

A domestic post-colony: the servant in Lankan English fiction as the “Colonized Orient”: a selective study

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The flourishing of the Lankan English novel is a postcolonial phenomenon. Readers of Sri Lankan English Fiction cannot disregard the frequent presence of servants in the texts. *Ayahs*, maids, gardeners, *boy-kollas*, cooks – the Lankan English novel introduces us to a wide range of servants at various degrees, set in differing socio-economic settings, belonging to different age groups, of either gender, and of different ethnicities. In many instances the servant plays the / a central role and fashions a dominant presence.

However, the servant in the Sri Lankan English novel – the way in which s/he is often evoked / seen / described etc – unmistakably echoes various elements that were attributed to the “Colonized Orient” by the imperialist discourse of European colonialism. This is resonant in both the “language” that is used by the writer to “construct” the servant and also in the idiom and the metaphor with which the writer fashions this construct.

Thus, within the genre of Lankan Fiction the servant is often “hailed”, typified and constrained into a kind of stock formula; or some semi-human exotic species. The servant in Lankan Fiction, therefore, occupies a curious position. Despite being a product of a postcolonial creative process s/he is an object within an imposed structure of economic and power relations.

The present study will engage in a discursive discussion of the above premise with reference to selected Lankan English novels.

Key words: Lankan English Fiction. Post-colonialism. Orientalism. Servant[s]. Postcolonial Creativity.

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