

- (iii) The challenge of postcolonial literature is that by exposing and attacking anglo-centric assumptions directly, it can replace 'English literature' with 'world literature in English'.

John Docker, 'The Neocolonial Assumption in University Teaching of English' (1978) in Ashcroft *et al.* (1995: 445)

- (iv) All of us, in some sense, belong to the diaspora; every nation is hybrid, becoming more so as migration increases.

Dennis Walder, *Post-Colonial Literatures in English* (1998:199)

READING: *Introductory*: Appiah and Sollers in Lentricchia and McLaughlin 1995: 274–305; Selden *et al.* 1997: 221–42; Bhabha in Greenblatt and Gunn 1992: 437–65; Low and Wolfreys in Wolfreys 2001: 200–23; Ashcroft *et al.* 2000; *Fuller studies*: Boehmer 1995; Said 1978, 1993; Brathwaite 1984; Ashcroft *et al.* 1989, 2000; Spivak 1987, 1994; Gates 1986; Bhabha 1990, 1994; Walder 1998; Young 2001; Moore 2001; Skinner 1998; Loomba 1998; Talib 2002. *Anthologies*: Walder 1990: 9–16, 171–202, 233–303; Williams and Chrisman 1993; Ashcroft *et al.* 1995; Schwarz 1996; Childs 1999; Thieme 1996; Gates and McKay 1997; Moore-Gilbert *et al.* 1997; Procter 2000.

2.10 TOWARDS A NEW ECLECTICISM: ETHICS, AESTHETICS, ECOLOGY . . . ?

The aim of this final section is not to have the last word on theory. But it is to put in a word (four of them, in fact) for certain ways of going about things. It is offered as a contribution to a continuing conversation on what theorising the subject (and being a subject who actively theorises) is and may yet be. It also seeks in various ways to 'see through' the current Post-positions (Poststructuralism, Postmodernism, Postcolonialism. Post-theory) with their predominant sense of belatedness, of being 'after' rather than 'during' or 'before' the event (see Prologue, pp. 6–7). Above all this is an invitation to readers to review and reconfigure the options for themselves, while also cueing some of the key terms and topics in Part Three.

The kind of **eclecticism** referred to here is not really another '-ism'. It is not a distinct movement, model or even method. Rather, it is the pragmatic activity of gathering and selecting, refining and adapting, whatever tools and techniques work with the materials and task in hand. The root is Greek *ekleigin*, meaning 'to select' or 'to elect', which are the Latin forms that came into English. 'Eclectics' was the name for a loose association of early Greek philosophers (second and first centuries BCE) distinguished by their attempts to synthesise a variety of idealist and materialist philosophies (Aristotelian, Platonic, Stoic, Epicurean); and they were praised or censured depending whether the effort was judged worthwhile. 'Being eclectic', it should be observed, is still considered a good or a bad thing. Again it all depends whether the results are reckoned significant and satisfying. By definition, therefore, the present Eclecticism is only 'new' in so far as it helps draw attention to existing practices that are readily recognised but usually unacknowledged. For the fact is that virtually all the most powerful and persuasive contemporary approaches turn out to be mixtures, compounds or hybrids and, however principled, in some measure 'impure' – in a word eclectic. Examples are the convergence of psychoanalytic, postmodern and post-structural perspectives in a nominally 'postcolonial' critic such as Bhabha, with feminist and Marxist inflections in another nominally 'postcolonial' critic such as

Spivak; or the capacious theoretical resource and nimble rhetoric of such opponents and proponents of Postmodernism as, say, Eagleton and Jameson (avowedly Marxist) and Hutcheon and Weedon (avowedly Feminist). All these writers are eclectic in that they continue to refine and develop – they do not simply impose – their particular syntheses. The present reader is enjoined to do the same.

Ethics is a handy, hold-all term for systematic attention to matters of right and wrong, responsibility, justice, and, by extension, all kinds of **value**. At its broadest ethics embraces moral and cultural ‘atmosphere’ or ‘ethos’ (whence ethics). All approaches to the subject are inevitably ethical in so far as their practitioners propose or presuppose a better rather than a worse way of looking at and doing things. In the case of overtly social-historical approaches such as Marxism, Feminism and Postcolonialism, the ethical imperative is linked to more or less explicit political agendas associated with class, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity. In the case of more narrowly text-based approaches such as New Criticism, Formalism and Post-structuralism (especially deconstruction), the ethical dimension is usually implicit in attitudes to verbal devices and textual structures: what counts as coherent and unified, or as acceptably discontinuous and heterogeneous. Meanwhile, the most persistent general rationale for the reading and study of LITERATURE is fundamentally ethical as well as aesthetic: that it cultivates a sense of imaginative tolerance, a capacity to see many points of view; reading ‘opens up horizons’ and ‘broadens the mind’. To be sure, such an argument has its problems: not all students and teachers of English are automatically full of sweetness and light. (The commandants of the Nazi death camps, we should recall, still enjoyed high art.) None the less, it is a widely held conviction that the very process of seriously engaging with complex and demanding work is inherently good for you. Bakhtin, for example, argues that the capacity to be fully responsive to a work (i.e. ‘response-able’) also helps readers sharpen their sense of ‘responsibility’ (see p. 261), and related arguments are made by many critics committed to Reader Response and Reception Aesthetics (see **writing and reading, response and rewriting**). Some such positions are held by defenders and proponents of liberal – and liberating – education as various as Ricoeur, Nussbaum Hillis Miller, Kearney and Levinas (see Reading p. 000).

Meanwhile, in pragmatic approaches to LANGUAGE there is a long-standing engagement with issues of power and responsibility. The teaching of RHETORIC, for instance, whether ancient or modern, directly addresses the relation between information and persuasion. In ancient Greece and Rome this was in the context of oratory and an oligarchy, which excluded women and depended on slave labour. Today it is more likely to be in the context of a broader-based democracy with communications dominated by the multi-media. But both kinds of Rhetoric are expressly concerned with what it means, in the fullest sense, to use language ‘well’ or ‘badly’: in the ethical service of what is true and good and not just for aesthetically pleasing effects and politically expedient ends. Similar concerns are expressed in current movements such as Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Language Awareness (Hodge and Kress, Fairclough, Tannen, Cameron and others) and, latterly, Ethical Linguistics (especially Wales). There are two main areas of attention:

- ◆ *Critical awareness of the ideological implications of using certain words, structures and varieties of language.* This includes (a) sensitivity to sexual and racial discrimination in language, and recognition of the loaded nature of such choices as ‘terrorist/freedom-fighter’, ‘fanatic/believer/infidel’, ‘we/they’, ‘them/us’, etc.; (b) a