

Upsetting Colonial Intellectual Narratives in Partition Literature



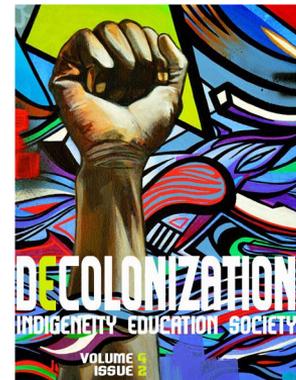
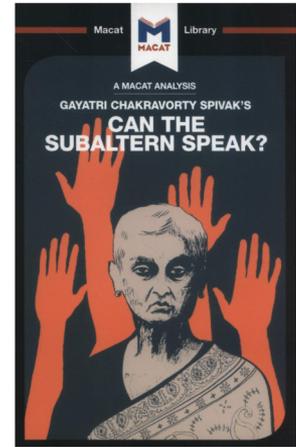
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Definitions

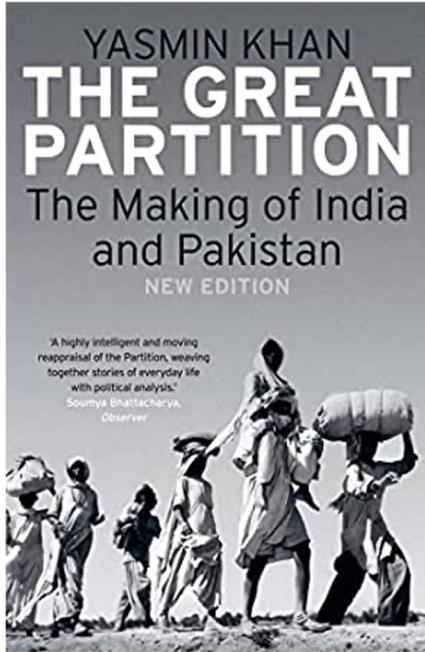
- ▷ **Intellectual narrative:** the stories of history that are put forth as fact in academic writing and literature.
- ▷ **Colonial narrative:** any narrative put forth by and upheld by colonizers, especially pertaining to marginalized and colonized people. “colonial intellectual narrative” is an appropriate word to describe recorded histories by western so-called academics and intellectuals since they are inevitably biased in favor of the western colonizer.
- ▷ **Anti-colonial:** to be anti-colonial is to be actively working against the colonial narrative. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang state that decolonization is not, and must not be used as, a metaphor. They emphasize that “decolonization” holds so much significance and must only be used only in context relating explicitly to reparations and repatriation of resources to marginalized and oppressed groups (in their writing, they specify Indigenous people). This is to ensure that the word is not co-opted by western writers and loses its impact (2). To avoid infringing on the connotations decolonization has for Indigenous and other oppressed groups, I opt to use “upsetting the colonial narrative” or being “anti-colonial” instead.

Theory

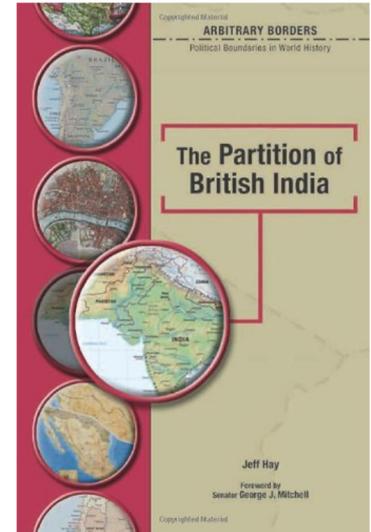
- ▶ “Can The Subaltern Speak?” by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak
 - White, western scholars can never *not* be colonial and biased when writing about the “Other.”
 - Western scholars’ quest for “transparency” is colonization of academia as it erases and replaces the “Subjects” perspective.
- ▶ “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor” by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang
 - “Decolonization” must not be used as a stand-in for removing colonial remnants from varying parts of society- it should only be used in reference to reparations to Indigenous people.
 - Settler moves to innocence: attempts by colonizers to rid themselves of blame (ex. claiming heritage).



Application



- ▷ “The Partition of British India” by Jeff Hay: upholds the colonial narrative.
 - His focus on providing an “unbiased” and “transparent” academic account results in erasure of firsthand experiences.
 - He focuses on the British experience, people, and high-level politics: no room for humanizing stories. The affected people are kept at arm’s length and their stories erased.
 - He writes as a western scholar for western people.
- ▷ “The Great Partition” by Yasmin Khan: upsets the colonial narrative.
 - She uses stories and narratives from people who experienced Partition to humanize them and incorporate emotion to do justice to an emotional event.
 - She writes for a wide audience- not just for westerners to “discover” the Other.



Big Picture

- ▷ Academia is our basis for knowledge. If we only consume narratives through one perspective, we will never have a well-rounded view of the world and its hierarchies of power.
- ▷ We must use narratives, especially intellectual narratives, to unite rather than divide. Recognizing shared colonial pasts is the only way forward.
- ▷ India and Pakistan must unite against the colonization of academia.
 - It is common knowledge that the British colonial government played the largest role in the division of Hindus and Muslims- the majority populations of the respective nations. Therefore, western scholars that uphold colonial narratives through their “transparent” academic reports on Partition perpetuate the invisible grasp that the British colonial government has on the territory.

Sources

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