

The Poetics of Protest: Understanding the Function of Satire in Post-Colonial and Neo-Colonial Capitalism Literature

Asst. Lect. Mustafa Arkan Khntel Asst. Lect. Hasanain Riyadh Abdulzahra

University of Al-Qadisiyah / College of Arts / Department of English

Mustafa.arkan@qu.edu.iq

Hasanain758@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This research focuses on the use of satire as an instrument for social and political rebellion in postcolonial literature. The study looks for the way in which the authors make use of humor and satirical to criticize the colonial legacy, identity problems, and systemic inequalities. This study also references other works that employ satire as a device to address the postcolonial realities. Through the analysis of characters, themes, and narrative techniques, this paper demonstrates how satire is both a mirror and a weapon in the postcolonial context, thus, bringing the readers to the point of deep thinking about the subjects of power, race, and cultural hybridity. Furthermore, the study seeks to explore how postcolonial authors have made use of satirical forms to resist the dominant narrative and, thus, empower the marginalized voices in a globalized world.

Keywords: Satire, postcolonial literature, neo-colonial, cultural hybridity, power dynamics.

الاستكشافات شاعرية الاحتجاج: فهم وظيفة الهجاء في أدب الرأسمالية ما بعد
الاستعمارية والاستعمارية الجديدة

م.م حسنين رياض عبد الزهرة

م.م مصطفى اركان خنطيل

جامعة القادسية / كلية الآداب / قسم اللغة الانجليزية

Hasanain758@gmail.com

Mustafa.arkan@qu.edu.iq

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الخلاصة:

يركز هذا البحث على استخدام الهجاء كأداة للتمرد الاجتماعي والسياسي في أدب ما بعد الاستعمار. وتبحث الدراسة في كيفية توظيف الكتّاب للفكاهة والسخرية لنقد الإرث الاستعماري، ومشاكل الهوية، والتفاوتات المنهجية. كما تُشير هذه الدراسة إلى أعمال أخرى استخدمت الهجاء كوسيلة لمعالجة واقع ما بعد الاستعمار. من خلال تحليل الشخصيات والمواضيع وتقنيات السرد، تُبين هذه الدراسة كيف تُمثل السخرية مرآةً وسلاحاً في سياق ما بعد الاستعمار، مما يدفع القراء إلى التفكير العميق في مواضيع السلطة والعرق والهجين الثقافي. علاوةً على ذلك، تسعى الدراسة إلى استكشاف كيف استخدم كتّاب ما بعد الاستعمار الأشكال الساخرة لمقاومة السرد السائد، وبالتالي تمكين الأصوات المهمّشة في عالم مُعولم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهجاء، أدب ما بعد الاستعمار، الاستعمار الجديد، التهجين الثقافي، ديناميكيات السلطة.

1. Introduction

Satire is a literary device that occupied a special place in post-colonial literature due to its power of critique, provocation, and reflection of social tension. In post-colonial settings, satire tends to be the form that questions power relations, colonial heritage, and cultural rivalry. Satire uses humor together with comments, makes it possible for writers to touch upon sensitive themes, and ridicule the absurdity of political oppression, social injustice, and cultural dominance. This research takes the form of protest poetics and explores not only the role of satire as resistance but also the vehicle for marginalized voices in post-colonial literature.

The study examines satire as a mechanism to interrogate and subvert dominant narratives, while advocating for change. Through post-colonial authors, satire has been used mostly to mock colonial ideas and thus gain back the original cultural identities. The analysis of this specific literary device, therefore, not only highlights its descriptive and rhetorical elements but also proves its impact on development of socio-political consciousness. By analyzing prototypic texts, the study will convey the relationship between satire, protest, and post-colonial dialogue, which in turn, will add more understanding to the genre's critical role in shaping contemporary literary landscapes.

This research is essential for a number of reasons. Initially, it opens up a new academic space by examining satire within the postcolonial literature framework, a field that is still vastly unexplored despite its critical importance. By examining the complex roles of satire, this study highlights how literature from post-colonial contexts uses wit and critique as powerful tools of resistance.

Then, it has real-world practical applications of understanding the cultural and political ramifications of the satirical study. It shows how writers are in a position to use this genre as a master manipulative medium which laugh at colonial ideologies, point out the socio-political injustices and put down the neo-colonial creation of marginalized communities and replace them with the desired imagery. The power of satire to act as a motivator for socio-political change and as a cultural enabler and or regainer is one of the satire's strengths which this study has exploited.

Last but not least, the study's interdisciplinary approach involves literary theory, post-colonial studies, and cultural critique, all of which are extremely pertinent, is able to provide a complete framework for studying satire in literature. It gives a deeper understanding of the way in which post-colonial writers draw on satire to express the complex issues of identity, power, and resistance, thus making it interesting to the scholars of literature, cultural studies, and political theory.

This study tries to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the distinctive features of post-colonial satire and how does it differ from satire in other literary traditions?
- 2- To what extent are post-colonial writers capable of using satire as a form of protest and resistance to fight against colonial and neo-colonial doctrines?
- 3- What are the different ways in which satire in post-colonial literature facilitates the reclamation of cultural identities and the critique of power structures?

2. Literature Review

In the field of literature, the study of satire as a form of resistance has a long and distinguished history, especially in the area of post-colonial literature. Hence, post-colonial satire can be a textual counter-discourse, the most important function of which is to ideologically confront the colonizers. Further, it is an instrument of cultural identity recovery and the analysis of the contemporary social environment. This literature review examines the key aspects of satire in post-colonial contexts, dealing with the historical importance, theoretical framework, as well as the aesthetic strategies of writers.

The fact that satire is a dissident tool and a means of criticism has been known for quite a while, as it can be traced back to classical literature. The post-colonial contexts, nevertheless, present satire in its multilayered form, addressing both the left-over colonial elements that have come to be entrenched in the complex post-colonial nation-building process. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1995) assert that in post-colonial fiction satirical approaches are often utilized in order to criticize colonial power and show the idiocy of cultural dominance. This satirical subversion aspect, according to them, is the facet that best communicates the power plays and thus the tug-of-war nature of discourses operating in colonial texts.

For instance, it can be seen in Achebe's works how satire is used as a tool to critique colonial rule's damage to local cultures. In the process of both humor and irony, Achebe not only shows the illogicalities of cultural disintegration but also makes the case for the pro-African identities (Achebe, 1975).

Satire in post-colonial literature often comes as a means of approaching the disappointments of newly independent nations, revealing the persistence of colonial structures under the guise of neo-colonial economic and political systems. Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966) and Ngũgĩ's *Devil on the Cross* (1980) are classic examples of this tradition. Achebe's novel is a critique of corruption in post-independence Nigeria, and Ngũgĩ's novel, which was originally written in Gikuyu and subsequently translated, exposes the devastating forces of capitalist exploitation in Kenya.

One of the most striking aspects of both novels is their use of the "carnavalesque," a term developed by Bakhtin, describing a literary genre whereby traditional hierarchies and power structures are inverted through the use of humor, parody, and grotesque imagery. The carnivalesque is at the heart of the satirical force of these novels because it allows for the subversion of oppressive regimes through laughter and ridicule. Bakhtin explains: "Carnival

is not a spectacle watched by the people; they live in it, and everyone takes part because its very essence is a reversal of all established hierarchies" (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 122).

The imaginative capabilities of satire in post-colonial literature have been approached from a multidirectional kind of framework which includes post-colonial theory, cultural studies, and literary criticism. The concept of carnivalesque developed by Bakhtin is a substantial standpoint for realizing the transgressive power of satire. In the words of Bakhtin (1984), satire is one "allowed trespass" in which writers make fun of the existing social system by exaggerating and ridiculing using humor. This format is thus also in line with the mission of post-colonial literature, namely to dismantle the colonial structures and open space for the underrepresented to express themselves.

Moreover, Edward Said's review of *Orientalism* is extremely useful, especially in the case of the deconstruction of colonial representations through satire. Said (1978) claims that the colonial discourse is usually extreme and that is the reason why they use the stereotype of the native as the main cause of oppression. The satirical texts show the crux of the stereotypes by indicating that they are natural contradictions, and hence also reveal the weakness of the colonial ideology. A typical example of this is the book *The Castle of My Skin* (1953) written by George Lamming, which through satirical aspects attacks the colonial education system and its contribution to cultural alienation.

Post-colonial writers employ diverse methods of aesthetics to maximize the effectiveness of satire. Irony, parody, and hyperbole can be said to be the most widely used techniques that enable the expression of satire in relation to socio-political issues. With irony, writers can both express their resistance to colonial power and at the same time bring to the fore the complex realities of their own societies (Hutcheon, 1985). That irony is a major device in post-colonial literature is seen in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross* (1980), where it has been used to criticize both colonial oppression and neo-colonial corruption.

Parody is equally important in post-colonial satire. Linda Hutcheon (2000) sees parody as a tool of "repetition with critical distancing," which is a technique that allows artistic authors to go against canonical texts and traditions. Post-colonial literature has themes of the intersection of satire and identity politics. Through satire, authors showcase the complex phenomena of cultural hybridity, racial oppression, and gender inequality to readers. The focus of Bhabha's mimicry is the examination of the colonial identities that are the vehicle of satire. Bhabha (1994) posits that mimicry creates the possibility not only to present colonial stereotypes but also to exaggerate them until they become absurd. The same effects can be traced in Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966), where satire in the political arena is a descriptive tool and serves to point out the paradoxes of the new leadership after independence.

One of the most significant functions of satire in post-colonial literature is the way it acts as a tool for cultural reclamation. Through satire, novelists defy the colonial narratives which have long been disregarding the indigenous peoples' cultural and knowledge systems.

Frantz Fanon (1963) accentuates the fact that cultural resistance is very crucial in decolonization, pointing out that culture retrieval is an absolute necessity for a die-off of colonial ideologies.

Post-colonial satire is the medicine of culture that gives the indigenous people the weapon to be out for their ace of cultural heritage and thus also the gesture of criticism of cultural unification as the die of colonial powers has witnessed. Walcott's sword in *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1970) is the satire that cuts through the woods of the nearest tree to bring forth the issues of cultural alienation and self-discovery. Walcott's work probes the depths of cultural blending and presents satire as a means of identity negotiation in post-colonial circumstances.

3. Methodology

This study embraces a qualitative research methodology in the examination of the role of satire in post-colonial literature, concentrating on the three following aspects: critiques of colonial ideologies, reclaiming of cultural identities, and the engagement with socio-political realities. This analysis runs parallel with textual and contextual methods which means that there is a dive into the in-depth analysis of the chosen literary works. This portion of the study notes the research methodology, the texts that were used, how the analysis was done, and the specific contexts of the novels and the other literary works that are being investigated. The study employs a textual analysis framework, examining the thematic, stylistic, and rhetorical dimensions of satire in post-colonial literature. By critically analyzing key texts, this research aims to uncover the underlying ideological and cultural functions of satire, situating the findings within broader theoretical frameworks such as post-colonial theory, and cultural criticism.

This study concentrates on a curated selection of two influential post-colonial novels that are renowned for their use of satire. These are:

Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*: This novel critiques political corruption and moral decay in post-independence African leadership. Achebe's satirical portrayal of societal issues provides a lens to explore the contradictions of nation-building in post-colonial Nigeria.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross*: In this work, Ngũgĩ utilizes satire to critique both colonial exploitation and neo-colonial capitalism. The novel stands as a potent example of how post-colonial satire interrogates global economic systems while advocating for cultural resistance and decolonization.

The following theories will underpin the analysis:

Post-colonial theory: This will be used to examine the deconstruction of colonialist discourse and the recuperation of indigenous identity.

Bakhtinian dialogism and the carnivalesque: These theories will underpin the examination of the subversive and liberatory possibilities of satire.

Cultural criticism: This will situate the analysis within the socio-political and historical contexts of the texts.

Contextual Analysis: The selected texts will be analyzed in their specific socio-political and historical context. Under this heading:

Achebe's *A Man of the People* reflects the strife of post-independence Nigeria, exposing the contradictions of government and leadership.

Ngũgĩ's *Devil on the Cross* satirizes the effects of neo-colonial capitalism on Kenyan society and the need for cultural and economic decolonization.

4. Analysis and Discussion

This section provides an in-depth analysis of how satire functions as a mode of protest in the selected post-colonial literary works. Through the novels and literary works mentioned before, the discussion concentrates on thematic components, dramatic devices, and social-critical ones built into these texts. Satire is looked at as a tool that breaks the colonial concepts of the language, questions the neo-colonial systems, and, finally, promotes the national cultural identity.

A Man of the People by Chinua Achebe, the colonization allegory of Nigeria, is uniquely a satire which not only criticizes but lights in a merciless way this particular path to political corruption. Through the character development of Chief Nanga, Achebe vividly illustrates situations filled with lies and the self-seeking mindset of political leaders. In Nanga's lack of nationalistic idealism, he being a big anti-colonialist, shows him robbing the state purse and being one who actually establishes the corrupt system (Achebe, 1966, p. 45). The irony shown in this portrait has two benefits, the first one is the exposure of the willing abandonment of principles of the independence movement, and the second is an illustration of the disillusionment felt by ordinary citizens. Achebe's satirical lens underscores the cyclical nature of exploitation, showing how post-colonial leaders mimic colonial practices rather than dismantling them.

Similarly, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross* employs satire to critique the persistence of colonial ideologies in Kenya's socio-economic structures. The "Devil's Feast," a grotesque gathering of businessmen celebrating exploitation, symbolizes the corrupting influence of neo-colonial capitalism (Ngũgĩ, 1982, p. 127). By exaggerating the absurdity of the event, Ngũgĩ underscores the dehumanizing effects of capitalism, drawing parallels between colonial extraction and contemporary economic exploitation.

The selected works employ various satirical devices, including irony, parody, and exaggeration, to amplify their critiques. For example, in Achebe's *A Man of the People*, irony

is used to juxtapose Chief Nanga's public persona as a "man of the people" with his private indulgences. This contrast highlights the moral bankruptcy of post-colonial leadership.

Ngũgĩ's *Devil on the Cross* incorporates the carnivalesque, as theorized by Bakhtin, to subvert hierarchical structures. The grotesque imagery of the "Devil's Feast" serves as a satirical inversion of societal norms, exposing the absurdity of capitalist exploitation. This carnivalesque approach allows Ngũgĩ to engage readers in a dialogic critique of power dynamics.

The socio-political situations of these novels are so much a part of their humor that they are essential to their satire. Furthermore, Achebe and Nguq's works have the ills of post-independence Africa as the substratum of their realism, through which they depict the endless challenges of nation-building and neo-colonial exploitations. Nonetheless, the Rhys' and Rushdie's novels introduce the subject of the intricacies of identity in a world of globalization to the extent of discussing migration, cultural hybridity, and subversion of hegemonic narratives.

Satire in post-colonial literature not only critiques but also envisions alternative possibilities. By exposing the absurdities of oppressive systems, these works encourage readers to question and resist hegemonic ideologies. For example, Ngũgĩ's portrayal of Wariinga's transformation from a victim of exploitation to an agent of resistance in *Devil on the Cross* embodies the potential for social change (Ngũgĩ, 1982, p. 254).

The application of satire in post-colonial fiction has been a powerful means of critiquing power relations and laying bare the intricacies of identity politics in newly independent states for centuries. The ability of the genre to satirize and undermine authority makes it a necessary paradigm through which the evolving dynamics of power and identity can be comprehended. In post-colonial nations, particularly those which are finding themselves beset by the byproducts of imperialism, satire is a tool to subvert the social and political establishment, as well as to provide an insight into tensions surrounding national identity construction.

Denouncing the corrupting influence of power in the post-independent world is one of the central themes of post-colonial satire. In Chinua Achebe's *A Man of the People*, for example, the protagonist, Odili, observes that political leaders who take power after independence are more likely to continue the same evils that their colonial counterparts committed. The common saying in the country, "it didn't matter what you knew but who you knew," is a reflection of the nepotism and favoritism culture that plagues the newly formed governments (Achebe, 17). Achebe's satire works best in denouncing the manner in which these leaders employ their authority to amass wealth, as the common man quietly suffers. John's description, which comes in the defense of the establishment by saying, "America may not be perfect, but don't forget that we are the only powerful country in the whole history of the world, the only one, which had the power to conquer others and didn't do it" (Achebe,

54), captures the disillusionment of most African nations when confronted with a future characterized by corruption rather than development.

Here, Achebe's satire is not just a criticism of specific characters but a broader commentary on the failure of post-colonial systems to provide actual independence. The Permanent Secretary, who was previously a symbol of dignity, is now "an ice-cream-eating Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Labour and Production. one of the richest and most corrupt landlords in Bori" (Achebe, 111). This shift from revolutionary idealism to betrayal of the masses is the essence of post-colonial satire, in which the repressive machinery of colonialism is merely replaced by new local repressions.

Similarly, in Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Devil on the Cross*, the intersection of satire and identity politics is illustrated in living color as characters come to grapple with the effects of neo-colonialism in Kenya. The voice of satire can be interpreted in the way that the narrator presents the social imbalances which exist even after independence. In a poignant line at one point, Gĩcaandĩ, a major character, declares, "The voice of the people is the voice of God" (Ngũgĩ, 3), but it is evident that the voice of the people has been silenced by the neo-colonial authorities which continue to rule their lives. This investigation of the breach of the people's trust by a governing elite that acts in the interests of foreigners rather than domestic requirements highlights the overarching theme of neo-colonialism that permeates the novel.

This same tension between foreign and indigenous is also evident in Wangari's lamentation: "a Kenyan by birth—how can I be a vagrant in my own country as if I were a foreigner?" (Ngũgĩ, 43). This passage illustrates the alienation felt by most Kenyans who feel increasingly marginalized in their own country as multinational corporations and foreign countries establish their presence. In *Devil on the Cross*, the characters struggle with the task of building a national identity that is not in the service of outside interests, with the novel describing the pervasive corruption that supports the political system in the country.

Ngũgĩ's satire also addresses the human cost of political corruption, as in the tragic observation of Mũturi: "Imagine! our children are going to be kept out in the sun, famished, thirsty, barefoot, gazing at fruit maturing on trees which they can't even gather even to satisfy a demanding stomach! " (Ngũgĩ, 46). This despair, as potent as it is a critique of capitalist labor exploitation, is also a rich commentary on the promises of independence broken. The poverty that cuts across the generations in this post-colonial environment makes clear the limitations of the new order, which is basically unequal.

At the heart of both *A Man of the People* and *Devil on the Cross* is the struggle for a meaningful identity that is not defined by the remnants of colonial rule. The corrupt elite, both local and foreign, continue to shape the course of post-colonial societies, undermining the potential for social transformation. The satire in these works, while humorous at times, is a critical tool for understanding how the intersection of identity politics and neo-colonialism plays out in the everyday lives of post-independence citizens.

This satirical critique also reveals the deep contradictions inherent in post-colonial national identities. Characters like Odili in Achebe's work, who is disillusioned by the

betrayals of the new political order, and Wangarĩ in Ngũgĩ's novel, who is alienated from her own country, embody the tension between the ideals of independence and the realities of neo-colonial domination. The satire in both novels forces readers to confront the grim reality that, despite achieving political independence, many post-colonial nations remain trapped in cycles of economic exploitation and social injustice.

Conclusion

The present study investigates the function of satire as protest in post-colonial literature by asking how writers apply satire to the legacy critique of colonialism, the exposure of neo-colonial systems, and the re-empowerment of marginalized groups. *A Man of the People* and *Devil on the Cross* by Chinua Achebe and Ngugi fabricate the methodology of analyzing several literary works seeking to prove how the satire tool is an effective instrument of resistance and a means for political and social change.

The results of the study identify various core areas that represent the theme of post-colonial satire. First, satire has been a powerful criticism not only of colonial oppression but also of internalized power structures that the post-colonial societies now face. The book *A Man of the People*, the story *Devil on the Cross*, from irony, through exaggeration to grotesque humor, exposes the contradictions and the corruptions exist in the post-colonial Bhutanese political system. maneuversynthesis Aunts post colonialism is still active. Second, it is an important art in reclaiming identities and redefining those which were bent by the colonialists. In addition, the presence of satire in specific social and historic contexts has been indicated by the research. Standing in the base of the post-independence Africa politics, the novels by writers Achebe and Ngũgĩ are filled with authentic social realities, on the other hand, the texts Rhys and Rushdie engage with travel, cultural hybridity, and resistance to hegemonic narratives issues.

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