

Lectures by Saugata Bhaduri, Professor at JNU, New Delhi, India
Invited Professor at ENS de Lyon
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ENS de Lyon, 15 Parvis René Descartes, 69007 Lyon

1) Wednesday 11 January 2023, 17h30-19h (room D2-002)

‘Literary Theory’, Ideology-Critique, and Beyond

This first lecture will focus on recent developments in the area of Literary Theory, or to be more specific, on how ideology critique, which would have been one of the methodological mainstays of reading literature and culture under the aegis of Literary Theory, has been challenged over the last couple of decades, in the form of post-critical and post-theoretical developments, to lead to more ‘affective’ modes of dealing with literature and culture. The move, from the late 1990s, towards literary pedagogic practices being oriented more towards affect and enjoyment has been complicated, however, over the last few years with an unforeseen rise in cybernetic cultures including the social media, the global rise of sectarianism and new-fascisms, and the unforeseen pandemic situation, having ushered discursivity and narrativity, on an unprecedented scale, into regimes of fake news and post-truth. Is there a need, therefore, to revitalize ideology critique as one of the primary modes of studying literature and culture? Or, considering that ideology is itself, by definition, false consciousness, and ideological interpellation is always connected to projections of identities, and thus identity politics, is there a need for strengthening a literary critical practice that is otherwise than ideological – premised on a robust economy of Truth and an ethical outlook of being other-regarding, rather than being sectarian and identitarian?

2) Tuesday 17 January 2023, 16h30-18h (room D2-002)

From National Literatures to World Literature: Issues in Translation and Comparative Literature

If, rather than being rooted in sectarian identity politics, reading strategies for literary and cultural practice have to be other-regarding, and not be cocooned within one’s self-same monolingual and monocultural universes, it calls for translation and comparative literature – where one goes beyond literary and cultural texts in one’s own language and reaches out to the other – to become mainstays of such a practice. To what extent would an emphasis on going beyond one’s own identitarian literary universes require one to align with the project of World Literature, considering further the question of

access to ‘worlding’ and canonization in a deeply differential globalized world? The role played by translation and comparative literature in leading pedagogic praxes beyond national monolingual literatures towards the ethical and other-regarding project of World Literature will be examined in this lecture with particular reference to the Bengali author Rabindranath Tagore’s views on the same.

3) Monday 6 February 2023, 15h-16h30 (room D2-109)

Postcolonialism and its Discontents: Towards Postcoloniality

Connected to the question of nationalistic and identitarian assertions versus the other-regarding ‘worlding’ of literary-critical praxis is the question of the Global South – questions more specifically connected to colonialism, postcolonial discourse, and new-imperialism. To what extent can postcolonialism offer a suitable methodological toolkit for studying literature today? Conversely, what are some of the current discontents with postcolonialism, arising particularly from emerging insights into colonialism and literary production from the Global South? To answer these questions, this lecture will probe into the different strands of recent critiques of postcolonialism as an adequate method of literary criticism. It will also focus on one of the primary research outputs of the current lecturer, which has been in the area of ‘polycoloniality’, or the multiple and productive strands of networked and mutually competitive colonial processes, which have always been multinational rather than mononational – with there being colonial efforts in South Asia, for instance, not just by the English (as is often presumed) but by the Portuguese, Dutch, French, Danish, ‘Germans’, etc, too. This lecture will examine this further, particularly in relation to France’s involvement in colonial projects in South Asia.



