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Skins for Emergence: Sounding a Possible Language of Transformation in Post-Colonial Critique

While an important aspect of postcolonial scholarship focuses on how so-called ‘colonized subjects’ are formed and produced through institutionalized literary and cultural productions of History; it has been argued that the discourse scholars are taking up to argue about and for the production of these ‘subjects,’ is one itself produced from the language of Post-structuralism, a discourse argued to have legacies of Eurocentric ideologues interwoven within its very structure. These earlier debates of postcolonial studies have now been reshaped by newer developments, the most urgent of which might be seen as globalization. Many scholars have claimed that post-colonial methods and vocabularies have become out of step with an intellectual scene where phenomenons such as transnational migration and transcultural capital expansion are found to be more and more prominent in its discussions. While the rising voice of globalization seems to be severing a cut from and spelling an end to postcolonial scholarship, questions arise—are we really ready to cut off and move on from post-colonialism completely? Isn’t this ‘new’ attempt to sever the post-colonial from the global yet another example of the binarizing vocabularies critiqued as bearing Eurocentric legacies in post-colonial scholarship? For, with traces of ‘old’ vocabularies residing and ‘new’ globalizing pressures encroaching, it seems that Post-colonialism has come to a historical juncture that calls for a re-theorization.

In this paper I will focus particularly on the problematic of subject-object orderings of knowledge as an example of an ‘old Eurocentric’ vocabulary found not only lingering within postcolonial critique but also within the ‘new’ globalization theories that threaten to replace it. I suggest a transformation of this binarizing language through a return to the body, visualizing from it a metaphor of knowledge as transformative skins. To do so, I will retrace Nietzsche’s discussion of the “subject” through Foucault’s emphasis on the body, aiming to enounce a revised language that doesn’t “cut through” bodies of knowledge, severing them into fossilized fragments of subject-object binaries just so to move away; but allows for various unequal subjects and objects to not only coexist but constantly mobilize, interpenetrate, and take forms under and through transformative layers of discursive skins. With this metaphor of discursive skins, I wish to provide a linguistic interface that is inclusive and transformative enough to allow for coexistence and collaboration not only on the level of post-structural and post-colonial vocabularies, but also of globalization and post-colonial theory, and the layers of ‘other’ subjects maneuvering within it.