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Research Article

Post-Colonial “Writing Back”

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The main aim of this article is to outline the state of the art of contemporary post-colonial literature related to the names of Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, Theodore Wilson Harris, Amos Tutuola, Grace Nichols, Amryl Johnson, Fred D’Aguiar, Maryse Conde. The theory of post-colonial studies put forward by Franz Fanon is considered to account for the creation of a new type of a post-colonial writer who maintains his own identity and is not related to any stereotypes, being in a way a Gorgon face that freezes anyone who wants to apply European or North Atlantic views on it. This sort of literature largely breaks the rules of the English language in the case of Anglophone literary sources that are considered in this research. A tendency is to develop a new kind of narrative regarding historical novel as well as classical post-colonial literature in the face of S. Rushdie or Garcia Marquez.

Key words: post-colonial literature, post-colonial theory, post-colonial reading, post-colonial thinkers

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«Ответное слово» постколониальной литературы

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Описано состояние современной постколониальной литературы, связанной с именами Видиадхара Сураджджпрасада Найпола (Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul), Теодора Вилсона Харриса (Theodore Wilson Harris), Амоса Тутуолы (Amos Tutuola), Грейс Николс (Grace Nichols), Амриль Джонсон (Amryl Johnson), Фреда д'Агюяра (Fred D'Aguiar), Мариз Конде (Maryse Conde). В связи с рассмотрением политических традиций функционирования колоний и постколоний прослеживаются основные тенденции развития постколониальных теорий литературы, в частности психологической теории Франца Фэнона, парадигмы формирования идентичности жителя постколонии и, соответственно, образа героя литературного произведения. Изучается проблема «взгляда Медузы Горгоны», т.е. литературы, которая приходит на смену доминирующему («северо-атлантическому») взгляду устоявшихся стереотипов, которые не позволяли исконной литературе коренного населения показать свою идентичность. Важным фактором функционирования такой литературы становится создание измененного варианта английского (или испанского, французского языков), сходного с языком пиджин, который разрушает привычные языковые нормы. Авторы таких произведений нередко проводят описание жизнедеятельности потомков жителей колоний при переезде в европейские страны. В случае с классиками литературы (на примере Г. Маркеса или С. Ружди) очевидна еще одна тенденция — легитимность постколониальной литературы, т.е. создание классического паттерна. Для подтверждения данного положения приводятся отрывки дневников из недавно предоставленного Техасским университетом архива Г. Маркеса.

Ключевые слова: постколониальная литература, постколониальная теория, постколониальное чтение, постколониальные мыслители

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Introduction

In his three-stage scheme of development of the identity of the resident of the colony or post-colony, as well as discussing the principles of anti-colonial struggle, Franz Fanon considers the first level, the so-called colonial “assimilation”, which inevitably leads to

the second phase, the phase of “breach”, which, among other factors, encourages the step of the “recovery of the author’s identity by restoring the cultural traditions, a phase, after which “usually comes the third stage of post-colonial literature development, namely the stage of “struggle”” in which you get “a thinking author, the one who is the original inhabitant of the colony”, but who, in his own right, is the object of post-colonial criticism, who at first stages tried to get lost among people, but at the third stage begins an active struggle to restore freedom, assert his political role, and resist colonial aggression. Thus, in consideration of post-colonial literature theories one could observe a vital trend — the development of psychological theories originally put forward by Franz Fanon and his definition is “a three-level panorama”, which includes the steps of forming the identity of the resident of the colony or post-colony, and, consequently, the main character of a literary work.

In recent years, the views of the main theorists of post-colonial literature, represented by Said, Spivak and Homi Bhabha, show that the post-literary tradition includes postmodern, meta-modernist literature, feminist literature, as well as trends in the formation of literature of the indigenous inhabitants of the colonies, and literature written by the descendants of the inhabitants of the colonies, who received education and moved to live in the former conquering country. Post-colonial literature includes authors from the Caribbean (North Atlantic or Caribbean writers), such as the Trinidadian author Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul, Caryl Phillips; English-speaking Guyanese writer, major historian of post-Indian culture Dabydeen David, English-language author of the Chinese origin Timothy Mo, English-language author of Japanese origin Kazuo Ishiguro, English-language author of Indian origin, classic of post-colonial literature Salman S. Rushdie, Guyanese writer Sir Theodore Wilson Harris; African (Nigerian) writer Amos Tutuola. Heroes of such literature study the topic of “the influence of the factor of globalization, hybridity on their identity” [1. P. 498], as do the heroes of the books of the Anglo-Chinese writer Timothy Mo. One of the main themes of the author is a satirical examination of issues related to corruption in Third World countries, as well as the problems of English-speaking residents in the Philippines and in the UK.

Another interesting trend in the development of fiction in modern post-colonial literature concerns historical prose. Thus, according to H. Prieto-Arrans, the emergence of historical prose is explained by the reaction against postmodernism and post-structuralism, which deny the traditional narratives (grand narratives) and is in some way a return to history [2]. The so-called “post-millennial shift” denies the relativity of postmodernism in relation to political doctrines. In English-language literature (Anglophone literatures) or French-language, Spanish-language, Portuguese-language literature, there is a clear emphasis on the multi-directional vector of memory image development, cross-references, and borrowings. This type of narrative uses either an indirect method of describing events, or a detailed personal and autobiographical (or pseudo-autobiographical) narrative that explores the tension created between private actors and entire institutions, or individual, private history and generally accepted points of view. The development of meta-modernism is not a philosophy, it is not an artistic note, a visual concept, a literary device, or a trope, but a structure of feeling. This structure of feeling finds its embodiment, according to V. Serbinskaya, in various nominal languages that have been described in detail by scientists and researchers and were coined: “new

sincerity”, “quirkiness”, “freak-folk”, “new romanticism”, “new materialism”, “speculative realism”. The beginning of the 21st century is the defining period for the transition from postmodernism to meta-modernism (just as the sixties were the period of transition from modernism to postmodernism). This trend is embodied in post-colonial literature due to the fact that its main dominant is not sad images of the past, but life-affirming characters and stories. Another term proposed by literary critics is the term digi-modernism. This term can denote a trend in culture that has replaced postmodernism, noting the irony and skepticism of a certain infantilism, romantic seriousness, infinity, and evidence of reality. At the same time, any text created in this aesthetics, by definition, is incomplete and optimistic, since it implies the participation of several persons in its creation, or an imitation of such a process of text generation.

Discussion

There is a pronounced tendency to create a new image of a resident of the former English-speaking (or French-speaking colony), who becomes the main (or secondary) character of post-colonial literature. His views are not due to the influence of a Western author or a political force that determines his identity, but are formed on the basis of native traditions and specific language means. Feminist literature, as well as indigenous literature, is becoming the main focus of research by theorists, and is becoming popular among readers. Authors often cannot associate themselves only with a specific country, telling about a whole set of countries and relationships between heroes, families, and entire continents.

A large number of English-speaking authors, representatives of the Empire, explore the problem associated with post-colonial literature, write about it with nostalgia, but a certain condescension, which is so characteristic of the representative of the conquering country. The fall of the British Empire was one of the main themes of fiction, starting with Kipling, F. M. Foster's *A Passage to India*, Paul Scott's *Johnny Sahib* (1952) and *Raj Quartet* (1966-1975). Similarly, Anthony Burgess in *Time for a Tiger* (1956), *the Enemy in the Blanket* (1958), “*Beds in the East*” (1959) showed a great interest in non — English, that is, international experience. In the 70s and 80s, interest in the experience of living in other countries, especially the former colonies of Great Britain, was particularly pronounced in the works of young researchers at the University of East Anglia, among whom are Malcolm Bradbury, literary teacher of Kazuo Ishiguro, and Andrew Motion.

Of much interest is post-colonial literature, which was created by the descendants of the inhabitants of the colonies who came to the UK. In this sense, the literature created by these writers does not fall under the term post-colonial, but forms its own niche, those authors who encountered the culture of the conquering country already on their own land in the era of post-colonial development. Literary texts have a special relationship to the English language. The main characters of these works assert their own identity, and at the same time distort, almost specifically, the norms of the English language [1. P. 493—500]. In the 1950s, Sam Selvon was a Trinidadian writer who created his works in the Creole version of English, having moved to the UK in 1950. Among his most famous works, *The Lonely Londoners* (1956), *I Hear Thunder* (1963), *Moses Ascending* (1975). In these works, the English language acts as one of the main characters of the

narrative, with its own grammar and music. Here, for example, are the descriptions given by the author in the novel *Lonely Londoners*:

It have people living in London who don't know what happening in the room next to them, far more the street, or how other people living. London is a place like that. It divide up in little worlds, and you stay in the world you belong to and you don't know anything about what happening in the other ones except what you read in the papers [3].

It is obvious that the description is filled with sadness, minor distortions (divide) show that the text is written by a native speaker of a non-standard version of the English language, which is particularly obvious in the following example:

It had a fellar call Five Past Twelve. A test look at him and say, 'Boy, you black like midnight'. Then the test take a second look and say, 'No, you more like Five Past Twelve [3].

Some language distortions (it had a fellar call) are not as eloquent as the joke itself about a person who is called Five Minutes past one, and the style and register are such that it can be assumed that in addition to the meaning of "strange", it also means "sexy". In addition, comparisons of the "guy" with the clock give out a certain regularity of the author (in some fragments, he also compares the Piccadilly square with the magnet of the Universe. Such metaphors as the "city" — is the "universe", the "body" is the "clock" make the works in many ways post-modernist, its space-time sub-systems are diverse and implemented in a large number of options and contexts.

To a larger extent, this kind of metaphor is similar to the first episteme (Renaissance episteme) in M. Foucault's system of epistemes, in which "words" and "things" change places and mix. Another technique that is actively used by S. Selvon is evident in books about Moses, in which events are described through the so-called "focalization", that is, only through the prism of Moses's consciousness (as, for example, in the book *Moses Ascending* (1975)).

Another prominent representative of the post-colonial trend is Ken Saro — Wiwa, a Nigerian writer and public figure who organized campaigns of violent resistance to transnational corporations and the Nigerian government. The book *Sozaboy: A Novel in Written English* (1985) is written as an anti-war demonstration, which takes place during the civil War in Nigeria. The main character, Mene, has very naive views about military service. He believes that in the Army, he will grow up, attract the attention of the girl Agnes, whom he loved, and also impress the villagers where he lives. In real life, everything turns out to be completely different. In this case, the current trend of considering history is obvious, as well as an open war against binary oppositions and stereotypes that are debunked right before our eyes, creating the effect of real life, rather than a far-fetched fantasy.

To a large extent, innovations by authors of post-colonial literature concern poetry, many of which use reggae texts. This includes authors such as Grace Nichols, Amryl Johnson, and Fred D'Aguiar. Grace Nichols is a Guyanese poet and author of books for children. After graduating from the University of Guyana, she taught at school and studied journalism. In 1977, she moved to the UK. Her poetry is based on her native Caribbean rhythms and carries the traditions of American and Guyanese folklore. So in the cycle the *Fat Black Woman's Poems* (1984) collected poems, the lyrical heroine of which is not a slender European woman, but a completely unattractive (from the point of view of

stereotypes) black woman. The poet recreates the experience of “otherness”, allowing you to experience a completely different, and at the same time similar paradigm of perception of the world, again destroying the usual oppositions. In one of the poems of the cycle *Blow Winds Blow* (1983), the poet writes about her feelings, the beating of drums, the Voodoo religion, but writes about it allegorically (in the text: here, Vaudoux, that is, “here, Voodoo”), thus referring to Haiti, religion, to what can heal and kill at the same time.

The image of post-colonial literature is sometimes compared, especially in previous colonial years, to the image of the Gorgon Medusa, which, as tradition says, paralyzes any reader or author with its gaze, that is, in the face of the “North Atlantic modern”, which is prone to making everything mediocre (averaging and discrediting), but always makes you turn back to the tradition. Fumagalli refers to a large number of texts (both modern and the ones that date back to the 12th century and which belong to the authors, residents of the Caribbean), and writes about their infinite variety. The literary works under research include historical short stories by Guadeloupean author Maryse Conde, ancient Egyptian fairy tales, romantic short stories by Jamaican authors, and a poem by Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott [4. P. 135–139].

The authors of the Caribbean countries would also include stories of the Colombian writer Garcia Marquez, an example that is, indeed, exceptionally successful, since Marquez operates with the tradition of the native population, actively using the methods of modern, postmodern literature, which allows him (similar to S. Rushdi), to claim the role of a classic of post-colonial literature. What is the reason for it?

Garcia Marquez, first of all, is a national writer, and at the same time a popular writer, in a sense, an epic one. This is an author whose works are read with joy all over the world, and, at the same time, he is a writer who, like no other one, has preserved an amazing identity, a sense of his own land, country and tradition. All these points can perhaps be illustrated by the phrase that Colonel Buendia expresses in the book *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (the novel that brought Marquez world fame). Waking up early in the morning, the Colonel suddenly makes a stunning discovery. “The earth is as round as an orange!”, he states. The discovery of this kind for any person on the planet is joyful, a little naive, and universal, and, here, the comparison of the earth with an orange, has, perhaps, its own special national flavor, as well as lime and earth, which one of the heroines of the novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the orphan Rebecca, constantly chops off the wall and quietly eats! For Marquez, love is the embodiment of a demon (that is, non-Christian, primordial, pagan). That is, what should and should be fought against (and (and, accordingly, what often wins over a person, hence the metaphor of “murder” or “death”). One of the works is called “about love and other demons” (the epigraph for this book, by the way, is the words from Thomas Aquinas, “Hair probably rises much earlier than other parts of the body”. Thomas Aquinas. About the resurrection of the body as a whole. Section 8, Chapter 5). Love for Marquez often occurs against the background of global catastrophes, which is the best setting (as in the novel *Love During the Times of Cholera* (1985)). The main features of the literary direction that Marquez follows are accurate, “realistic” detail in describing eccentric characters and supernatural events. Marquez admitted that he decided to “destroy the demarcation line between what seemed real and what seemed fantastic, because in the world that he sought to embody, this barrier did

not exist”. For his characters, “Christian morality”, “Republican traditions”, “currency famine”, “social progress” are the same products of modern magical consciousness as belief in spirits, fairy tales, mystical experience and corruption.

An even more important factor for understanding the figure of the author—a classic of post-colonial literature, which Marquez creates on the pages of his works, becomes not so much his political activity, but the authority of his personality on the political horizon, and, accordingly, the interpretations that such an image entailed. Some Internet sources (in particular, the popular newspaper *El País*, dated October 3, 2014), write that during the US presidency of Bill Clinton (1993—2001), Garcia Marquez, at the personal request of the President of Mexico, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, informally mediated negotiations between Clinton and the Head of the Republic of Cuba, Fidel Castro (*La mejor novela de espías de García Márquez*. EDICIONES EL PA S S.L.). The reference, however, is given to the art book *Back channel to Cuba*, written by William Leogrande and Peter Kornbluh, who allegedly revealed secret documents about negotiations between Cuba and the United States, starting with the Socialist Revolution in Cuba in 1959.

Here is what information is contained in a more reliable source: the Garcia Marquez archive, recently released digitally and published for the University of Texas at Austin’s Harry Ransom Center website. The archive, in particular, contains detailed records of meetings between Garcia Marquez and Bill Clinton, Garcia Marquez and Fidel Castro. One of the notebooks describes Marquez’s famous (and often interpreted) meeting with Bill Clinton and Hilary Clinton at the White House, along with other guests, including Carlos Fuentes, a Mexican writer and diplomat. A meeting that lasted five hours [5].

According to the information provided in the archive as a summary of what happened, Marquez talked about both the drug trade and Colombia. The text of the same completed summary of the meeting, stored in the archives of Marquez, at some point in the middle of the discussion, Clinton decides to change the topic of the discussion and begins to talk about literature. In response to this, he receives the desired answers from his interlocutors—the names of his favorite novels. *The Adventure Of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain, *The Count Of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas. Clinton quotes Faulkner’s *the Sound and the Fury* from memory, explaining which part of this work is more complex:

Así que el mismo Clinton desvió la conversación hacia la literatura. ¿Qué libro le hubiera gustado escribir a Styron? preguntó Clinton, para iniciar la ronda. “Huckleberry Finn”, de Mark Twam, respondió el anfitrión. ¿Y a Gabo? “El conde de Montecristo”, de Alejandro Dumas. <...> Me gusta más Absalón, Absalón”, señaló Clinton, “pero sobre todo admiro la sejaínda parte de El ruido y la furia”. Los coitertulios se sorprendieron, porque esa es, como dice García Márquez, “la parte más compleja, y la más meritória y difícil, del trabajo de Faulkner.

[And then Clinton turned the conversation to literature. “What book would have liked to write to the Styron? Clinton asked to start the round. “Mark TWAIN’s Huckleberry Finn”, the owner replied. “And Gabo?” “The count of Montecristo by Alexandre Dumas” ... And I like Absalon, Absalon” Clinton said. “But most of all I like the second part of the Sound and the Fury. Everyone present was very surprised, as Garcia Marquez said, “this part is the most complex and confusing of all Faulkner’s works] [5].

If the conversation with Clinton seems much more formal, stretched, held rather from a sense of duty than a sincere desire to help, the meeting with Fidel Castro for Marquez

is much more emotional, as evidenced by the words of Marquez against Fidel Castro, very open and sincere: “to sum up, without a single break but my or someone else’s, I would like to say the following: I’m friends with F(idel) for many years, I admire him, I respect him and I love him very much”:

En síntesis, y sin una sola interrupción suya ni de nadie, le dije lo siguiente: Lo primero que quisiera decirle es que no sólo mantengo con F una gran amistad desde hace muchos años, sino que además lo admiro mucho, lo respeto mucho y lo quiero mucho.

[Summing up, without giving my own interpretation, or any other, we can say the following: I have not only maintained a friendship with Fidel for many years, but I also admire him very much, respect him, and love him very much”] [5].

Developing the idea that the United States has made Fidel an image of a primitive and brutal dictator, Marquez writes in his diary that Castro, in fact, is a completely different person, very well educated, versed in world politics, a man with experience, and a political gift of rare Providence, a brilliant orator:

Los USA le han creado la imagen de UN dictador primitivo y cruel, y es todo lo contrario: un hombre muy bien educado, muy bien informado del mundo, de una experiencia y de una lucidez políticas excepcionales, y un lector poco común.

[The United States has created an image of a primitive and brutal dictator, in fact: the opposite is true, he is a very well-educated, well-informed person with experience and an amazing political gift, an excellent public speaker] [5].

During one of the meetings with Fidel Castro, Marquez himself asks Fidel a question about literature, but this is not done to change the topic of conversation, but is shown as a completely relaxed continuation of the conversation on a friendly basis. This is the all-reconciling summing up question Marquez asks Fidel: “What are you reading now?”:

Y ahora, terminemos con estos discursos y dígame una cosa: “¿Qué libro está leyendo?”
[Let’s end this discussion, tell me what you are reading now?]

In this case, the story shows not even a specific political activity of the writer, but rather his image of a worthy, trustworthy, wise man and public figure. The literary works of Garcia Marquez are an attempt to combine the image of the original hero of the post-colony and the traditions that have always been. An interesting fact is that such a figure becomes somebody to bridge the gap between the old and the new world, between the post-colony world and the Empire or conquering country.

To sum up, there is a certain “answer” to post-colonial literature, an answer in the meaning of what is indicated in the book “the Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature” [Ashcroft, Griffiths, Tiffin 1989], written by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin and released in 1989. The book is dedicated to post-colonialism and is the first truly serious theoretical work, covering a large number of post-colonial texts, which is devoted to the study of post-colonial culture.

Conclusion

Post-colonial literature, which replaces the dominant view of former colonies that did not allow indigenous literature to show its identity. An important factor in the

functioning of such literature is the creation of a new type of English, Spanish (or French) citizen, who destroys the usual norms and stereotypes. Such literature is characterized by a description of the life of the descendants of the inhabitants of the colonies after their moving to European countries, or a recreation of their life in a post-colony, addressing issues of hybridity.

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