influence of one writer over another, it's rather a historical event, the colonisation experience. At the heart of any approach of the aftermath it has to be the notion of Empire and Imperialism, legacy of colonisation. In fact, the British Empire is one of the motives that led to these writings. Furthermore, the end of the British Empire and its clumsy withdrawal was put into question by many historians and novelists. Was it the end of the British Empire? Was it a transfer of power? Was it a simple withdrawal? Or a war of Independence? All these questions splashed out in order to understand the truth about this end as it will affect the decolonised nations. Thus, Scott and Burgess wrote two historical works of fiction in order to rigger the truth about this ending, the last days of Empire and its effects on people.

2. English language:

“The text does not tell the story in language but transforms the story into language. Language becomes the condition of story.”⁷ Language plays a crucial role in narration, the way language is used, how it is used, in what context and what language used can make a great difference in conveying a particular message. According to Lacan “It is a world of words, which creates the world of things,”⁸ with words one can create a whole community, characters, people, animals, and an entire life just with words. Furthermore, for Bakhtin “the significance of language lies in the perception that it exists neither before the fact nor after the fact but in the fact”⁹ In *The Jewel in the Crown* and *Time for a Tiger*, there are different approaches to language; English language in particular, the uses, misuses or abuses of the English language.

As a matter of fact, the reasons behind the use of English language and not another language are widely debated among historians. Chinua Achebe argues “we are going to do the unheard of things in English”¹⁰ that is, language is going to be problematized, he is going to twist the English language for his own purposes. The question that imposes itself here is why? Well, English language is the language of the coloniser. Hence, the writers like Scott, Burgess and Achebe want to make their message to the colonizer clear, they want to speak the language of the enemy in order to make intelligible to the British. In fact, if they chose to write in another language, the enemy won't bother himself and translate the work into his language and thus the message won't be articulated. This idea of writing in English language came from the Irish writer James Joyce who speaks about hating the language and appropriating it. That is, to use it, doesn't necessarily mean to love it but just use it to serve your own interest and appropriate it to your own needs.

On the flip side, Ngugi Wa thiong'o has another view about the English language, he believes that one should write in his own language (kikouyou in his case) in order to revive the old lost traditions and prevent it from disappearance. He believes that if he will write in English language

his mother tongue will disappear and thus his identity as he considers language as a source of identity. Moreover, Burgess makes the issue of language clear in *Time for a Tiger* as follows:

“One minute it’s all about being a farmer’s boy in Northamptonshire and the next you’re on about the old days in Calcutta and what the British have done to Mother India and the snake-charmers and the bloody temple-bells. Ah, wake up for God’s sake. You’re English right enough but you’re forgetting how to speak the bloody language...”
11 (7)

Thus, Scott along with Burgess used English language as a way to make their novels intelligible for the British.

3. Metaphor:

Throughout history many historical accounts and narratives tended to use images to transmit their messages and ideas. In fact, metaphor is a commonly used device to describe the Imperial experience through the novels. Metaphor is no longer what Aristotle viewed as a mere ornament; it’s rather a whole meaning holder. Furthermore, in *The Jewel in the Crown* and *Time for a Tiger* the use of metaphor is omnipresent throughout the novels. Hence the dialogue between the metaphorical and the literal dominates them. Explaining this further, a metaphor can be on the level of a sentence but goes on to a whole discourse and here what is most obvious is the metaphor of the titles, the extended metaphor at the level of discourse.

Both Burgess and Scott used metaphors in their titles. *The Jewel in the Crown* is highly symbolic; it holds a whole story behind it. In fact, India is the “jewel” and England is the “crown”. This metaphor goes to cover the whole atmosphere of the novel through the character of Daphne and Kumar and the group of Indian cops; going further to the rape scene, which is the most powerful passage for it displays a sexual humiliation articulated for domination and shows the inversion of roles. That is, normally England is the man and India is the raped woman; yet in the case of Daphne Manners, the raped is England and the man is India.

Another important metaphor is “the weary titan,¹²” which was used by Joseph Chamberlin in 1902. In fact, the Malayan Trilogy used to be “the Long day wanes” but Burgess changed it. This metaphor suggests that the downfall of the day is the downfall of the British Empire and was originally taken from Tennyson’s poem “Ulysses”:

The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices

In these lines, he is speaking about himself as a sailor and yearns to go back home and here it’s as if England speaking. Moreover, the title *Time for a Tiger* is indeed a metaphor for “tiger” is a kind of beer, which suggests “let’s have a drink.” In this respect, Anthony’s novel is more comical and funnier than Scott’s one. He is doing a different manner of critique to the British Empire, like Victor Crabbe (he is victorious but at the end he is defeated.) here, the British Empire is like the Crabbe, which moves in the four ways. Hence, Scott along with Burgess used the device of

metaphor not as an ornament but as a whole meaning holder to better display their sarcastic and interrogating attitude.

Generic studies

Genre:

“The process of assimilating real historical time and space in literature has a complicated and erratic history, as does the articulation of actual historical persons in such a time and space. Isolated aspects of time and space, however, those available in a given historical stage of human development, have been assimilated, and corresponding generic techniques have been devised for reflecting and artistically processing such appropriated aspects of reality.” (M. M. Bakhtin, 85)¹³

Genre is a highly debated issue by theorists and novelists because it exists in every text; it's unavoidable, as E. D. Hirsch argues about genre that one cannot understand any text without thinking of its generic origins. Furthermore, we can't speak about genre without mentioning Derrida and his argument that: “(E)very text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging.” Henceforth, genre is inevitable and genre according to Derrida and Hirsch is boundless. We can't define one single genre in a narrative account, which leads us to the impurity of genre. That is, not impurity as opposed to purity but impurity as the mixing of genres in the same account. This can be further demonstrated through the words of Bakhtin as he argues that: “genre is an unceasing process of becoming, there is no singular Great tradition, no Ideal Form, no Definitive Shape.”¹⁴

On the flip side, Frye has another view of genre. He claims that “expanding images into conventional archetypes of literature is a process that takes place unconsciously in all our reading.”¹⁵ In fact, Bakhtin draws a parallel between genre and the chronotope in the novel. He argues that:

“It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time. The chronotope as formally constitutive category determines to a significant degree the image of man in literature as well. The image of man is always intrinsically chronotopic.”¹⁶

As far as the novels are concerned, they open with showing a unified world where everything is in order and both the controlled and the controller know their limits. They unveil the truth about the period that precedes the British withdrawal whether from Malaya or India: the stage of transfer of power. For instance, Paul Scott in *The Jewel in the Crown* exposed two outstanding events: the death of the Indian teacher and the rape of Daphne Manners upon which the rest of the novel is based and the rest of events are directly or indirectly connected to the effects of these two events on the community. Thus, in the post-colonial novels, there is a sense of resistance and struggle that lies within the lines of the narrative, a rebellion against the coloniser and a will to uncover the reality of the colonizer.

Moreover, in *The Jewel in the Crown* and *Time for a Tiger* there is a dialogue between the narrators. Furthermore, the structure of the novels is dialogic: one type of discourse against another discourse,

one opinion against another opinion. It is a matter of voices shouting over one another and that is the reason behind its dialogic¹⁷ system. There is an exchange of ideas as Barthes states in his S/Z:

“One narrates in order to obtain by exchanging; and it is this exchange that is represented in the narrative itself: narrative is both product and production, merchandise and commerce, a stake and the bearer of that stake”¹⁸

Added to that Derrida’s concept of language not as a speech but as writing:

“of course speech acts are involved every time characters in a novel enter into a dialogic situation (whether they actually converse or interact in other ways), but the important consideration is that the narrative as a whole may itself be read as an extension and complication of such acts in its constantly shifting position somewhere between the narrator and the reader.”

Therefore, the concept of genre is widely debated whether it is fixed or not fixed. In the case of *The Jewel in The Crown* and *Time for a Tiger* one finds it more appropriate to agree with Derrida’s impure genre for the mixing of different genres in the novels waving from dialogues to letters.

Conclusion

To conclude, the previous sections dealt with three major aspects. The first section shed light on the importance of the subaltern voices and how *The Jewel in the Crown* and *Time for a Tiger* talked about the dark side of the pre-decolonising period and the passage of power. Indeed, the first section included the gap filling aspect of a decolonising novel, which contains a whole mosaic of “les petites histoires” not as opposing the official historical accounts but as a supplement to it. Then, the “mise en intrigue” aspect, which implicates the gathering of the pieces of the true historical puzzle, compressing them and constituting a whole direction of event marked with intelligibility. After that, the second section handled the issue of common points between *The Jewel in the Crown* and *Time for a Tiger* in terms of the British Empire, English language and Metaphor. More precisely, the British as being the target of novelists and historians in the aftermath; the English language as being the common tool used to express different views and the Metaphor device used not as a mere ornament but as a whole message carrier. Finally, the third section treated the aspect of genre; how it is viewed by Derrida, Hirsch, Frye and of course Bakhtin and how it is articulated in the novels.

Endnotes:

¹ Paul De Mann. "Lukacs's Theory of the Novel." *Blindness and Insight*. 1983

² Karl Löwith. *Meaning In History* (Chicago : Univ. of Chicago Press, 1949)

³ I used this term "The alienated gaze" after Balzac who uses it to display the power of the writer to see everything because of his divinity and his ability to see the truth wherever it lies.

⁴ John Rigull. *BALZAC the alienated gaze*.

⁵ John Rigull *BALZAC the alienated gaze*.

⁶ Paul Scott. « Part three : sister Ludmila » *The Jewel in The Crown*. Garanada Publishing.1966

⁷ André Brink. "Introduction : languages of the novel." *The novel*. 1998.

⁸ André Brink "Introduction : languages of the novel." Lacan, (1977 : 65) *The novel*. 1998.

⁹ André Brink "Introduction : languages of the novel." *The novel*. 1998

¹⁰ Chinua Achebe

¹¹ Anthony Burgess. "Time For a Tigerr". *The Malayan Trilogy*. Vintage Classics

¹² I used this expression after Joseph Chamberlin who used it in 1902.

¹³ M. MBakhtin. « Forms of the time and of the chronotope in the novel .» *The Dialogic Imagination by M.M.Bakhtin*.

¹⁴ André Brink. "Introduction : languages of the novel." *The novel*. 1998.

¹⁵ Frye , *Anatomy of Criticism*

¹⁶ Bakhtin, M.M. « Forms of the time and of the chronotope in the novel .» *The Dialogic Imagination by M.M.Bakhtin*.

¹⁷ I used this term after Bakhtin's dialogism, which consists of a dialogue between the characters and between the characters and the reader and the reader and the author.

¹⁸ Brink, André. "Introduction : languages of the novel." *The novel*. 1998

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