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Humour and Sadness in Postcolonial Novel: Emotional Ambivalence in Early Anglo-Indian Novels

Sömürgecilik Sonrası Romanda Gülmece ve Hüzün: Erken Dönem Hint-İngiliz Romanlarında Duygusal İkirciklilik

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Abstract

The deployment of humour and sadness together in postcolonial literature invites important discussions on ambivalence. These two juxtaposing themes in postcolonial novels reflect not only the cultural clashes effectively, but also the emotional ambivalence of the characters. While the use of humour and sadness turns the anti-colonial novels into sub-historical texts, the tragi-comedy created in this context provides an opportunity to view history from an individual perspective and re-interpret it. This can be observed within the early novels of Salman Rushdie, particularly in Shame, Midnight's Children, and The Satanic Verses, Hanif Kureishi and Arundhati Roy. The excerpts taken from these novels indicate that the cultural clashes occurred by the confrontation of Eastern and Western cultures inevitably bring humour and sadness together. Yet, the occurrence of these juxtaposing uses of humour and sadness reveals an emotional ambivalence as well as cultural ambivalence of the main sub-continental characters in these works. This paper, therefore, argues that colonial practices, as represented in Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy's novels in question, function to create a juxtapositional unity of humour and sadness that create the emotional ambivalence of colonial subjects who are not only hybridized culturally but also traumatized individually.

Keywords: Rushdie, humour, sadness, history, culture, east, west.

Öz

Sömürgecilik sonrası yazında gülmece ve hüznün bir arada kullanılması ikirciklilik kavramı üzerine önemli tartışmaları gündeme getirmektedir. Sömürge sonrası romanlarda, birbirine karşıt bu iki tema yalnızca kültürel çatışmaları etkileyici bir biçimde yansıtmakla kalmaz, aynı zamanda karakterlerin duygusal ikirciklilik lerini de yansıtır. Gülmece ve hüznün birlikteliği sömürgecilik karşıtı romanları alt tarihsel metinlere dönüştürürken, ortaya çıkan traji-komedi tarihin bireysel perspektiflerden görülerek yeniden yorumlanmasını sağlamaktadır. Bu durumun örneklerine Salman Rushdie'nin, özellikle Utanç, Geceyarısı Çocukları, ve Şeytan Ayetleri gibi erken dönem romanlarında, Hanif Kureishi ve Arundhati Roy'da rastlamak mümkündür. Bu romanlardan yapılan alıntılar doğu ve batı kültürlerinin karşılaşmasıyla ortaya çıkan kültürel çatışmaların kaçınılmaz bir biçimde gülmeceyle hüznü bir araya getirdiğini göstermektedir. Ancak, gülmece ve hüznün birbiriyle çatışan bu kullanımı, bu eserlerdeki Hintli karakterlerin kültürel ikircikliğinin yanı sıra, duygusal ikirciklilik lerini de gözler önüne sermektedir. Bu çalışma, bu nedenle, sadece kültürel olarak melezleşmeyen aynı zamanda bireysel olarak travma yaşayan sömürge karakterlerinin duygusal ikirciklilik lerini yaratan gülmece ve hüznün birlikteliğine, Rushdie, Kureishi ve Roy'un söz konusu romanlarında görüldüğü biçimiyle, sömürgecilik uygulamalarının sebep olduğunu tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Rushdie, gülmece, hüzün, tarih, kültür, doğu, batı.

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Extended Summary

This article intends to revisit the early novels of Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi and Arundhati Roy to evaluate them in a more contemporary approach to postcolonial studies. It is a natural consequence that the references of major theoretical terms and concepts in postcolonial criticism have changed in the twenty-first century when there have been global migrations of huge populations. Cultural ambiguities and hybridity, as defined in postcolonial theory, are no longer the sole representations of postcolonial migrants since they can be observed in the situations of all migrants. However, these concepts are still valid in the analyses of texts that are conventionally accepted as postcolonial. The binary oppositions of humour and sadness in postcolonial novels cause ambivalences. In this study, the ambivalence, usually admitted as cultural ambivalence in postcolonial studies, is studied from a different perspective. The examples taken from Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy's novels here all display postcolonial characters in despair and anguish. From the perspective of the postcolonial character in the centre, the situation is saddening, but from an outsider's perspective, their pathetic situation seems to be quite humorous as it does not fit the new cultural environment of the postcolonial character.

This study, therefore, presents classical definitions of the term postcolonial and questions whether or not the novels in question here may be categorized under these definitions. Next, this article further questions the use of humour and sadness in these novels by quoting examples from the novels, which are categorized and labelled as "Anglo-Indian" in this study as this term better represents the hybridity of these texts. The Anglo-Indian novel emerged after the collapse of Eurocentric colonisation of the Indian subcontinent and Salman Rushdie, as an Anglo-Indian author, deliberately promotes hybridity, postcolonial ambiguity, anti-imperialism, Anglophilia, religious fanaticism as themes and motifs of their novels, and foreground provincial-marginal characters within contemporary metropolitan centres. This article first deals with *Midnight's Children* in which Rushdie re-writes the history of independent India through his narrator Saleem. Then the article goes on to analyse the cultural contradictions and clashes in *The Satanic Verses* where the author recounts the story of two postcolonial immigrants in London who are metamorphosed there.Hanif Kureishi's *The Black Album* deals with the burning of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in a college yard where Shahid, the protagonist of the novel, studies. *The Black Album* is set in 1989, the same year as the issuing of *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie. The notorious book burning incident in Bradford is fictionalised here. The fanatical group that tries to persuade Shahid to join them organises the protest against the author of *The Satanic Verses*. It is an alternative history and presented as a parody, like in most of Kureishi's texts. Among the crowds at the protest, where two ex-Marxist lecturers are confronted, the events are introduced in a humorous way.

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* is the story of an Anglophile Indian family living in Kerala. They have not lost their ties with their London connections. The family have twins called Estha and Rahel who are the youngest members of the family, and they are obliged to have an English education. As their mother tongue is not English, they mimic the English language. How the words sound is more important than what they mean in most cases. As their perception of language grows, their play of words becomes more of an uprising against the imposed language.

Their educational process constitutes the humorous side of the story. They cannot take sides with any of the cultures while they still struggle to belong somewhere.

To sum up, this study argues that, in all narratives of migration and multicultural conditions, there are cultural clashes and cultural ambivalences, since characters find themselves in ambiguous and contradictory situations in all those texts. They cannot find a solid standpoint between their cultural roots and their new dwelling places and are forced to find new ways of expressing themselves. They may, therefore, inevitably be required to have new identities which fit neither their original culture nor their new culture. As long as they stay somewhere in the middle, it is unavoidable to fall into hybridity and ambivalence which is not only cultural but also emotional.

Introduction

The use of humour and sadness together in postcolonial literature invites discussions of binary oppositions in the novels written in English by writers of colonial origin because the utilisation of these two juxtaposing themes in contemporary postcolonial novels functions as an affective reflection of the cultural clashes. The postcolonial condition represented in Salman Rushdie's early novels inevitably juxtaposes humour and sadness to create responsiveness in the reader. This responsiveness makes the reader aware of the individual reactions to the imperial rule. The co-existence of humour and sadness in the post-colonial context turns the post-imperial novels into sub-historical texts. In other words, the tragi-comedy created by the use of humour and sadness in the most unlikely situations provides a re-interpretation of history from the individual perspective.

The difficulty of defining the term postcolonial as a generalising catch-all is always a prevalent problem. Thus, the need to specify exactly which postcolonial to discuss emerges while talking about the texts written in the postcolonial era, particularly when Salman Rushdie's novels are in question, since he represents reactional and protesting anti-colonial identities of postcolonial immigrants after the first generation, labelled as "Windrush generation"[1] that became the core subjects in the novels by especially V. S. Naipaul and Sam Selvon. Rushdie, in particularly *Midnight's Children* and *The Satanic Verses*, became the spokesperson for postcolonial immigrants who raised their voices against the former imperialist practices in the homelands and ongoing racism against the immigrants in their new dwelling places.Therefore, the most traditional definitions of the postcolonial still work to describe where Rushdie's novels stand. Deepika Bahri says "in a very fundamental sense, postcolonial is what has been preceded by colonisation" (1995, p. 51). This definition is minimal, because world history has been full of colonial experience, and there is hardly a land in any part of the world that has not been affected by colonial experience in some way or other. Hence, it is of utmost significance to ascertain the specific postcolonial period under examination, with respect to the colonialism it follows. It is necessary to refer to the nomenclature of "Anglo-Indian Postcolonialism" because this study attempts to read the texts of Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, and Hanif Kureishi, educated in British institutions that generated their cultural formation.

1 The ship that brought 492 immigrants to Britain from the Caribbeans in 1948 was called "HMT Empire Windrush". Hence, the immigrants on the ship and their descendants are referred to as "Windrush generation". See: https://www.haringey.gov.uk/culture/black-history/timeline/windrush accessed on 16.06.2023.

However, it would be useful here to discuss various critical positions on postcolonialism. As the term has been used since the 1950s, it obviously refers to the era after the end of European colonies. When the term is used in this sense, it foregrounds the mid-twentieth century and the end of the British and French Empires, which is unacceptably Anglocentric and Eurocentric, as Peter Childs and Patrick Williams argue. This would be excluding the end of Spanish and Portuguese control in South America in the early nineteenth-century, or the independence of the United States of America (Childs & Williams al., 1997, p. 1).

Aijaz Ahmad refers to earlier colonialisms experienced by such as the Arabs; the Ottomans and the Chinese well before European colonialism began (1995, p. 9). As well as expanding the term backwards, Ahmad pushes it forward to refer to all sorts of oppressions as part of a colonial experience still going on in the contemporary world (p. 9). As such, the ongoing British rule in the Falklands, Belize, or Hong Kong up to 1997 may be cited as examples. Ahmad also finds the term postcolonialism degrading (1995, p. 9), as it intrinsically refers to colonialism that, in a sense, confirms its ongoing existence. In addition to that, although postcolonial is a nomenclative reference to the era after the end of colonialism; the term is not used to include the writers of the imperial nation who wrote in the same period, but it is used to label only the writers who are genetically the descendants of formerly colonised peoples.

There is, and has always been, more than one type of colonialism and thus more than one type of postcolonialism, which is regarded as dubious by numerous critics. Anne McClintock, for instance, thinks it was coined to soften the term "Third World" (1994, p. 254); and Arif Dirlik argues that the term is too Eurocentric and, thus, promotes the Western-ness of history (1994, p. 329). On the contrary, however, Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge welcome the use of the term. They refer to two types of postcolonialism. One is spelled with a hyphen between "post" and "colonial", and it refers to the historically post-colonial period, and the literature written after decolonisation. The second postcolonialism is without a hyphen and refers not only to the period after colonisation, but to the understanding and opposition against colonisation: perhaps the hyphen-less postcolonialism should be expressed as anti-colonialism (Mishra & Hodge, 1991, p. 399).

From Childs and Williams' perspective, texts "which are anti-colonial, which reject the premises of colonialist intervention (the civilising mission, the rejuvenation of stagnant cultures)" may be called postcolonial. Because of the difficulty of pinning down the term to chronological terms, it is still best understood as a literary or cultural style rather than a historical period (Childs et al., 1997, p. 4). Elleke Boehmer argues that the present historical and cultural condition of the world has been created by colonial practices in the past couple of centuries (2005, p. 1). However, the period mentioned by Boehmer covers the colonial historical time span of the dominance of European colonial powers. This kind of periodization does not include the colonisations in the earlier centuries by non-European imperial powers to which Aijaz Ahmad also refers. It is impossible to deny Boehmer's categorization of European colonialism as one of the most powerful tools of cultural imperialism that has generated the present hegemonic culture in today's world, when the dominance of the English language all over the world is taken into consideration.

Stephen Slemon does not think that the term is useful when it is used "synonymously with a post-independence historical period in once-colonised nations". (1991, p. 3) It is much more useful, as he points out, when it locates "a specifically anti- or *post*-colonial *discursive* purchase in culture" (Slemon, 1991, p. 3). The Anglo-Indian authors chosen here, then, may be regarded as anticolonial since they bring the colonised in the margins of colonial discourse to the centre of postcolonial discourse. It is impossible to ignore the importance of literature written in the postcolonialist sense reversing the colonial discourse of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It is also impossible to keep out of the frame the large body of postcolonial literature, which comes out of Eurocentric colonialism. For instance, Ben Okri, Samuel Selvon, Anita Desai and the authors considered here are the ones who have come out of the colonial experience but utilized the styles or strategies of the imperial culture.

The Use of Humour and Sadness

This article will analyse the use of humour and tragi-comedy in the Anglo-Indian novel, which emerged after the collapse of the Eurocentric colonisation of the Indian subcontinent. Salman Rushdie deliberately promotes hybridity, postcolonial ambiguity, anti-imperialism, Anglophilia and religious fanaticism as themes and motifs of their novels, and foregrounds provincial-marginal characters within contemporary metropolitan centres.

In *Midnight's Children*, Salman Rushdie re-writes the history of independent India through his narrator Saleem, who telepathically communicates with one thousand and one children born at exactly the midnight hour when independence was declared. Rushdie creates alternative histories where certain historical facts occur on fictional dates rather than real dates. The strong political sense of the novel is in ambiguity, because Rushdie idealises neither the nationalist struggle in India nor imperialism. However, as he presents the hybridity of his colonised characters in a humorous manner, dramatic coincidences eclipse these two subjects. In a sense, humour, sadness, and history are interdependent, as will be suggested below with examples.

In the chapter called 'Mercurochrome', Saleem recounts the story of his grandfather Doctor Aziz, who, in April 1919, spends two days in Amritsar. On April 7th, people riot in their nationalist struggle, and Doctor Aziz helps the wounded by bandaging and daubing them with

Mercurochrome

Finally, he returns to his hotel room, his clothes soaked with red stains, and Naseem commences a panic. "Let me help, let me help, Allah what a man I've married, who goes into gullies to fight goondas!" ... "I don't know why you can't be a respectable doctor like ordinary people are just cure important illnesses and all? O God you've got blood everywhere! Sit, sit now, let me wash you at least!" (1981, p. 35)

Naseem's reaction to the red stains is a humorous one in the sense that she feels insecure when her husband is involved with independence struggles. The feeling of insecurity is both because she fears the political outcomes of this struggle and because she fears the results at her home as a traditional housewife who longs for a peaceful and regular life. Her husband, on the other hand, has an active role in a political struggle, which does not fit her expectations for a peaceful household.

She deals with her husband's while she has to face her lack of knowledge about the outside world that surrounds her in a foreign language forming her into alienation. Her postcolonial ambivalence is revealed here as an emotional aspect, as well as being cultural. However, her reaction is juxtaposed with her husband's answer:

"It isn't blood, wife."

"You think I can't see for myself with my own eyes? Why must you make a fool of me even when you're hurt? Must your wife not look after you, even?"

"It's Mercurochrome, Naseem. Red medicine."

.... "You do it on purpose," she says, "to make me look stupid. I am not stupid. I have read several books." (1981, p. 35)

Another important point in her reaction is that she denies her ignorance by claiming to have read "*several*" books. By doing so, she tries to disprove the locally established fact that reading books is a male territory. Such a response, she believes, will also enable her to function outside the expected values of the society which renders the female identity as the supporter of husband only rather than producing an intellectual judgement of the male authority.

On April 13th, however, Aziz goes to the largest compound called Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, where thousands of people gather for a meeting although the meetings are banned. While a peaceful protest is in progress in the compound the entrance to which is through a narrow alleyway between two buildings, Brigadier Dyer, the Martial Law Commander of Amritsar enters the compound with his fifty men with rifles. When he goes back to his hotel room, Aziz has red stains on his shirt again:

"I see you've been spilling the Mercurochrome again, clumsy," she said appeasingly.

"It's blood," he replied, and she fainted. When he brought her round with the help of a little sal volatile, she said, "Are you hurt?"

"No," he said.

"But *where* have you *been*, my *God*?"

"Nowhere on earth," he said, and began to shake in her arms. (1981, p. 36)

First, Naseem thinks that Mercurochrome stains are the stains of blood. When, afterwards, her husband explains to her that those are Mercurochrome stains, she believes she is being fooled. With the same logic, she thinks the bloodstains are the stains of Mercurochrome. Then a harsh reality comes as a shock: "It is blood". (Rushdie, 1981, p. 36)) The humorous description of an uneducated, traditional woman acting out her traditional role as wife is used to describe the Amritsar massacre. Amusing reactions of a traditional woman coincide with a brutal and serious historical fact which creates in the reader a response of rueful sadness. Thus, her ignorance not only renders her identity as a postcolonial uneducated woman but also causes her to be humiliated and ashamed. The reason Rushdie describes the situations preceding and following the massacre but not the massacre itself is that a naturalistic or documentary account is implicitly unavailable for

the characters. Rushdie also wishes to focus on the subjective experience of the massacre in retrospect, as an aftermath effect. While the novel is presented as a magic realist text where history is re-written and alternative histories are created to escape from reality and from traditional forms of story-telling, a strong political opposition against imperialism is sensed through a disturbed wife's funny image. Rushdie deliberately pushes the reader into sudden disturbing reality while claiming to be "unrealistic" and suggests in *Imaginary Homelands* that *Midnight's Children* should not be read as a reliable history book (1991, p. 2-3). This strategy, according to Brian McHale, is typical of postmodernism, because postmodernism fictionalises history and postmodernists imply that history might be invoked as a kind of fiction (1987, p. 96).

Although not all parts that include humour and sadness can be cited as examples of fictionalised history in *Midnight's Children*, some incidents that are totally local and traditional present another affective way of using these two juxtaposing themes. The death of an Indian woman in a camel-cart accident is a remarkable example:

… My unhappy father, I repeat, thinks bad-temperedly about cash. About his wife, who wheedles rupees out of him and picks his pockets at night. And his ex-wife (who eventually died in an accident, when she argued with a camel-cart driver and was bitten in the neck by the camel) … (1981, p. 82-83)

The death of Ahmad Sinai's ex-wife may not be a historical and post-colonial condition. However, when such an incident, which is very unlikely for the western reality, is recounted in the English language to be read by the western reader, the local reality that would never surprise a native Indian appears to be unusually striking. A sad event like death, as the content of the text, gets into a humorous form when written in English. Despite not being intended to serve as a sub-historical context, the representation of a serious local reality, which would otherwise not be humorous, is juxtaposed with western logic. This is inevitably a post-colonial condition, in which the co-existence of sadness and humour in a *comedy-noir* is also unavoidable when the characters of eastern traditional origin are faced with secular and industrialised western reality.

Fictionalised history is observed in Hanif Kureishi's texts as well. In *The Black Album*, the burning of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* occurs in a college yard where Shahid, the protagonist of the novel, studies. *The Black Album* is set in 1989, the same year as the issuing of a *fatwa* against Salman Rushdie. The notorious book burning incident in Bradford is fictionalised here. The fanatical group that tries to persuade Shahid to join them organises the protest against the author of *The Satanic Verses*. This is not the real environment of the actual protest, and these are not the real people that burned the book. It is an alternative history and presented as a parody, like in most of Kureishi's texts. Among the crowds at the protest, two ex-Marxist lecturers are confronted. One is Mr Brownlow, who takes sides with the Asians due to his anti-racist views, and the other is his ex-wife Deedee, who has an affair with Shahid who is obliged to help his fanatical friends during the protest:

Fiercely resolute she elbowed through the crowd to Brownlow. She was angry enough to clout him but people were gawping at her, it wouldn't have been a good idea. She berated her ex-husband, who stared at Riaz, who shook his head and stuttered even more, his lips making

futile spastic gestures. She moved around him, trying to locate something she could appeal to, but the students began laughing at them for having 'a domestic' at such a time. (1995, p. 223)

Kureishi employs a domestic argument along with a historical incident. Brutal book burning is presented with an ex-wife's fury at an ex-husband. On the other hand, the protagonist Shahid is in between his fanatical friends and his lover Deedee who wants them to stop the protest. While we are presented with a distorted image of an abandoned husband who stubbornly supports the fanatics in order to be anti-racist, or just to be against his ex-wife, and their funny image among the angry crowd; one of the most violent ways of punishing an author is being occurred. Both the husband and the wife are in this struggle and claim to take sides with the Asian students. Yet, while their activism has its political causes in their oppositional stance to their government's deeds; they are also involved in it for emotional reasons as Deedee has an affair with Shahid, her Asian student. The emotional ambivalence, this time, does not appear as the postcolonial immigrant's ambivalence but as the coloniser's.

In *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie foregrounds cultural collisions resulting from migration rather than presenting alternative histories. *The Satanic Verses* can be classified as a work of contemporary literature rather than a historical one. Its material is more postcolonial, and it deals more with postcolonial migration than postcolonial independent India. Humour is so satirical that the text becomes tragi-comic in parts. Since it is more about postcolonial migration, the satirical humour is produced by cultural clashes, and in most parts, it is hard to determine whom the satire is directed to.

Salahuddin Chamchawala, the protagonist who changes his name to Saladin Chamcha for practical reasons after migrating to Britain and becoming a voice-over actor, finds out that his father is offering him an English education. The resemblance to the author is unmissable. His mother's objection to his leaving is a contrast to Saladin's joy upon this offer and presents her resistance to the coloniser's culture:

"Don't go dirty like those English," she warned him. "They wipe their bee tee ems with paper only. Also, they get into each other's dirty bathwater." These vile slanders proved to Salahuddin that his mother was doing her damnedest to prevent him from leaving, and in spite of their mutual love he replied, "It is inconceivable, Ammi what you say. England is a great civilisation, what are you talking, bunk." (1988, p. 39)

Soon after Saladin starts a boarding school in England, he starts experiencing saddening 'giggles' from his classmates at his voice, exclusions from their secrets, and suffering from racism for not being like them. The difficulty of conquering England occurs to him when he finds a kipper on his plate for breakfast one morning. None of his fellow-pupils tells him how to eat it. It takes him ninety minutes to eat the fish:

Then the thought occurred to him that he had been taught an important lesson. England was a peculiar-tasting smoked fish full of spikes and bones, and nobody would ever tell him how to eat it. (1988, p. 44)

This bitter and pathetic allusion is a reference to a new migrant's place in England. The difficulties that a newly arrived migrant experiences in England are symbolised by the difficulty of eating smoked fish. It is equally funny and sad because a naive concept like eating smoked kipper can be a saddening experience for a newcomer from an alien culture. The above example is also a satire directed to the English understanding that the country is open to migrants who are welcomed, but also who are not told how to cope with it while expected to integrate. Also, the immigrants' cultural shock and their identity problems lead them into mimicry in which they find themselves in an ambivalent situation - both emotionally and culturally - as to whether they should stick to their cultural roots or imitate the culture of their new home in order to integrate.

In one of its chapters, *The Satanic Verses* presents the story of Mishal who ventures to walk through the Arabian Sea to Mecca with people from a whole village. She believes that the Arabian Sea will part for such a divine purpose allowing them to walk on the bed of the ocean. Her husband Mirza, on the other hand, tries to stop them:

"... When the waters of the ocean part, where will the extra water go? Will it stand up sideways like walls? Mishal? Answer me. Are there miracles? Do you believe in Paradise? Will I be forgiven my sins?" He began to cry, and fell on to his knees, with his forehead still pressed against the wall. His dying wife came up and embraced him from behind. "Go with the pilgrimage, then," he said, dully. "But at least take the Mercedes station wagon. It's got air-conditioning and you can take the icebox full of Cokes." (1988, p. 239)

Rushdie juxtaposes Mirza's secularism with Mishal's mysticism. In other words, the divinity is humourized. Supported by objective truths, his secularism is put forward against his wife's religious belief in such a subjective truth as the parting of the Arabian Sea. Tired of failing to convince his wife, Mirza agrees to let her go on condition that she takes the Mercedes with an icebox full of Cokes. Eastern mysticism is not only satirised but, funnily enough, intervened by a Western capitalist product. It is, as asserted in *The Satanic Verses*, 'the Coca-Colonization of the planet' (406).

The same cultural clashes and conflictual relationships that bring together the concerns of cultures in juxtaposition may also be observed in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, which is the story of an Anglophile Indian family with London connections living in Kerala. The twins Estha and Rahel are the youngest members of the family and they are obliged to have an English education. Since their mother tongue is not English, they mimic the English language. How the words sound is more important than what they mean in most cases. As their perception of language grows, their play of words becomes more of an uprising against the imposed language. Their Aunt Baby Kochamma, being an Anglophile, is in charge of their education. Her Australian missionary friend, Miss Mitten, is employed to teach the twins who are offended by her. They start reading everything she shows them backwards. They show Miss Mitten, who is not amused, how it is possible to read both *Malayalam* and *Madam I'm Adam* backwards as well as forwards. Then they realise that she is not aware of the fact that Malayalam is the native language of the people of Kerala: She said she had been under the impression that it was called Keralese. Estha, who had by then taken an active dislike to Miss Mitten, told her that as far as she was concerned it was a Highly Stupid Impression.

....

They were made to write *In future we will not read backwards. In future we will not read backwards*. A hundred times. Forwards.

A few months later Miss Mitten was killed by a milk van in Hobart, across the road from a cricket oval. To the twins there was a hidden justice in the fact that the milk van was *reversing*. (1997, p. 60)

Death is presented with childish humour. The demise of a person presented as revenge for the children brings the co-existence of humour and tragedy into Roy's text. Roy's depiction of Miss Mitten's ignorance reflects western ignorant perception of the reality of the colonised land. What is presented in the above quotation is not only the twins' cultural ambivalence but also Miss Mitten's cultural prejudices. The ambivalence of twins and prejudices of Miss Mitten are all caused by the imperial intervention. However, it turns out that those childhood traumas influence the twins' future life heavily in their later life, because those experiences make them emotionally ambivalent while they also stem from colonial practices. The traumatic memory, then, becomes the outcome of a traumatic postcolonial identity.

It is difficult to include all the similar examples within the scope of a study at this length, but as seen so far, all three authors mentioned here employ humour as well as sadness. Their usage in the same text is always due either to cultural clashes or imperial impacts. Sudden switches from one feeling to another make an already hybrid sub-genre an even more hybrid one. Humorous situations are inevitable for postcolonial hybrid characters, in particular when they are in cross-cultural relations where they are subject to cultural clashes. Postcolonial migrants in Kureishi's novels are; for instance, perfect examples of disconcerted images of postcolonial cross cultural relations. The author's multicultural experience in all of the texts mentioned so far is reflected as a collage in the texts.

Conclusion

Humour and sadness are inescapable because of the colonial or postcolonial condition. Black humour is an outcome emerging from impoverished conditions. Rushdie, Kureishi and Roy would all rather present their stories in humorous ways, adding a sharp satire, which switches the text from highly comic situations to deeply pathetic or tragic ones. Is it, after all, not possible to argue that as postcolonial authors they take up themes that are both funny and sad because of their ambivalent and indeterminate attitude towards their material? The present study, answering that rhetorical question in the affirmative, claims it is. Even without a critical approach from postcolonial theory, it is still best understood in an analytical light that postcolonial Anglo-Indian novel contributes to the novel genre in a way that it moves the genre from western terms and produces novels that are difficult to name as a comic or a tragic novel in classical sense.

In Elleke Boehmer's words, postcolonial writing has created its own poetics in the postcolonial period and in the same way as in other kinds of literary texts, the fiction produced within the postcolonial condition is inevitably concerned with "questions of form, structure, perception, and reception" (Boehmer, 2018, p. 2). Therefore, it is suggested it owns its insights that on the

way the imperialist attempts work (2018: 2). This is to mean that postcolonial writing creates its own poetics. Postcolonialism presents "its problems of positionality" to share with her disciplines working on "othered" subjects (Boehmer, 2018, p. 23). In a sense, postcolonial criticism is concerned with complex structures of narration concerning many other fields in humanities, as much as other critical theories do.

Since it deals with the individual experiences of postcolonial immigrants, the fiction written by authors from the formerly colonized nations questions the power relations between the coloniser and the colonized while at the same time dealing with the identity problems of postcolonial immigrants. The politics of postcolonial condition in their novels inherently generate a specific poetics that is not unique to postcolonial texts. This poetics may also be observable in the novels dealing with such power relations that occur in multicultural societies in which cultural ambivalences are prevalent. Yet, these cultural ambivalences, as a natural consequence of individual experiences of migration, are also observed as emotional ambivalences whereby the individuals are indecisive whether to laugh, be laughed at or cry out their anguish.

Anglo-Indian novels studied here bear full representations of personal grief that, when seen from the perspective of the coloniser, might sound amusing. The novels in question in this study are full of representations of all the conventional postcolonial characteristics including mimicry, hybridity and, most importantly, ambivalence. As has been argued so far, the ambivalence of the characters as to whether they take sides with the coloniser's culture or be against it is not necessarily a cultural ambivalence. This kind of love-and-hate relationship renders their emotional state to obscurity. The amusing situations in which they find themselves are quite humorous at the same time. As a result, they are indecisive about whether or not they should be happy surrounded by the coloniser's culture.

To conclude briefly, in all narratives of migration and multicultural conditions, there are cultural clashes and cultural ambivalences, since in those narratives, characters find themselves in ambiguous and contradictory situations. These contradictions in which they cannot find a solid standpoint between their cultural roots and their new dwelling places force them to find new ways of expressing themselves. By doing so, they may inevitably be required to have new identities which fit neither their original culture nor their new culture. To feel comfortable in the new, they have to transform themselves fully to adapt and leave behind their home culture. As long as they stay somewhere in the middle, it is unavoidable to fall into hybridity and ambivalence which is not only cultural but also emotional.

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