Abstract

This thesis discusses the strategy of "rewriting" which many postcolonial writers have adopted in their attempt to respond to the racial representation of the colonized in most European works of the colonial period. The study attempts a postcolonial re-examination of the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized from a new perspective: the perspective of "the other"; that is, of the colonized which has always been silenced and kept in the background in most European works. Such examination is carried out with the aim of covering examples of the ways many postcolonial rewritings use to challenge, defy, and refute the colonial assumptions made of the colonized in their colonial pre-texts.

In addition to its analysis of two examples of postcolonial rewritings, the thesis attempts an analysis of their British counterparts. This is carried out for two reasons: first, a postcolonial reading of the European text acquaints the reader with the colonial version of the story before listening to its postcolonial response. Secondly, the study tries to adopt an objective standpoint by giving voice to the two sides in order not to commit the mistake of the European works which used to ignore the perspective of "the other".

The study finds out that most of the critical readings offered along years have been less relevant in accounting for the roles played by "the other" in colonial novels. Some of the famous readings of Heart of Darkness ignore the historical and geographical background of the novel along with the racial tone used in describing the colonized. The study, therefore, provides a comprehensive postcolonial reading for Heart of Darkness which accounts for such ignored details, but at the same time, places the novel in
its cultural context concluding that Conrad is not that celebrated anti-imperialist nor the bloody racist of Achebe, but rather a man of his times who tried his best to criticize European colonialism but was influenced by the European views of other races. Similarly, the famous psychoanalytic and feminist readings of the role of the West Indian Madwoman in the attic of Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* ignore the racial background of that Caribbean woman. The study, therefore, provides a postcolonial reading of the role of Bertha which accounts for her racial representation and the role she is supposed to play to enhance the superiority of the English heroine.

Having acknowledged the racial standpoint of the European novels in focus, the study, therefore, prepares the scene for analyzing the postcolonial rewritings responding to such misrepresentation and demeaning portrait of the colonized. In the postcolonial versions, the roles are exchanged: in *Things Fall Apart*, it is the Igbo people, not the English, who are centre-stage, and again, it is through the eye of an Igbo narrator, not an English man, that the story is told. The primitive savages of *Heart of Darkness* turn out to be courageous men of a valuable culture and a respectful law while the supposed civilizers turn out to be intruders who, instead of being victims of such supposed alien, lawless environment, have contributed to a great extent to the collapse of the Igbo society. Rhys does the same in *Wide Sargasso Sea* where she makes the West Indian woman, not Jane and Rochester, the focus of the novel, and again the West Indian woman, not Jane, the narrator of the novel. Such change of the perspective turns things upside down and the victim becomes a victimizer. That the impressions and assumptions change when the same story is narrated from a different perspective, illustrates the importance of listening to the other side before making any judgments.