



Metacriticism in Salman Rushdie's Short Story *Yorick**

Salman Rushdie'nin *Yorick* Adlı Kısa Öyküsünde Üsteleştiri

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Abstract

Salman Rushdie is mostly known for his usage of new techniques especially those of postmodernism. In his short story collection *East, West*, besides many postmodern techniques such as pastiche, parody, and metafiction, his focus on metacriticism is apparent in the short story titled "Yorick". Rushdie's "Yorick" that is based on an invented story about the character Yorick, the dead clown whose skull Prince Hamlet handles and makes his famous speech in *Hamlet*, appears as an example of creative metacriticism that depicts the place and function of literary criticism in a fictional work. Referring to theoretical criticisms of *Hamlet*, such as psychoanalysis and social theories, Rushdie uses criticism of literary criticism in his short story "Yorick". Thus, he adds his postmodern interpretation into the analyses of literary criticism since antiquity. This study will firstly focus on the theoretical background of metacriticism, in general, and creative metacriticism, in particular. Later on, it will try to find out the traces of creative metacriticism in Rushdie's short story "Yorick" in which he also deals with metafiction, the role of the writer, the function of the reader, writer-critic-reader collaboration, the objectivity or subjectivity of literary criticism, creative writing or creative reading, and the truth in storytelling. Analysing how metacriticism operates in the story, finally Rushdie's ideas on what literary criticism is and should be will be clarified.

Keywords: Salman Rushdie, "Yorick", metacriticism, creative metacriticism

Öz

Salman Rushdie, özellikle postmodernizmle bağlantılı yeni teknikleri kullanması ile bilinmektedir. Doğu, Batı adlı kısa öykü derlemesinde, pastiş, parodi ve üstkurgu gibi birçok postmodern tekniği kullanmasının yanı sıra, "Yorick" adlı kısa öyküde üsteleştiri üzerine yoğunlaşması göze çarpmaktadır. *Hamlet*'te Prenses Hamlet'in elinde tutarak üzerine ünlü konuşmasını yaptığı mefta soytarı Yorick karakterinin kurmaca öyküsü üzerine temellenen Rushdie'nin "Yorick"i, kurgu bir eserde edebi eleştirinin yerini ve işlevini dile getiren bir tür yaratıcı üsteleştiri örneği olarak ortaya çıkar. Psikanaliz ve sosyal teoriler gibi *Hamlet*'in teorik eleştirilerine gönderme yaparak Rushdie, "Yorick" adlı kısa öyküsünde edebi eleştirinin eleştirisini kullanır. Antik çağdan bu yana edebi eleştiri üzerine yapılan incelemelere Rushdie kendi postmodern yorumunu böylelikle eklemiştir. Öncelikle bu çalışma, genelde üsteleştirin, özelde ise yaratıcı üsteleştirin teorik arkaplanı üzerine yoğunlaşacaktır. Daha sonra çalışma, Rushdie'nin üstkurgu, yazarın rolü, okurun işlevi, yazar, eleştirmen, okur işbirliği, edebi eleştirinin nesnellığı ya da özneliği, yaratıcı yazarlık ya da yaratıcı okurluk ve öyküleme hakikat konularını da ele aldığı "Yorick" adlı kısa öyküsündeki yaratıcı üsteleştirin izlerini bulmaya çalışacaktır. Öyküde üsteleştirin nasıl işlediğini inceleyerek sonuç olarak Rushdie'nin edebi eleştiri nedir ve ne olmalıdır hakkındaki fikirleri açıklanacaktır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Salman Rushdie, "Yorick", üsteleştiri, yaratıcı üsteleştiri

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Introduction

Literary criticism, evolving since the ancient philosophers, has arrived at the phase of metacriticism in the world of postmodern. In a broad sense, in a critical theory, metacriticism can be defined as “criticism of criticism, the goal of which is to scrutinize systematically the terminology, logic, and structure that undergird critical and theoretical discourse in general or any particular mode of such discourse” (Henderson and Brown, 1997, “metacriticism”). Thus, a metacritical study means to analyze the foundations of criticism in general, to describe, examine, and question the principles, methods, and terms of a critical approach besides analyzing a critical text in terms of its context. While “a criticism of criticism” is produced by any literary critic in a nonfictional study, in the world of postmodernity, it is mostly and creatively delivered by fiction writers in their creative works. It is known that before postmodernity, many English writers such as Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce had implemented their literary criticisms in their fictional works. However, as a strictly intentional technique, it came into use mostly by postmodernist writers who attempted to challenge the orthodox relationship between a creative writer and a literary critic; the role between the producer and the controller in other words. Until the twentieth century, “criticism was subjective, prescriptive, defensive and the whole dependent on literary practice, literary doctrine, or literary movement in general” (Golban, 2014, p. 55). However, the twentieth century, “an age of criticism” (Golban, 2014, p. 67), brought a much more playful way of criticism that is not separated from a literary work, but infused into it. Challenging the nineteenth century idea of the scientificness of literary criticism that was supported by the positivist understanding, twentieth century literary criticism introduced some sort of paradoxical interaction between the author and the literary critic. Especially with the extensive use of metafiction, many creative writers have taken the place of metacritics, writing their ideas on literary theory and literary criticism in their fictional works. Either implicitly or explicitly, these metacritics reflect their philosophies of literature and literary criticism that makes their works criticism of criticism. To David Lodge (1971), that writer-critic is “the creative writer whose criticism is mainly a by-product of his creative work” (p. 247). However, many examples show that criticism is much more than the by-product of a literary work as it is not easy to decide on whether the creative writing or criticism has the priority in a creative metacritical work in which they exist as co-products.

Within this context, this study focuses on the new direction in metacriticism that is labeled as “creative metacriticism” or “metafictive criticism” in which creative writers combine the writing process with theoretical criticism to blur the borders of those fields. Ravel in his book *Metacriticism* (1981) identifies “metacritics” as the scholars and critics who “engage in philosophical analysis of the problems of criticism and critical theory” via nonfictional works (p. 239). However, this study will analyze a fictional work of Salman Rushdie as a creative writer who plays the role of metacritic in his work to express his approaches to literary theory and literary criticism. The creative metacritics make their comments on literary theory through their fiction directly or indirectly, using some narrative strategies, mostly postmodern ones. The “desire to assert their interpretive authority in their own fiction is both an intellectual and artistic objective and an expression of their pleasure in writing and interpretation” (Al-Shara, 2009, p. 126). Speculating on literary criticism in general, and a critical work in particular, creative metacritics use metafictional techniques in their fiction to critique existing theories and to present their own arguments about literature and criticism. Thus, their fictional works can be perceived as criticism of criticism in which they are able to question literary theories.

In this sense, Salman Rushdie, who combines two worlds of creativity and criticism, is a “creative metacritic” in view of his metafictional story “Yorick” in his short story collection *East, West* (1994). Being the first story in “West” part, Rushdie employs a different point of view in “Yorick” towards Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* by putting the dead jester Yorick of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* into the center of the story. The story “is built as a double voiced text in which various texts or writing practices are examined from the perspective of their influence and the possibility of their renewal through destruction” (Nogueira, 2002, p. 150). Rushdie writes alternative explanations of Hamlet’s story presenting the deeds of Hamlet and using overt and covert references to some of the criticisms of the play. That’s why; Rushdie’s “Yorick” in which “Shakespeare’s main themes— revenge, madness, and suicide—are rewritten” (Guerrero-Strachan and Hidalgo, 2008, p.

78) goes beyond the limits of metafiction and steps into the realm of creative metacriticism. Within this context, this study will analyze how creative metacriticism operates in this story and it will explain Rushdie's literary concern while using this technique.

Creative Metacriticism in *Yorick*

In the beginning of the story, the narrator explains that the origin of this story has been found, "Thank the heavens!", on a material known as "strong vellum" (*EW*, 63). As "the tale of a piece of vellum, -both the tale of the vellum itself and the tale inscribed thereupon" (*EW*, 64), it aims to illuminate many dark points in the story of Hamlet. Being "a velluminous history," the story has been preserved by the family of Yorick and it brings a new perspective to "the *Hamlet* of William Shakespeare" (*EW*, 64). The metaphor of *vellum* (or parchment) signifying the "ways in which the subject is written and overwritten through multiple and contradictory discourses" (Davies, 2000, p. 138) invites the reader to think about the earlier critical readings of Yorick, the character. Reviving the originality of a text with the metaphor of vellum, Rushdie defends the nonexistence of not only any pure text but also any single interpretation. Kapadia (2008) states "[s]uggesting that 'Yorick's saga' contains a 'velluminous history,' Rushdie punningly calls attention to the 'voluminous' scholarship devoted to the textual history of *Hamlet*, as well as to the critical discourse attendant to the play" (p. 4). In this respect, Rushdie's "deliberate usage and reinterpretation of the elements of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* together with notions from the critical tradition and metaliterary reflections" (Guerrero-Strachan and Hidalgo, 2008, p. 76) makes the short story a work of creative metacriticism. While depicting the pre-history of Shakespeare's story narrating Prince Hamlet's childhood, when he was seven, and his relation both to Yorick and other characters in those times, Rushdie has "included critical reflections, which seem to be addressed to those readers who are acquainted with the diverse interpretations of the play as well as with literary theory" (Guerrero-Strachan and Hidalgo, 2008, p. 64).

The narrator of the story explains that his present intent is "not merely to abbreviate, but, in addition, to explicate, annotate, hyphenate, palatinate&permanganate -for it's a narrative that richly rewards the scholar who is competent to apply such sensitive technologies" (*EW*, 64). In the story, both the narrator and the reader are accepted as literary scholars, in a way, who are well aware of the critical reviews of *Hamlet*. However, the point is that the mentioned "scholar" is both invited into the interpretation process and "is mocked at some points of the shorty story" (Guerrero-Strachan and Hidalgo, 2008, p. 81). The aim is mostly related to the idea of trustworthiness of both fiction and literary criticism that will be explained in detail. Giving the implications of various literary criticisms such as psychoanalytic criticism, criticisms related to social, postcolonial and readerresponse theories, Rushdie tests the validity of them within a dialogue with the reader.

In the beginning of the story, the challenging question is again "What is Hamlet's problem?" and its answer is brought back to a Freudian reading in the first place. Hamlet is pictured as a lonely child deprived of his parents' love because of their political affairs. By substituting his clown Yorick and his wife Ophelia as surrogate parents, Rushdie's Hamlet feels a certain fascination and also hatred for Ophelia and a pure hatred for Yorick. However, his detestation of Ophelia is not clearly explained as Rushdie wants to throw suspicion on the trustworthiness of the demystification of psychoanalytic criticism that dates the subject's fixations back to the childhood: "It's sure he hated Ophelia; but for what? [...] could it have been [...] her body that was not his to command? At seven, Prince Amlethus is disturbed by something in this girl, but cannot give it name. -So childish ardour turns to hate" (*EW*, 70). Instead of a single explanation, the narrator presents three motives for his hatred: "Perhaps all three: her stink; her theft of Yorick's heart, for as any fool knows the heart of a Fool is his prince's possession, for who but a Fool would surrender his heart to a prince?; and, yes, her beauty, too" (*EW*, 70). According to the narrator, "there's no need to choose" and we should "be gluttonous in our understanding and swallow this trinity whole" (*EW*, 71). Referring to psychoanalytic plot and psychoanalytic criticism (namely to creative writing and critical reading), Rushdie, as a creative metacritic, takes advantage of both literature and criticism opening literary criticism for discussion. Without placing a premium on one single interpretation, the narrator continues to weave the plot around Oedipus complex. When young Hamlet hidden behind the arras witnesses the lovemaking scene

between King Horwendillus and the Queen, he misunderstands that his father is trying to kill his mother; thus, he attempts to save her without foreseeing that he will be punished by the King for his deed and be thrashed as a result. Furthermore, the king “beats something into the prince’s hide” it is “hatred; and dark dreams of revenge” (EW, 76). This experience is also presented as the archaic cause that lies behind Hamlet’s motive to murder Polonius hiding behind the arras: “And so it may be said of him that in later life he slew himself, his child-self’s memory lurking in this place, grown hoary and Polonial in form” (EW, 75). Weaving Hamlet’s problem around an oedipal scene, Rushdie forms not only a new plot that is mostly related to psychoanalytic criticism but also criticism of it as he problematizes the earlier psychoanalytical origin of Hamlet’s problem.

In the story, “a *Plot* [in plot] is born, conceived by Urgency out of Hate” (EW, 77). Bursting out of little Prince Hamlet’s hate towards his father, this invented plot would explain who really killed the King. Making up the PLOT, Hamlet persuades Yorick that King Horwendillus and Yorick’s wife Ophelia are having an affair. His poisonous SPEECH (EW, 78), which is “a powerful device used by Hamlet to produce a false reality” in the story (Nogueira, 2002, p. 149), makes Yorick kill the King, Ophelia go mad, and Yorick to be put to death because of his uncovered crime by Claudius. With a plot that is open to psychoanalytical reading and creative metacriticism, the narrator constructs *syuzhet* around *fabula* of Hamlet’s history. Opening the way to the reader critic, the narrator wants her/him to infer Hamlet’s thoughts from what he did (EW, 76), just like it is done in psychoanalytic criticism. After Hamlet witnesses the intercourse between his parents and he is thrashed by his father as a result, the narrator states that his “vellum is silent on what Hamlet felt while locked&wealy in his room” (EW, 76), and wants the reader to infer Hamlet’s thoughts. In this manner, the narrator opens the way of criticism to the reader by which s/he could interpret the story. Within a dialogue with the reader critic, the narrator leaves her/him with abundance of interpretations. As the narrator’s vellum is silent now, he proposes to the reader: “If you desire, you may see him haunted” ([emphasis added] EW, 76). The narrator also discredits the phantom of the King that haunts Hamlet and states that maybe he is “[h]aunted by the Phantom of his crime [not of the King]” (EW, 82), which will cause his loss of reason and misbehaviors, especially towards his love Ophelia. Thus, the narrator problematizes different comments that would appear in the mind of the reader on what Hamlet feels and thinks that makes up the corpus of *Hamlet* readings. In this manner, he reflects Hamlet’s world “where uncertainties are of the essence” (Mack, 1952, p. 507) within the uncertainties in terms of the criticisms of the play.

The original cause of any action by the protagonist is problematized with regard to Hamlet’s problem. Yorick states “Hamlet, you want for nothing: yet Yorick finds you wanting” (EW, 70). Although the archaic first cause of Hamlet’s deed is stated in the vellum, the narrator, who descends from Yorick, does not mention it. In fact, the critic’s aim is traditionally to speculate on the most probable first cause of any problematic in a narration. However, the narrator of “Yorick” believes that to narrate a story –as it completely happened with a pure mimesis– will be a kind of insult to the reader or the interpreter. The narrator “would be rash to treat our Reader [...] as if he were a Fool” (EW, 72), if s/he did so. Although the reasons of Hamlet’s mistreatment of Yorick are written in vellum “listing in gruesome detail all the crimes committed by the prince against the jester’s person [...] complete with itemisations of cause, effect” (EW, 71), the narrator does not recount them, but just gives various alternative psychoanalytic implications. Thus, the narration opens the way for different interpretations and criticisms without verifying their validity, which brings to mind the reader-response theory.

Rushdie’s second metacritical approach is towards the social theories that scrutinize power relations in terms of public affairs. Depicting the scene of a fest in the court, he refers to the political issues and power relations that found the tragedy in *Hamlet* besides any familial defects giving rise to psychoanalytic interpretations. The transition from the borders of psychoanalysis to politics is defined as follows: “I have till now endeavoured to tell a delicate tale of private character, with many fine touches of psychology and much material detail; still I can no longer keep the great World from my pages, for what ended in tragedy began in Politics” (EW, 72). This statement gives the basic element that lies behind tragedy whose history goes back to public and political matters. Connecting political affairs with the theory of tragedy, Rushdie illuminates another debate on a critical subject. According to Guerrero-Strachan and Hidalgo (2008):

[A] covert reference to a critical subject lies behind the description of the banquet at Elsinore, where, after giving a detailed account of all the animals served for dinner, the narrator adds, 'Were its several dishes assembled into a single edible beast, a stranger monster would lie here than any hippogriff or ichthyocentaur!' (*EW*, 73), in a clear allusion to the beginning of Horace's *Art of Poetry*. (p. 82)

In this regard, it is possible to say that Rushdie proposes his ideas on literary theory and gives the subject matter of both art and criticism as "creation". Creating a new work of art, he changes the earlier traditional aesthetics into a renewed and different one; furthermore, he takes a different critical approach that supplies various readings coexisting like the stranger monster lying on the table.

Referring to the strategical approaches of Gertrude and Horwendillus to eliminate Fortinbras, the narrator emphasizes the significance of power discourses in the story. However, with a quick deviation, the narrator falsifies this political discourse as well and turns back to the feeling of "absence" in Hamlet: "It does not matter. I've lingered at the banquet only to explain why this Queen Gertrude, over-occupied by diplomacy, beset by several types of meat, was unable to go upstairs and wish her son goodnight" (*EW*, 73). Still, with a second deviation, this time the narrator falsifies the established psychoanalytic truths in terms of Hamlet's "lack":

[W]here is the fellow who can portray an absence? [...] a boy shewn horizontal in his cot, and subject to the tergiversations&other Frenzies characteristic of insomnia, may nevertheless be taken for a child plagued by a flea; or fevered; or surly, at being forbidden the grown-ups' table; or practicing his swimming in this textile sea; or G-knows what, for I don't. (*EW*, 74)

Proposing explanations for what is really happening in the story and in Hamlet's mind, Rushdie questions the validity of any critical approach to decipher the embedded reality. That is to say, the claim to reveal "the reality" in a fictional work with the help of literary theories is problematized by Rushdie. In this respect, he reminds the criticism of Karl Popper of psychoanalysis and Marxist theory which should not be accepted as scientific approaches to reveal reality. Popper (1974) criticizes the principle of verification of logical positivism to make a distinction between real science and metaphysics. He believes that neither Marxist social criticism nor Freudian psychoanalytic theory could be accepted as the demystifiers of reality because they are not applicable to the principle of falsification. To him, if it is not possible to falsify an argument, its validity can never be scientifically approved. In this respect, as any psychoanalytic argument cannot be falsified, namely a psychoanalytic case is open to various even contradictory interpretations, it is not possible to talk about its validity. At this point a similar approach appears in "Yorick" when the narrator's various psychoanalytic arguments about Hamlet's motives and their falsification with each other undermine the validity of any psychoanalytic reading. However, Rushdie's approach is unlikely to test psychoanalysis or label psychoanalytic criticism as non-scientific. Contrarily, Rushdie appreciates the co-existence of various arguments and multiple realities both in a literary work and criticisms of it. Thus, plying between different fictional realities and metacriticisms, he leaves the reader with an abundance of interpretations and misinterpretations with the help of his narrator. This kind of creative metacriticism "places demands on the reader, and fosters reading of a professional kind" (Al-Shara, 2009, p. 128).

Along with psychoanalytic criticism and power discourses, Rushdie's story gives a critical response to postcolonial criticism as well. In "Yorick", Rushdie covertly brings postcolonial metacriticism into question. At this point, a difference between postcolonial criticism and postcolonial metacriticism should be made. The interpretations of "Yorick" in terms of postcolonial criticism argue that this story is writing back to the western canon. For instance, Nogueira (2002) accepts the rewriting of *Hamlet* as a particular point in which "the oppressed group is allowed to remake the world through the word" (p. 141). However, according to Kapadia (2008), though the "postcolonial Shakespeare seam has been a rich vein for writers and critics [...] seeking to 'gain power' over a colonial discourse that used literature [...]" (p. 2), Rushdie's intentionally intertextual narratives "with their manifold literary and cultural references, challenge the presumed immutability of Shakespeare" (p. 3). Namely, according to Kapadia, in "Yorick", Rushdie goes

beyond a postcolonial reading with his reinterpretation of *Hamlet*. In this sense, instead of being a postcolonial criticism, the story is a parody of the postcolonial reading and a pastiche of the postcolonial text. The anticipation of the reader and the critic from a writer labelled “postcolonial” is challenged by Rushdie as he wants to “target academic readings of Shakespeare through a postcolonial lens” (Mendes, 2016, p. 86-87). Creating the narrator as a fool, he challenges the “scholar” who wants to apply established postcolonial criticisms, namely “sensitive technologies” (EW, 64) that profess authoritative rights over the text. However, doing that, he attributes superiority neither to his story nor his metacriticism; specifically, his criticism of postcolonial criticism. The “typically Rushdiean conceit of ‘hybridity,’ of a celebration of syncretism” (Ghosh-Schellhorn, 1998, p. 167) transforms into multiple criticisms and criticism of them in this sense.

While Rushdie’s “cultural mixture” and “cultural impurity” (Rushdie, 1988, p. 35) are clearly reflected in his story collection *East, West*, it turns into a critical mixture and critical impurity in “Yorick”. Guerrero-Strachan and Hidalgo (2008) state that in his *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie argues that postcolonial authors are not able to suggest a “whole sight”, a whole picture of the story; instead they “present a fragmented vision that conveys not a whole picture of reality but a picture in which all the complexity of reality may be present” (p. 83). With “Yorick”, it is apparent that he conveys a similar opinion about the necessity of a fragmented vision of literary criticism as well. As a “whole sight” is not possible in the construction process of a story, it is not possible in literary criticism, either. Therefore, both the reader of a story and the reader of any criticism on this story are liberated to choose among a variety of texts or to make a combination of all. Rushdie proposes his metafiction and metacriticism with “Yorick” in terms of the liberation of the reader to conceive all the texts as acceptable. In this respect, his manifesto appears towards the end of the story: “In this it’s true my history differs from Master CHACKPAW’s and ruins at least one great soliloquy. I offer no defence, but this: that these matters are shrouded in antiquity, and there’s no certainty in them; so let the versions of the story coexist, for there’s no need to choose” (EW, 81). Thus, instead of a “single unified historical narrative” and, in a similar way, a single unified critical narrative, Rushdie opens the way to “choice and interpretation” (Guerrero-Strachan and Hidalgo, 2008, p. 83). His text “plays reductive games with the reader, creating a literary image of folly and stimulating a response on various interpretive levels” (Nogueira, 2002, p. 143).

We infer that challenging absolute meaning and absolute criticism, Rushdie implies the possible validity of reader-response theory in literary criticism. So, as a story that should be “read as the story of the circuit involved in the reading process” (Nogueira, 2002, p. 144), “Yorick” is formed with probable responses from the reader. In the story, the narrator has a high degree of scholarly critical awareness and the reader is also accepted to have a similar critical awareness thanks to which they stand as co-performers. Asking the reader “What’s this? Interruptions already?” (EW, 65), the narrator invites the reader to participate in a critical collaboration. At this point, Rushdie shares the concern of a creative metacritic who believes that the writer’s presence in a literary text will require an engagement and collaboration with the reader. The allusions to the criticisms of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is expected to be identified by the reader, otherwise the text would not achieve its goal. The narrator congratulates those readers in the story who act successfully as co-partners: “Reader, my congratulations. Your fancy, from which all these dark suppositions have issued [...] is proved by them more fertile&convincing than my own” (EW, 78). He accepts each reader as a critic and values their comments above his own. Nevertheless, the reader critic who is given such a privileged status is mocked at some points in case s/he accepts this privilege to value her/his own interpretation above all.

Deductions from *Yorick* as an Example of Creative Metacriticism

Including Hamlet’s rewritten story with its attending criticism, Rushdie gives a significant example of creative metacriticism in “Yorick”. Then, what is his literary theory as a consequence? First of all, it should be stated that blurring the line between fiction and literary criticism, he questions the trustworthiness of both. Critics such as Kapadia and Guerrero-Strachan and Hidalgo comment on Rushdie’s writing style as being in the realm of Bhabha’s Third Space. To Guerrero-Strachan and Hidalgo (2008), Bhabha’s theorization

of a Third Space as “a product of the translation of dominant elements by the colonized subject” (p. 74) is reflected in Rushdie’s story. This Third Space could be expanded to a realm for the reader-critic who tries to find an alternative space that synthesizes fiction and criticism without taking firm critical positions. Being against the writer’s or critic’s colonizer position, Rushdie proposes the significance but not trustworthiness of the interpretations of the reader each of whom is a critic per se. Focusing on the impossibility of reality of any fictional and critical text, Rushdie problematizes the existence of truth. Rushdie (1992) relates his critical approach to the notion of ‘reality’ and ‘truth’ which are examined in terms of his being an immigrant writer, who is “at once plural and partial” (p. 15); to him, the immigrant writer mostly accepts “the provisional nature of all truths, all certainties” (p. 12). Thus, the vellum in “Yorick” is a kind of representative of multiple truths and certainties that coexist without being superior to each other. The tale inscribed upon the vellum gives another version of the story of *Hamlet* making it clear that the story has been rewritten and probably will be written over and over again manifesting different realities and various interests. Rushdie (1992) believes that reality “does not exist until it is made, and that, like any other artifact, it can be made well or badly, and that it can also, of course, be unmade” (p. 280). As “[r]eality is built on our prejudices, misconceptions and ignorance as well as on our perceptiveness and knowledge” (Rushdie, 1992, p. 25), he is skeptical about any text because a text is just a construction. Thus, the impossibility of certain reality, truth, and also knowledge as a postmodern concern appears in relation to the impossibility of absolute interpretation in literary criticism. Standing against completely self-justifying literary criticism, Rushdie sheds light on the uncertainties of criticism. Besides being a metafictional text that questions the constructed status of reality, as a creative metacritical text, the “engendering of palimpsests” (Davis, 2000, p. 83), “Yorick” examines the construction of criticism. In this sense, the focus on palimpsest strengthens the idea of multiple realities and universes in which oppositions of fiction and reality, literature and criticism interpenetrate. Exploring the relationship between fiction and criticism in terms of their relation to reality, Rushdie is against any presented objectivity. While many literary criticisms try to impose the objectivity of their scientific status, Rushdie mistrusts the objectivity of theory and criticism. In this respect, in “view of the plurality of the modes of criticism”, Rushdie agrees with some critical theorists, who “consider it absurd to identify the truth (about literature and criticism)” (Ravel, 1981, p. 240) with any mode of criticism via his narration in “Yorick”.

Using a descendent of Yorick’s child, who survives and results in “multicolored generations” (*EW*, 83), as the narrator of his story, Rushdie challenges the status of language with its relation to reality and truth. The “humble AUTHOR” (*EW*, 83) behaves in a self-mocking way and holds the status of both the narrator and the audience by means of interchanging the roles. Thus, he deconstructs what he says or implies to ruin the possibility of any fixed critical determination in the story. Like Hamlet, who is a strict cynic using language games of irony, sarcasm and puns, the narrator of “Yorick” opens the way to the ploy of language and so to criticism. Though the characters are also well aware of the strength of language, they are ensnared in its borders because an unconditional trust in language is a handicap as seen in Yorick’s full belief in Hamlet’s speech. Although Yorick is good at jesting with everybody using his puns and reminds *Tristram Shandy*’s Yorick, who has a good sense of humor, he cannot dominate language entirely, neither his descendant AUTHOR of the story. The AUTHOR’s confession at the end of the story, again a reference to Yorick’s final words in Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* bringing the novel to the end, is that “his chief weakness is for the telling of a particular species of Tale [...]. And just such a COCK-AND-BULL story is by this last confession brought quite to its conclusion” (*EW*, 83). With this confession, he not only invalidates the truth in a story but the trustworthiness of any literary criticism on it. Ghose (2010) states that “[w]hat haunts [Hamlet] is the impossibility of certain knowledge” and “[p]erhaps it is during the graveyard scene [...] that Hamlet begins to suspect that he will never discover his true self” (pp. 1014, 1015). In this sense, Rushdie’s re-writing of Yorick’s story increases his mistrust in the possibility of discovering certain knowledge about Hamlet’s true self. As a criticism of earlier criticisms of Hamlet’s problem, his motives, his thoughts, and even his unconscious, Rushdie brings into question the absolute reliability of literary criticism. While the critics search for the authentic identity of the play, Rushdie’s AUTHOR brings them into doubt. Rushdie’s deliberate references to critical texts accept them playful and significant as long as they do not claim superiority over each other. In this respect, although he gives the idea that any text’s literary survival depends

upon literary criticisms of it, he does not accept their supremacy over the text itself. As an indication, Rushdie uses an earlier criticism of the play that comments on Ophelia's rank breath discussed in the late seventeenth century as a leitmotif in his text (Guerrero-Strachan and Hidalgo, 2008, p. 81). When he applies that criticism to the description of Yorick's wife Ophelia, he neither mocks nor sublimates it; but uses it as a consequence of metacriticism. While the narrator is constructing the story in the realm of metacriticism, he makes use of earlier criticisms of the play; thus, the reader is not only reading a story but witnessing the working of literary criticism in a text.

Conclusion

Today, many works of fiction are not only for "ordinary" readers but also reader critics as intertextuality is extremely used in postmodern works. The readers are unceasingly sent to a text from another including the critical texts of literary works. As a metacritical story "Yorick" has a different function than metafiction. Besides directing the reader how to read fiction and understand fiction construction, it reflects some ideas on literary criticism and opens a new way for the readers to discover a literary work within a discussion on literary theory and criticism.

In "Yorick", Rushdie associates the seventeenth-century *Hamlet* to its following criticisms that give him the opportunity to reflect his understanding of literary criticism in general. First of all, the idea Rushdie gives to the reader is that a literary work is as much valuable as it opens the way for the readers to question a text within its sub-texts. To decipher the writer's intention, to resolve the reasons behind her/his motive to create a certain character or event, to arrive at an ultimate interpretation about the characters and their motives are of secondary importance. In "Yorick", Rushdie as a creative metacritic cross-questions whether the author or the critic has the authority to attribute an absolute meaning to a fictional work and he suggests with his story that neither of them has the full authority. Instead, a brain storm occurring with the attendance of the writer, the critic, and the reader, even the earlier and future readers of the text is in question. Furthermore, the attendance of the readers into the process of interpretation makes them critics in this sense. Rushdie accepts each reader as a critic making a comment on a certain text and depicts her/his significant role in interpretation and criticism.

At that point, the question of reliability of literary criticism comes in sight. Thus, he problematizes not only the authority of the writer but also of the reader critic. In "Yorick", the narrator's consistent self-edition challenges the idea of the completeness and reliability of criticism and the final world. This notion that could be named "critic's fallibility" problematizes the universal consent of existing theories or criticisms and problematizes the applicability of them all to each text. Rushdie, making critic's fallibility a current issue in the story, problematizes the objectivity of any theory's validity such as psychoanalysis or social theories. In this respect, using irony, he makes the reader question the established theories and criticisms. The vellum which "is not wholly to be relied upon in this regard" (*EW*, 68) is a representative of unreliability of any text. Rushdie argues "[s]ome things may never be known" (*EW*, 68) although self reliant criticism argues it may be.

However, when he problematizes the objectivity of literary criticism, he does not propose to make it removed totally. On the contrary, he reflects the significance of literary criticism and critical texts in providing an intertextual understanding, and he proposes to accept the world of criticism as an increasing resource. Thinking on a literary work within its critical texts makes the process much more performative. In this sense, he uses "critical eclecticism" that David Lodge finds significant in literary criticism because critical methods should not be accepted as competing with each other but instead as complementing each other. At that point, the involvement of the writer, the critic and the reader in a literary text will result in a creative intellectual performance. In this respect, although literary criticism is not scientific, it is definitely a creative act. Thus, contrary to Hamlet's speech on mortality with Yorick's skull in his hand in Act 5, Scene 1, Rushdie's "Yorick" signifies immortality of literature that could be obtained via never ending criticisms of the play.

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