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# Kim, Huck and Naipaul: Using The Postcolonial Bildungsroman to (Re)define Postcoloniality

Feroza Jussawalla
University of Texas at El Paso

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**Abstract**

Contemporary theoretical formulations have failed postcolonial literature as they do not define exactly what the characteristics are of the so called postcolonial novel or author. The *bildungsroman* originally a German, nationalist genre, as used by postcolonial novelists to show the growth of a young protagonist into nationalist, anti-colonial sentiments is the form that helps define the true characteristics of what constitutes postcoloniality in a work of literature. The most important component, however, is that the growth defined is not just anti-colonial but is towards indigenousness in language, style, religious roots and belonging.

By these characteristics then, it is possible to see that those works like Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and Mark Twain's *Huck Finn* and authors such as V.S. Naipaul, not normally considered postcolonial, can be seen as helping to define the postcolonial.

Key words: *Bildungsroman*, postcolonial, Kipling, Twain, Naipaul.

Recently, on the Internet Postcolonial Literature Discussion group, an intense debate has been raging on the nature of current critical language and the direction of the study of new literatures written in English by persons from recently independent countries in Africa, the Indian subcontinent, the Caribbean, Canada and Australia. There is a growing disaffection with the arcane nature of the language of contemporary criticism and the feeling that since much of this language stems from European, particularly French fashionable theories, such as deconstruction and Foucauldian theories of power, such critical practice in itself constitutes a «neocolonialism» of the third world's cultural production. Increasingly scholars, particularly those from the different countries themselves, are searching for indigenous theories or interpretations that shed light on the cultural context of the literatures. Contrarily, because new literatures in English have been appropriated by an increasingly multicultural United States of America as a means of introducing diversity into the classroom, a need has been defined to find ways to make this literature accessible to students from all backgrounds. There is a feeling,

therefore, that simply local or indigenous critical practices will not suffice for an interpretation of these literatures.[1]

In a world that is changing fast, and as cultures migrate and new cultural hybridisms emerge, a new issue is how one changes the critical literature and practice to suit the hybridity of the literature itself. Does theory travel? Is there a travelling theory? i.e., can a Foucauldian description of power suit an Indian environment? Or conversely can a Marxist analysis of colonialism and its effects suit an area like the Indian subcontinent which has experienced several colonialisms but has happily absorbed all the cultures into its own? Criticism cannot simply be Eurocentrically based nor can it be indigenously based because it must both explicate the culture *and* evaluate the literature critically by global standards as the literature itself migrates to readers around the world and they struggle for «yardsticks» to measure it by, as Matthew Arnold would have said. (See Arnold, «Sweetness and Light» in *Culture and Anarchy*).

I believe that it is time to move onto or return to a study of the texts, the authors and the way in which the authors locate their texts in their own spiritual or cultural contexts. Often the critical perspective of the authors is embodied within the text itself and it simply needs a knowledge of the cultural context to unveil this perspective. Instead, I believe that the language of theory has become a form of neocolonialism in (re)colonising the literatures under the hegemonic control of the critics as opposed to governmental imperialists. In looking at the texts and at their contexts, I believe that we can make different judgements about whether writers are colonial or postcolonial. Literary critics today can be compared to British colonial officers. They pick up a text just like the colonizers picked a geographic area. They often know little or nothing about the area or the text and simply judge them by their particular models of analysis, Marxist, Foucauldian, Psychoanalytic. This is just like the colonial officers who applied their British or French perspectives and supposed their interpretations to be the truth about that culture or that text. I have expanded on this idea at length in my article on the misreadings of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* (Jussawalla, 1996a). Theoretical distinctions become slightly spurious when we begin to see the messages embodied in the writers' choice of genre and the way that genre is used to express their

1. Over the past ten years, a battle has been raging in the American academy over opening up «the canon» and incorporating third world literatures in English or in translation in the curriculum. Gayatri Spivak has argued, for instance, for the incorporation of the Mayan epic *Popul Vuh* in World Literature or World Civilization classes. Conservative commentators have seriously objected to this. «Tenured radicals,» as Roger Kimball has called them in the book with that title, have incorporated third world literatures and teach them using their contemporary critical theoretical practices. Dinesh D'Souza, though arguing against the opening up of the canon, has emphasized the importance of teaching the roots of literature. There is an extensive literature now on the canon debates in the United States. See for example Dasenbrock, 1987a. On the issue of arguing for broader ways of making meaning of third world literatures in English, see Dasenbrock, 1987b.

politics and attitudes. For instance, Rudyard Kipling has been seen as imperialist by the postcolonial criticism of Patrick Williams following in the wake of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha (See Williams, 1994). But analyzing Kipling's *Kim* as a *bildungsroman* where the external events of colonization are less important that the *bildung* or self awareness of Indianness shows it instead to be a deeply anti-colonial work. This method reveals surprising results: Kipling then can be seen as deeply Indian rather than colonialist; Mark Twain as an American Postcolonial, and both in line with such postcolonial writers as Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Often the clues to this kind of critical analysis are embodied in the writing itself, so that if the critic becomes familiar with the context s/he can read this in the text itself instead of having the theory imposed on the text in grand colonial fashion, because much of what contemporary postcolonial critics are doing today is what the «Orientalists» were doing in the period of high colonialism: interpreting the cultural context through their theoretical biases.

U.S. Senator Patrick Moynihan's term «post-colonial», used to describe countries that were unable to pay off their debt to the U.S., has been appropriated in literary studies where it has gained immense proportions in signifying oppression and marginalization and has been extended metaphorically into feminist studies with womens' bodies seen as «areas of colonization». Yet no one has attempted to define the specific features of postcolonial literature or of postcolonial novels, other than to say that they depict the anti-colonial struggle, or any struggle against a dominant «colonizing» power. Here for instance are two definitions of postcolonialism in literature: Bill Aschcroft, Helen Tiffin and Gareth Griffiths in their book *The Empire Writes Back* say «We use the term 'Postcolonial'... to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day» (1989: 2). They certainly do not include Vedic Aryan colonization or Mughal/Muslim invasions of India. They do not say what colonization and by whom. They assume European colonization —again making the Europeans a dominant reference point. For instance, the colonization of India by the Mughals was very different from the colonization of India by the British and certainly colonization in India was very different from colonization in Africa. From the Vedic Aryans onwards, India absorbed the cultural practices of its colonizers and has developed a palimpsest culture. The colonizers especially the Mughals enriched rather than simply plundered India. They created not just a rich tradition of Persian poetry and religion but of Indo-Persian architecture, poetry, culture and art. The difference was that they were nomadic, travelling, colonizers who made India their home. They did not have the necessity to export «back home» Indian goods as the British did with Indian coffee, tea, spices and cloth. Contrarily, India, absorbed British culture and tradition and made English an Indian language, creating in it a literature uniquely Indian. Raja Rao in his now famous Preface to his novel *Kanthapura* (1948) notes that English is not a foreign language to Indians. It has become, like Sanskrit and Persian before it, an Indian language. The South African

writer J.M. Coetzee raised the question of different types of colonizations in an «After Empire» conference at the University of Tulsa (March, 1994) and asked if «postcolonialism» included post-Soviet colonialism.

The postcolonial discussion group on the Internet (postcolonial_@_jefferson.village.virginia.edu) define their agenda as follows: «Postcolonial theory and criticism interrogates the relations between culture and imperialism. It frequently is concerned with creating agency for the marginalized and with recovering lost cultural histories». They do not say how agency is created for the maginalized. It is not always created through an anti-colonial struggle. Often it is through self-realization. Also, some writers from dominant colonizing cultures were involved with creating agency for the marginalized. Therefore, by these definitions some of the writers considered imperialist and from a dominating majority culture or literary trend should also be considered «postcolonial,» as should those works that can be read as creating agency for the marginalized, for example Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* and Mark Twain's *Huck Finn* as I will show in this essay.

Over the past decade of literary criticism, with literatures in English from countries, such as India, Kenya, Nigeria and with literatures in English by multi-lingual, multi-cultural minorities, such as the U.S. Hispanics and Britain's Asians taking centre stage, the term *postcolonial* has been in wide use as a means of describing the authors and the themes of this new body of literature. It is usually used simply as a historical term to describe the literature in the period after the end of British colonization. Again, no real literary definition of the term postcolonial has emerged. What are the shared characteristics of a «postcolonial» novel? I believe that the shared characteristics of the postcolonial novel are 1) that it is created in the language of the colonizers but with an effort to vary that language to express the local culture; 2) that the theme expresses a turn towards indigenousness away from the moment of culture-contact; and, 3) that it expresses what the Hispanic writers call «orgullo» or pride in the indigenous culture. Often the hero or heroine of the postcolonial novel comes to this knowledge through a journey, especially one linked with the growing up process.

In the German literary tradition, the novel of growing up and coming to an awareness of who one is was called the *bildungsroman*. Martin Swales in his book *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (1978) points out that the German novels which concern themselves with the growth and change of a young man through adolescence and which take this period as precisely the one in which decisive intellectual and philosophical issues are embedded in the psychological process of human self discovery, (1978: 6) are the ones which are usually characterized as the *bildungsroman*. He further defines the

> *Bildungsroman* as a highly self reflective novel, one in which the problem of the *bildung*, of personal growth, is enacted in the narrator's discursive self-understanding rather than in the events which the hero experiences (1978: 4).

This is an important definition for the issue of postcoloniality because contemporary postcolonial theory simply lays emphasis on the events of colonialism that the hero experiences rather than on his understanding and absorption of the events of colonization and culture contact. However, Swales notes the thematic possibilities of the *bildungsroman* were largely focused around adolescent flux and change. Therefore, when Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* a historical and social novel continued to use the *bildungsroman* for «nationalistic» and class analysis purposes this genre «was never quite dislodged from its prestigious position» (1978: 7). Swales also notes that

> the English novel of adolescence [Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy and Joyce] is essentially concerned to find a certain practical accomodation between the hero and the social world around him (1978: 34).

Franco Moretti in his book *Signs taken for Wonders* (1983) believes that the *bildungsroman* is not applicable to the period after modernism because myths of the past are redundant in mass culture. He writes that

> At the end of *Wilhelm Miester's Years of Apprenticeship* everything-episodes, characters, values find an unambiguous arrangement within an organic totality. Wilhelm Meister's *Bildung* —and through him the reader's— consists precisely in recognizing this state of affairs; in feeling integrated and finally finding one's peace there (1983: 231).

But Moretti feels that under modernism and the postmodern condition of mass culture this is no longer possible because as Roland Barthes says «The event is fully experienced as a sign whose content is however uncertain...» (ibid). As I will show in the rest of the paper the sign is not uncertain, despite modernism, in the postcolonial *bildungsroman*, if the reader knows how to read the context with specifically context generated information. Additionally, despite wanting to be bereft of history and myth it is in the American *bildungsroman* that the genre unequivocally takes on the senses of nationalism. The American *bildungsroman* as defined in R.W.B. Lewis' *The American Adam* is concerned with defining Americanness in the new world and the passage of new world innocence to knowledge through tragedy. Lewis describes this effort:

> The American myth saw life and history as just beginning. It described the world as starting up again under fresh initiative, in a divinely granted second chance for the human race after the first chance had been so disastrously fumbled in the darkening Old World. It introduced a new kind of hero... (1955: 5).

This was a hero who would define America's «separation from Europe» and demonstrate «our national birth» (ibid).

It is, therefore, not surprising that when the postcolonial novelists needed a genre to define the birth of their new nations and to define their experiences

in relation to colonialism they chose the genre of the *bildungsroman* or the novel of «growing up» to signify their national birth —their nationhood. It is the chosen genre of several postcolonial novelists from R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (1935) to Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* to Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and *The Moor's Last Sigh.* The earliest writer who is traditionally considered «postcolonial» by contemporary theory is R.K. Narayan, a writer from India who was publishing «growing-up-stories» just as India was becoming independent from Britain or becoming «postcolonial». These growing up stories, such as *Swami and Friends,* were metaphors for the countries' own coming of age. Several other writers from «postcolonial countries» such as the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o followed suit with novels like *Weep Not, Child* that expressed the indigenous selfhood as the desired condition to aspire towards. Contemporary minority writers like the Hispanic-American writers Rudolfo Anaya and Tomas Rivera in their books *Bless Me, Ultima* and *...the earth did not swallow him* and female writers, such as, Kamala Markandaya, Bapsi Sidhwa, Jamaica Kincaid, Paule Marshall and Sandra Cisneros have used this genre to describe adolescent growth as growth towards ethnicity and nationhood.

By comparing these works of postcolonial literature with two works, currently neither considered politically correct nor acceptable in contemporary curricula —Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*[2] and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*[3]— I want to show not only the literary «paternity» of postcolonial writers but also that both Kipling and Twain can be considered «postcolonial,» and especially, that Twain, writing as an American, and asserting his Americanness, and more so, America's independence from Britain, can be considered the first of the «postcolonial writers». Thus far no one has defined what the characteristics of postcolonial literature are, other than by rooting works historically in actual moments of postcoloniality (so that literature from India since 1947 is considered postcolonial) or metaphorically extending analyses of race, class and politics as designating postcoloniality. However, I would like to show that postcolonial literary works share certain characteristics, such as those of linguistic experimentation and assertion of an indigenous selfhood. These characteristics are also shared by the so called «classics» mentioned here. Twain's novels reflect a growth towards Americanism, selfhood and the effort to free oneself from British imperialism. Kipling, though himself often seen or represented as a colonialist, shows the growth of his character Kim towards Indianness and his desire not to be identified with the British imperialists. But Kipling's sympathies are definitely with India as he shows Kim identifying himself not just with the Buddhist lama from whom he has learned Indian religion and cultural practice but from whom he has learned that salvation from the Karmic wheel comes only through identi-

2. See Williams, 1994.
3. See Booth, 1988.

fying himself with the «great spirit» of this ancient land. As he repeats the famous Indian mantra «so hum» —«I am»— to himself, after his dilemma of not knowing whether he wants to go with the British or with the Indians, Kim realizes that he is essentially Indian despite his birth and his education. And in repeating «I am Kim» he identifies with Brahman «I AM the great I AM». He is of India and of the Indian spirit. In all the novels mentioned, the hero or heroine's journey leads not towards political categories such as «hybridity» or «indigenousness» but towards a shamanistic spiritual growth —what the West Indian writer Sam Selvon called «the new world man». What then constitutes postcoloniality and what is the place of postcolonial literature alongside the classics?

By juxtaposing and comparing the American «classic» Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and a British «classic» Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* with «classic» works of postcolonial literature, such as R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends*, Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Weep Not, Child* and Rudolfo Anaya's *Bless Me, Ultima* and by extending the comparison to other works of postcolonial, minority and feminist writers, we can show that there are certain shared characteristics that undermine the classifications into postcolonial and non-postcolonial, canonical and noncanonical. These charactersitics are, quite simply, 1) the postcolonial response to writing in English by either nativising it, as Twain and R.K. Narayan did or by varying it to reflect an indigenous consciousness as Raja Rao did in *Kanthapura*, by trying to express in a language that is not one's own a consciousness that is one's own; 2) by embodying in the form and the content of the novel a return to «ethnicity» and indigenousness; 3) a rejection of westernization and the colonizers' values as expressed in the growth of the hero or heroine's point of view. The characters in postcolonial novels almost inevitably reject the culture contact situation or hybridity and choose a particular indigenousness. It is interesting that Kim, a child of a British mother and Irish father, abandoned in India, the land of his birth, chooses not to be either British or Irish but follows the path of an Indian seeker.

All of the novels I have mentioned so far embody a child who is growing up. Kipling's Kim, Twain's Huck Finn, Narayan's Swami, Ngugi's Njorge, Rudolfo Anaya's Antonio (in *Bless Me, Ultima*), or any of the characters of the women writers, such as Bapsi Sidhwa —for example, Lenny in *Cracking India*— are all children growing up as new nations are forming. They first go to school and come in contact with the English (or French) language, with Christianity, and with Westernization. After having taken a journey, sometimes short as in Narayan's *Swami* where the character runs away from a cricket match and sometimes long as in the case of Huck Finn or Kim, often a journey along a river, that leads the child to solitary speculation about who s/he is, they usually connect with the land and the quintessential culture of the land. The child then reaffirms his/ her turn away from westernization or modernization and turns towards an introspective knowledge of who he or she is within the parent culture. This is the basic postcolonial *bildungsroman.*

A knowledge and understanding of the cultural contexts of many contemporary novels shows that this is the essential pattern of novels by writers from postcolonial countries. This is the pattern of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* or even *The Moor's Last Sigh.* Both novels depict journeys where the hero is seemingly moving towards cosmopolitanism but is indeed moving towards his own cultural roots. When this has been misinterpreted, as in the case of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses,* to reflect the hero as moving towards metropolitanism and a criticism of his own people, it has caused world wide misunderstanding and miscommunication.

Homi Bhabha, now considered a leading postcolonial critic in his attempt to define postcolonial criticism, writes:

> Postcolonial criticism bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority in the modern world order (1992: 437).

According to him, the cultural representations of a Twain or a Kipling would be «signs» inscribed in the hegemonically dominant cultural identities and, therefore, their depictions of «others» such as Twain's Nigger Jim and Kipling's Haree Babu would be seen as «self perpetuating series of negative ontologies». By taking the examples of Twain and Kipling and comparing them to the dominant novels considered postcolonial, I would like to propose that we search new ways of studying postcolonial literatures, drawing cultural signification from the contexts in which they make meaning rather than from the concept of culture outside the «object d'art». Much of this (mis)interpretation of politics and placement results from postmodern theory that sees culture as both transnational and translational, and from the belief that «cultures' particularity cannot readily be referenced». (Bhabha, 1992: 438). They also see theory as «traveling» along with these cultures that are not to be considered «fixed». Homi Bhabha claims that «It is from the hybrid location of cultural value —the transnational and translational— that the postcolonial intellectual attempts to elaborate a historical and literary project» (1992: 439). In searching new dimensions for postcolonial theory, I would like to urge a return to a close study of the contexts of literary works and to the history of the contexts themselves in reaffirming the project of (re)creating agency and of recovering lost histories and identities.

Of Ashcroft et al's definition we can ask, What is meant by «culture affected by the moment of colonization»? Certainly Mark Twain's depiction of an indigenous native Americanism versus the cultured Britishisms of speech and society prevalent in an America a hundred years after independence can be seen as opposed to a British imperialism and its continued prevalence in nineteenth century American society. Additionally, Twain can be seen as attempting to create agency for Nigger Jim. Recent work in Twain criticism showing that Huck was fashioned on a black servant that Twain had, and Anthony De Palma's report on how Huck's voice can be heard

among the black youth of today, more than sustains the argument that rather than being racist Twain was indeed creating agency for «the other».

The same is true for Kipling's *Kim*. Interestingly, Kipling struggles with the term «hybridity» in this novel, a term appropriated by Homi Bhabha and currently fashionable in postcolonial theory, to indicate the mainstreaming of minority and diasporic populations. No acknowledgement is made to Kipling by postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha, who use this term and who prefer instead to castigate Kipling as colonialist precisely for his creation of characters, such as Haree Babu. For Kipling, «the monstrous hybridism of East and West» creates deracinated characters such as Haree Babu, which is why he seems to be urging Kim towards Indian shamanism. Kipling's position, thus unlike that of Homi Bhabha, is for nativism and nationalism, as opposed to hybridity, not because it is a means of keeping the natives in their place but rather, as *Kim* shows, because the indigenous philosophy is liberating. Why then can Kipling and Twain not be considered «postcolonial writers» and what is the distinction to be made in teaching, incorporating or juxtaposing these writers in canon formation? Against this thematic and formative genre of the *bildungsroman* all of the complex issues of juxtaposing oneself against a colonizing or foreign culture, of finding the identity of one's race, of recognizing oppression, etc., are all played out. This process seems to follow a typical pattern. The stage is set with a culture contact situation where the self is defined in opposition to the «other» or colonizing culture. The process then follows an interaction with the colonizers' religion, usually Christianity, the rejection of which leads to the first steps in discovering an identity which is most often nationalistic, where race and nation can be seen as one. In the instance of the Hispanic writers or the British Asian writers the discovery is a connection with «la raza». There is a literal journey which is metaphoric of the journey towards self recognition often involving a river, or a forest as the teacher in the earlier novels, and within the last decade, as in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* or Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat*, air travel. The retreat into seclusion may mean, in the case of Narayan's Swami, a withdrawal into a forest or as in the case of Rushdie a withdrawal into an apartment over a restaurant or as in Bapsi Sidhwa to a quieter part of America. Like Mormon missionaries, these seekers always seem to go out in pairs: Narayan's Swami with his Europeanized cohort Rajam, Ngugi's Njorge with the westernised and more submissive Mihiwaki, Anaya's Antonio with Ultima, Bapsi Sidhwa's Lenny with Ayah in *Cracking India* and Feroza with her uncle Manek in *An American Brat*, Rushdie's Saladin Chamcha with his bowler hatted colleague in *The Satanic Verses*. This is of course true of Huck and Nigger Jim, and Kim and his Lama. The other of the pair usually embodies the binary opposite, the one who embodies «otherness,» and therefore facilitates the protagonist's knowledge of self. The nature of the «enlightenment» after this initiation process is often intensely nationalistic in delineating a belonging to a particular group and in all cases the characters seem to reject their hybridity. This pattern is true of both Twain's *Huck Finn*

and Kipling's *Kim*. Of course it can be argued that the pattern is true for countless literary works where nationalism forms the theme, from *The Odyssey* to Derek Walcott's *Omeros*, particularly James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Ulysses*. Joyce's work, however, has been (re)interpreted as postcolonial, but Twain and Kipling still suffer labels of colonialism and racism. The postcolonial's quest is a spiritual quest to come to terms with who s/he is in the current condition of postcoloniality and postmodernity, a condition of flux, migrancy and the interaction of peoples in different cultural contexts.

All the writers concerned have used the English language but have changed it to suit their particular local sensibilities. Rudyard Kipling's effort to capture the altered English of the Indian soil has been criticized as colonialist satirizing of the Indian «Hobson-Jobson» that was generated as Indians learned to speak English. The effort to change the English language to express a native and local sensibility was of course first spearheaded by Mark Twain and since then has become the creed of writers like Raja Rao who best articulated the need to break the colonial hold on English while also appropriating English, the language of the colonizer in an effort to have their works read across all borders. Rao wrote:

> One has to convey in a language that is not one's own a spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word «alien» yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make up —like Sanskrit or Persian was before— but not of our emotional make up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have to look at the large world as part of us. Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will someday prove to be as distinctive and colorful as the Irish or the American. Time alone will justify it.
>
> After language the next problem is that of style. The tempo of Indian life must be infused into our English expression, even as the tempo of American or Irish life had gone into the making of theirs.

Since Raja Rao wrote these words in 1938, the effort to make English one's own has been an integral part of a postcolonial writer's project. Though Twain prefaced his *Huckleberry Finn* with a note about the authenticity of the dialects used, there was no political motive ascribed to his experimentation and he considered «patriotism» a base instinct (Needer, 1959: 97). And yet in changing the English language to reflect Americanism, Twain was the first to begin to demarcate an American Literature. Bernard de Voto in his classic «introduction» to the works of Mark Twain wrote:

> Mark Twain wrote one of the great styles of American literature, he developed the modern American style, he was the first writer who ever used the

> American vernacular at the level of art... Huck's style, which is the spoken language of the untutored American of his place and time, differentiates the most subtle meanings and emphases and proves capable of the most difficult psychological effects. In a single step it made a literary medium of the American language; the liberating effect on American writing could hardly be overstated. Since Huckleberry Finn the well of American undefiled has flowed confidently (De Voto, 1973: 26-28).

It is not an understatement to say that since Mark Twain, the well of English, tapping the springs of various geographic plateaus has flown and nurtured postcolonial writers from Joyce through Amos Tutuola to Salman Rushdie —all in the same spirit of asserting nationhood and the validity of various native Englishes like Indian English, Nigerian English and Chicano English.

Therefore, to outline, the characteristics of a postcolonial novel are: 1) the interaction of an indigenous people and cultures with a foreign or dominant or colonizing culture and its language; 2) the interaction of the protagonist with the colonizing religion, most often Christianity; 3) the coming to a «political» knowledge of one's indigenousness, for example that of Indianness or Kenyanness —whether in India as being particularly Indian or as with diasporic characters such as Bapsi Sidhwa's Feroza as being Indian within the context of America; 3) that despite the condition of postcoloniality often equated in theory with postmodernity, as a hybrid flux and merging, or the problematizing of cultures at various interstices, postcoloniality constitutes a rejection of hybridity and a turn towards nationhood; 4) this knowledge often comes to the protagonist (and can we speculate —the author?) by involving certain literary devices and old fashioned archetypes, such as a journey involving a river/sea, a companion/guide, an educational process or schooling involving language learning and/or religion. While this indigenousness means the rejection of the hybridization of religion, an acceptance of a hybridized but nativized English language becomes accepted as the medium of expression of the «race» or «culture». The postcolonial hero/heroine/protagonist seems to refuse to inhabit a «border» liminal space and finds such a space uncomfortable so that the merging of cultures via colonialism or migrancy is a self definition process rather than a translational one.

V.S. Naipaul took many literal journeys in postcolonial countries, which other than his journalistic and novelistic output, seem to have been metaphoric journeys searching for his identity and his roots which he has found in being an «Asiatic» —the word he prefers as he explains to Bharati Mukherjee, as opposed to «Asian» or «postcolonial» as a word to describe his Indian heritage (Jussawalla, 1996b: 76). And yet though Naipaul has been scorned by postcolonial critics for his scathing depictions of India and countries in Africa, Naipaul was the first of the writers to talk about postcolonialism and to outline the attitude we now call postcoloniality —describing and depicting the ills of colonialism, of colonial writing and of the oppression of the poor

and the disenfranchised, whose experience he lived for many years consecutively. In his now famous piece entitled «London» published in *The Times Literary Supplement* 15 August 1958 (ironically India's independence day though not the actual year), V.S. Naipaul complained about being a colonial without an audience experiencing racism and difference. In an interview with David Bates in *The Sunday Times Magazine* 13 May, 1963), he highlights this further, noting that «where subjects such as racial prejudice and colonial exploitation are involved, seriousness is often confused with solemnity and violent dramas of rape and miscegenation which sold well» while the «subtle accuracy» of Naipaul's social observation was appreciated only by a few. He felt alienated from London and felt that he was writing in a vacuum. Yet, he notes, he is grateful to the B.B.C. and to Henry Swanzy for starting him off. In other interviews he says he could not have been a writer anywhere other than London. Yet in his most recent work he has made a tremendous turn towards his Indian roots.

The case of Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul is very much like that of any of his characters from Mr. Biswas onwards or one of the characters of R.K. Narayan whose work Naipaul writes about with warm affection not just in his essay «London» but in *India: A Wounded Civilization* (1977). More importantly, Naipaul himself is like Kipling's Kim. Charles Michener has called *A House for Mr. Biswas* Naipaul's *Kim* (Jussawalla, 1996b: 69). It is interesting to see how much there is in common between Kim and Naipaul. Mr. Naipaul is just like the foundling child, Kim, caught between his Indian culture and his desire to be British, the love of these two cultures and between seeing himself as British or Indian. Mr Naipaul's deeply entrenched brahminhood, in which he was raised, leads him like the fictional Kim to explore who he is with the time honored and ancient meditation , the «so-hum breath». «I AM». «I AM that I AM». «I am Kim», Kim repeats to himself; «I am Naipaul», Naipaul asserts over and over again of his individuality and his oneness with himself. Naipaul, who practised yoga all his life, punished himself with back bends when he could not write. Those of us who know yoga know that this is less a punishing device and more a form of focusing and centering, keeping his connection to the great I AM. He has also kept up his Uttar Pradesh Brahmin practices like vegetarianism. Eventually, he comes to a place of honoring himself as such. In the «Ceremony of Farewell» in *Enigma of Arrival*, we see him contemplating the flames, offering himself as it were «swa-ha». The mantra «Om Bhur buh swa ha» surrounds this individual whom we think of as cosmopolitan, metropolitan, transnational and critical of postcoloniality. Instead he remains a Hindu Brahmin seeing himself as one with the I AM.

Like Kipling, Naipaul tells us through interviews and depictions of characters that attaching oneself to other cultures is bound to be superficial. To Cathleen Medwick in an interview published in *Vogue* he says his work is about people who want «to attach themselves... to other civilizations, with other drives,» because «their own have failed them. But these people only suc-

ceed in becoming aliens with no sense of who they are, or why they have come» (Jussawalla, 1996b: 58-59). In this Naipaul is very much like Kipling in that he has always been supportive of connections to one's culture (maybe not roots). He denounces hybridity in much the same way as Kipling does in Kim as «the monstrous hybridism of East and West». And Naipaul is not a «bogus» (another of his favorite words) holy man peddling false spirituality like his character, G. Ramsay Muir, in *Mr Stone and the Knight's Companion* or like the India he criticizes for not having anything to show after all these years of wisdom but false holy men. He doesn't care if you're not on «the journey(s)» with him. He lives his own search, finding the center.

Naipaul has come the full Karmic circle in knowing where he belongs. Alex Hamilton notes in his interview with Naipaul that he has become «paradoxically a wheel —the weight of his obsession at a tangent to any society» («Living a Life on Approval», *Manchester Guardian* 4 October 1971: 8). He has made his journey from the initial culture contact, the absorption into the colonizers' frame of mind, a move towards hybridity and a final coming to a recognition of himself as belonging to the culture that he started from. This is a typical «postcolonial *bildungsroman*».

Lacking a clear definition of what constitutes postcoloniality or postcolonial literature, or what the characteristics are of a postcolonial work of writing, postcoloniality in literature can be defined not just by the fact that an individual or an author is historically or chronologically a post-colonial —i.e., living in and writing in an era after colonization but metaphorically as a «postcolonial» (here used as a noun —rather than an adjective) by his attitude to the colonizing culture, to the colonizers' language and by his growth or journey towards indigenousness.

For me, postcoloniality in a work of literature is characterized not just by its historic placement but by: 1) the attitude of the writer towards the dominant culture, which is one of seeking independence from the colonizing culture; 2) the attitude towards the dominant language, whereby the typical postcolonial writers seek to experiment with and change English to catch local idioms and pidgin. This is not from lack of command of the language; 3) and the theme or content which expresses a turn away from the colonizing culture towards authentic indigenousness which, it has been posited, is nonexistent in these postmodern times of hybridity.

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