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Imperial Uncertainties: Reconsidering *Différance* in Postcolonial Re-writings of Empire

Recent postcolonial theory, namely the work of Homi K. Bhabha, has considered and posited Jacques Derrida's theoretical formulation of History-as-writing, as a tool for postcolonial counter-discourse. It is one of historical agency that destabilizes imperial narratives of history since the meanings spawned by these are never closed off. Rather, as Derrida would have it, history and historicization are products of the perpetual postponement of signification; hence Bhabha's argument that colonial discourse is fundamentally ambivalent. Ambivalence, however, is not inherently emancipatory. Bhabha is well aware of this when he links the postponement of meaning to the cultural productivity of colonial discourse. In other words, the imperial narrative is strategically ambivalent and uncertain for the sake of imperial reproduction. My paper explores how this is especially true today as imperial histories are resignified not only by the postcolony, but more perniciously, by the post-empire/ former metropolis. Focusing mainly, but not exclusively on the case of post-imperial Portugal, I propose an interrogation of how recent intellectual production in the former metropolis has taken hold of the very ambivalences and hybridities of colonial discourse and resignified Empire into the postcolonial present. This questioning is particularly important when we consider the reception and reading of postcolonial literature in the former metropolises. If postcolonial literature is a space of subaltern enunciation and contestation of history, one of my fundamental concerns is what happens when canonization of these very postcolonial texts takes place in the former metropolis. As we know with narrative and textual uncertainty, no text has its meaning comfortably bound, allowing the act of reading to essentially resignify it. Therefore, I consider how canonization of postcolonial writing in the metropolis foments new imperial meanings, since canonization is itself a form of signification, a hegemonic hermeneutics.