

IDEOLOGICAL INTERFACES IN THE POST 9/11 WORLD

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One of the most defining concepts of Post modernism was the use of de- naturalisation as a process, through which to quote Marx from a different context, “All that is holy is profaned’. Post modernism attempted to dismantle all notions that were understood to be natural, like liberal humanism, capitalism, language, patriarchy, gender and a unified sense of self. The post modern decentering transformed the self from a self present unity into a multiple, fragmented and Protean identity in a constant state of flux. Lyotard’s formidably concise formulation ‘incredulity towards meta narratives’ shook even the operational framework of literary theories to its very foundations.

If the best days of theory were considered to be the period in which Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Deleuze and Jean- Francois Lyotard wrote, the mid-1990s, witnessed a significant diversification in the field of theory. But it was generally felt that the golden age had passed and whatever remained was a sort of after theory. “‘Theory’ did not end, it lost a brief and extraordinary institutional hegemony; a hegemony that was restricted to particular disciplinary sites within the Anglophone humanities during its heroic ‘French’ period (1975-1995): primarily, literary studies of various sorts” (Cussett *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States.*)

9/11 occasioned a deep rethinking about the validity of theoretical stances. There were already signs in the air that theory was about to stage a comeback. From the overtly Marxian angle provided by Terry Eagleton through Mc Quillan’s attempt to deconstruct the ‘event’ of 9/11 and Dabashi’s passionate desire to provide an adequate perspective to the American stance in international politics to Giorgio Agamben’s effort to analyze the liminality of the migrants, theory was resurfacing from its untimely death.

9/11 became the shorthand for international emergency. It was an attack on the US and hence defined to be an attempt to destroy world peace. The ‘holy war’ was for the first time taken to American ground and so it had to concern the world. Mc Quillan writes that 9/11/2001 ‘othered’ other incidents that had happened on the same dates in different years. In 1919 on the 11th of September the US marines entered Honduras. On September 11th in 1973, a military coup happened in Chile. But America’s use of 9/11 as a symbolic device for international terror somehow succeeded in othering all other 9/11s. This once more draws attention to the oft quoted dictum in the study of power that it is the victor in any power structure that decides what truth is, what morality is and what should be recorded or erased in historiography.

The end of the Cold War that raged between capitalism and communism was supposed to bring an end to the raging ideological warfare and lead to the establishment of liberal but solidly capitalistic democracies everywhere. But the much awaited end of the Soviet Union has not succeeded in establishing America as the source and font of all norms that will govern the world. The new holy wars against America necessitated the propagation of new theories to provide the necessary framework to newly emerging genres of writing that were already on the path of technologically enabled transformation.

One of the complaints raised against theory was its lack of utilitarian impact. It was thought that the practical, increasingly commercial and materialistic world breathing freely in the conglomerated air of globalization had no use for the highly esoteric abstractions of theory. It was felt that the cultural capital of the world was no longer Paris or London but Wall Street. Money became the explicit and implicit motivating force. But it was soon understood that this was an extremely short sighted view to adopt.

The event of 9/11 demanded a theoretical frame work and theories which had been sent to an early grave needed to be resuscitated, recreated and reformed to meet new requirements. Politics and religion are being increasingly intertwined with the post 9/11 ideologies. The events of September 11, 2001 and its after shocks have demonstrated with cruel clarity the dangers of uncontrollable greed and the perils of indoctrination. The plurality of voices being heard from a multitude of cultures need to be analysed and understood. We are in the midst of a history that is witnessing tremendous change in the areas of production, technology, digital media, international relations, manipulations of language and erection of new power structures. These changes are happening on both global as well as local levels.

Terry Eagleton's *After Theory* published in 2003 heralded the end of postmodern theory which tended to ignore reality and truth always trying to foreground the unreliability of particular truths as it is mediated through language. He also criticized the inability of cultural theory to answer some of the basic questions posed by an increasingly globalised and technologically equipped world caught in a paradoxical situation. Religion which was thought to have been relegated to the backburner ever since Darwin's world shacking formulations about the evolution of the human species resurfaced in an *avatar* determined to take vengeance on everything that was considered to be ideologically motivated by the West.

Cultural theory as we have it promises to grapple with some fundamental problems, but on the whole fails to deliver. It has been shamefaced about morality and metaphysics, embarrassed about love, biology, religion and revolution, largely silent about evil, reticent about death and suffering, dogmatic about essences, universals and foundations, and superficial about truth, objectivity and disinterestedness. This, on any estimate, is rather a large slice of human existence to fall down on. It is also, as we have suggested before, rather an awkward moment in history to find oneself with little or nothing to say about such fundamental questions. (101-2)

A confirmed Marxist, Eagleton tries to grapple with the issue raised by the academic world that Marxist theory had somehow failed to meet expectations and had been unable to provide a framework to postcolonial writing. It was felt that Marxism is international in character and therefore it could not provide a suitable response to the complexities of nationalism in the post colonial imperial debate. Many Marxists later turned to cultural theory searching for a suitable perspective. Marxism's shift to culture was maybe because as an ideology it failed to

capture power and was caught between various schools of conflicting thought that arose within the ambit of Marxist ideology. They felt that by venturing into cultural studies they could find enough ammunition to attack capitalism and thereby justify their existence as theorists. Eagleton adds that

. . .much Western Marxism ended up as a somewhat gentrified version of its militant revolutionary forebears, academicist, disillusioned and politically toothless. This, too, it passed on to its successors in cultural studies, for whom such thinkers as Antonio Gramsci came to mean theories of subjectivity rather than workers' revolution.(40)

Eagleton categorically states that most of the ideologies in existence are generated from and by America. But in his opinion America is not internationalist in nature as she would rather control than understand the world. He felt that it was money which was the greatest motivating force behind the political giant that America has come to be. Money according to Eagleton is extremely 'promiscuous', totally devoid of any elements of morality and its possession also seems to denude the possessor of any sort of scruples or ethics. This seems to suggest that any form of knowledge emerging from the U.S would be capitalistic, right winged political and monopolistic in nature, attempting to subsume or control plural voices.

In Eagleton's *Holy Terror* published in 2005, he focuses on terrorism and religion seeming to suggest that one should focus on these seemingly different cultural endeavours to attempt to analyse the post 9/11 world. The dialectic of religion and terror points to the basic instincts of human beings to find common denominators and to turn against anyone who doesn't conform. Eagleton tries to trace the history of terrorism and proves with evidence that terror is as old as religion and it was one of the methods used to propagate religion from ancient times. Eagleton draws inspiration from the Marxian premise that religion is the opiate of the mind and establishes that fundamentalism needs cast iron principles to survive. It is to establish unquestionable obedience that religious practice condones the use of terror with the promise of a better life 'hereafter'. Even the crusades were acts of violence in the name of religion. In the modern context of 'Islamic terrorism' the equation is further problematised by politics and financial motives. Moreover we are forced to adapt and follow the views of a country driven by greed.

Eagleton makes an attempt to understand why there is a flood of hate unleashed against the US. In a frenzy to established uncontrollable supremacy the US is always on the prowl to locate, repress and overpower the other. With infinite resources at her command once the threat is located, the US uses a plethora of methods to contain the 'other'; ranging from subtle indoctrination to overt economic curtailments to open violence. A discourse is generated and sustained that serves to justify and establish the methods she uses and the choices she makes. Eagleton tries to analyse the underlying psyche of the superpower and feels that it is a "nation in the grip of a frenzied voluntarism, for which limits are always horizons, and for which the frailty and finitude of men and women is a shameful scandal"(115). They identified the communists as the threat to world peace and security during the previous century. At the end of the Cold War which the US felt she had won hands down. The extremely philistine Americans felt that they were living at the end of history. They proclaimed that present-day America, with its free market, striding the world like a Colossuses was the intended climax of human life. The evolution was complete.

Overcome by the power America wields over the rest of the world, the neocolonial power finds it difficult to understand why it is constantly under attack: both ideologically and with the use of force. Eagleton tries to universalize the equation of power, religion and terror. His socialist sympathies are at odds with the globalizing maneuvers of America and he tries to arrive at an understanding of why the US is under attack and at the same time seems to be putting in an effort to make the US also realize wherein the fault lies.

Hamid Dabashi in *Brown Skin and White Masks and Postorientalism* firmly casts America in the role of the villain and generates data to confirm his premise. If Eagleton proclaims his indecision, Dabashi is quite clear in his Anti American stance. He brings in arguments from many traditions ranging from Kant, Hegel Foucault, Said and Fanon. His rhetoric has a personal tone of urgency to it and this demands the reader's attention.

Europe has an undeniable stain of anti-Semitism, which was replaced by racism based on colour where the blacks were targeted and now the Arab and the Muslim have taken the place of the other in the Eurocentric imagination. Dabashi claims that America is on a perennial witch hunt. If it were the communists who were haunting the American dream of a capitalist heaven dotted with Mac Donald's burgers and flowing with natural oil. Dabashi says that it was the collapse of the Soviet Union that created a 'unipolar international system' that firmly placed America at the top of the hierarchy thereby giving her the power to implement neo conservatism in politics and neo liberalism in international finance. Dabashi claims that the Americans have morphed themselves into a particular species somehow distinct from the rest of the human race and there is a concerted effort to recreate the rest of the world in a way that they will fit into the category of Americans. But Dabashi states that the Americans themselves do not have the intellectual stamina to inquire into the dialectics of what it means to be American.

I would even shrink from calling to mind the notion that at the bottom of American imperialism is "racism" (despite the abundance of racism in America)—for it is not as Caucasians or Christians that they seek to save the world. It is as "Americans"—that most amorphous of concepts. Something about being American demands saving the world even if that means destroying it (*Brown Skin and White Masks* 9).

The neocolonial America is also involved in creating a discourse that seeks to justify her decisions and actions. For this she seeks the help of the migrants who are encouraged to write narratives that position the US as the haven of peace, a space conducive to women offering equal rights and dignity. So there is a concerted effort to create a category of 'native informers' who will be heard, translated and published in the main stream media and this will be ample justification for America's interventions in the affairs of countries like Iran and Iraq labeling these activities as efforts to maintain international peace. Dabashi cites instances from New York, London, Tel Aviv, and Bombay that have been portrayed by the media as instances of global terrorism which can be attributed to the followers of Islam, he argues that on the other hand imperialist manipulations are always given masks of a benevolent power that is only too willing to help.

Drawing on Frantz Fanon's central metaphor, that black people must wear "white masks" in order to exist in this world Dabashi identifies a clique of academics, migrants from the traumatized Muslim world who are cheering America on as she continues with her political and economic manipulations of these countries. This is a dangerous ploy as it is an explicit effort to manipulate history, giving credence to those voices that cry 'Viva America'. The comprador

intellectuals need to be exposed as they are involved in dehistoricizing the Arabs and the Muslims. They are creating a false consciousness by firmly positioning Islam as the 'other' to the enlightened West creating yet another binary structure, demanding suppression of these demonic forces and envisioning an ending in the typical Hollywood style where American heroes; Spiderman, Batman or the GI Joes are cheered on to triumphant victories over the forces of well identified evil.

The task undertaken by these migrant academics is to ideologically foreground a country which has openly resorted to violence to satisfy its greed. The Marxist Terry Eagleton said that it is a nation which lacks intellectual perspectives, money being the only motive behind each one of her endeavours. Dabashi points to a more sinister effort the creation of a discourse that ennobles imperialist ventures. This becomes one of the main methods of indoctrination. He reconsiders the concept of Said's Exiled intellectuals who may or may not be displaced by space. They may be not spatially but metaphorically in exile. They are traditionally the group that offers resistance to hegemonic power structures and are consequently positioned as the outsiders. In Dabashi's words, the geographical terrain occupied by the comprador intellectuals are not important, what is important are the mental landscapes they inhabit.

To quote Giorgio Agamben "The Mechanism of the exception is different. While the example is excluded from the set insofar as it belongs to it, the exception is included in the normal case precisely because it does not belong to it." (*Homo Sacer* 6)

The native informers "are everywhere, because they are nowhere in particular, and they are nowhere in particular because they try to keep close to the mobilized center of power," Dabashi says. Native informers are homeless as a result of their servitude to power in the empire's land and their lack of meaningful support of the actual resistance movements to imperialism and domestic tyranny in their homelands. One can not support a resistance culture that one mocks and demonizes, regardless of whether the resistance is against imperialism or domestic tyranny. It is seen through history that revolutions and wars, that is to say that violence, produces new streams of thought ; the French revolution gave rise to romanticism, the world wars caused the births of modernism and post modernism. In the present day it is America that has been located as the nerve centre of the world and her armed interventions that is engendering the era of a new discourse. The ideological interfaces that exist between America and the East creates a new polemics which the academics are trying to frame sometimes with old tried and tested theories and sometimes trying to create new frame works to contain new discourses.

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