

HOPE: THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN AND THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET

UMUT: DURUMA GÖRE BAZEN KIZILDERİLİYİM VE MANGO SOKAĞI'NDAKİ EV

Kübra YÖRÜK

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Abstract

At the centre of contemporary American literature, isolation has an important centre in cultural, social, and individual contexts. Social and individual groupings caused by negative conditions such as racism and poverty tend to make individuals feel alone in society. This subject of loneliness frequently emerges from difficult social concerns like racism, poverty, and prejudice, all of which make underprivileged people feel incredibly alone. Dark history, factors such as exploitation and assimilation support identity loss and personal isolation. It creates an identity crisis in these communities by increasing cultural isolation. Native Americans, Indians, were subjected to massacres and assimilation techniques by whites in their own countries. On the other side, the marginalization of Latin people has caused people to enter the lens of isolation and hopelessness. The fictionalization of the experiences of individuals belonging to these societies constitutes the essence of American literature. Their marginalization has been exacerbated by racial prejudice, economic hardship, and language limitations, which has resulted in a sense of pessimism and exclusion that is eloquently captured in American literature. In *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Sharman Alexie conveys own desperate situations like loneliness, poverty and racism to the reader through fiction. Sandra Cisneros's work *The House on Mango Street* is also similar to Sharman Alexie. The economic difficulties and social discrimination experienced by the Latin culture are conveyed to the reader through stories created through fiction, which the author experiences first-hand. The purpose of this study is to show how two different characters from two different cultures and races in American society maintain their hopes and achieve their aspirations despite facing racism, poverty, and marginalization.

Keywords: Hope, Indian, Latin, Identity.

Özet

Çağdaş Amerikan edebiyatının merkezinde, izolasyon kültürel, sosyal ve bireysel bağlamlarda önemli bir merkeze sahiptir. Irkçılık ve yoksulluk gibi olumsuz koşulların neden olduğu sosyal ve bireysel gruplaşmalar, bireylerin toplumda yalnız hissetmelerine neden olma eğilimindedir. Bu yalnızlık konusu sıklıkla ırkçılık, yoksulluk ve önyargı gibi zor sosyal kaygılardan ortaya çıkar ve bunların hepsi de dezavantajlı insanların inanılmaz derecede yalnız hissetmelerine neden olur. Karanlık tarih, sömürü ve asimilasyon gibi faktörler kimlik kaybını ve kişisel izolasyonu destekler. Bu, kültürel izolasyonu artırarak bu topluluklarda bir kimlik krizi yaratır. Bu politika Yerli kimlikleri silmeyi, geleneksel olanı yok etmeyi hedef almıştır. Ayrıca yeni bir ulusal kimlik politikasını da içermektedir. Yerli Amerikalılar, Kızılderililer, kendi ülkelerinde beyazlar tarafından katliamlara ve asimilasyon tekniklerine maruz kaldılar. Öte yandan, Latin halkının marjinalleştirilmesi, insanların izolasyon ve umutsuzluk merceğine girmesine neden oldu. Bu toplumlara ait bireylerin deneyimlerinin kurgusallaştırılması, Amerikan edebiyatının özünü oluşturur. Marjinalleşmeleri, ırksal önyargı, ekonomik zorluk ve dil sınırlamaları tarafından daha da kötüleştirildi ve bu da Amerikan edebiyatında güzel bir şekilde yakalanan bir karamsarlık ve dışlanma duygusuyla sonuçlandı. Sharman Alexie, *Duruma Göre Bazen Kızılderiliyim* adlı eserinde yalnızlık, yoksulluk ve ırkçılık gibi kendi umutsuz durumlarını kurgu yoluyla okuyucuya aktarır. Sandra Cisneros'un *Mango Sokağı'ndaki Ev* adlı eseri de benzerlik gösterir. Latin kültürünün yaşadığı ekonomik zorluklar ve toplumsal ayrımcılık, yazarın bizzat deneyimlediği kurgu yoluyla yaratılan öyküler aracılığıyla okuyucuya aktarılır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Amerikan toplumunda iki farklı kültür ve ırktan gelen iki farklı karakterin ırkçılık, yoksulluk ve ötekileştirmeyle karşı karşıya kalmalarına rağmen umutlarını nasıl koruduklarını ve özlemlerine nasıl ulaştıklarını göstermektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Umut, Kızılderili, Latin, Kimlik.

Introduction

Hope is defined in the dictionary as the state of expecting something to happen and thinking that it will happen. It is the basic element that emerges for individuals to program themselves to overcome the difficulties that may be experienced in line with the next step they will take and the desire to reach the set goals. It can be said that hope is a state of estimating possibilities and feeling desire for the situation that is about to happen. It is impossible to predict what choices will lead to in every moment of life and not to experience the feeling of desire that develops in the face of these situations. There is also the opposite of this situation. Since the subject in question is predictions, feelings of sadness, disappointment and grief arise when the expected situation does not happen. It is a triggering element for the situation of binary oppositions. Hope is an emotional state targeting optimistic approaches. Positive emotions such as excitement, expectation, and joy emerge before and after the feeling of hope. The loss of life expectancy causes the feeling of hope to be lost. This gives the expression, which is the direct opposite of the feeling of hope, hopelessness, and 'despair'. This situation triggers binary oppositions. Hope creates an optimistic approach in the individual. It causes the formation of general expectations. The pessimistic feeling created by hopelessness also prevents the individual from taking action. Although the oppositions of hope and hopelessness are abstract conceptual expressions, the results that emerge reveal concrete structures.

The concept of hope emerges in various human fields. Psychology, sociology, and literature are the leading disciplines. The science of psychology makes the following statement about hope and its oppositions: Fear and despair are the two main opposites of Hope. Aristotle was the first to discover emotional opposites (Day 90).

Hope is a motivating force. It exists with its opposite concepts. Psychology targets these aspects of the concept of hope. In this field, it is expected to produce active and concrete evidence from the passive and abstract concept of hope. There is an example philosophical analysis. Being hopeful increases my disappointment about missed opportunities and colours the world in such a detailed way that disappointment is more likely (Bovens 680).

From a sociological perspective, hope is a factor that helps individuals develop faith and collective consciousness and support each other. It has created social and collective actions within society. It supports actions that arouse communities to create a future and commemorate the past. From a literary perspective, the following can be said about the author and their work:

In the works of every author, there is often a desire to immortalize aspects of their own life through writing. Some do this by reflecting reality exactly as it is, without altering even the smallest details, while others choose to veil these personal experiences under different names and settings, subtly presenting them to the reader. (Tanrıtanır and Aykaç, *Aydın Öteki Yüzü Paul Auster'in Kitaplarında Yaşanmışlıklar, Üstkurmaca Ve Kader Ötesi Tesadüfler* 7)¹

It is possible to say that literature is a reflection world where people tell about themselves and society. Terry Eagleton also has a statement on this subject:

In this sense, one can think of literature less as some inherent quality or set of qualities displayed by certain kinds of writing all the way from Beowulf to Virginia Woolf, than as a number of ways in which people relate themselves to writing. (Eagleton 8).

As a result, the idea of hope—both individually and socially—plays a significant part in literature. Hope is a human emotion and it is possible to observe its existence in the literary world, which is a human system. It is encountered in every age, from epics to today's

¹ Translations made by author.

literature. Literary characters desire to overcome the troubles they experience and expect a better future. Hope emerges in the literary world as a concrete source of power that shapes destiny. A definition that can be made for the literary world is as follows: Hope is the shaping of the expected future by the existing conditions, experiences and perception of reality (May 26).

Hope is a common theme in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* and *The House on Mango Street*. Stability in the transformation of individuals with cultural and social differences is emphasised. The purpose of this study is to uncover the light of hope in both novels.

1. *The Absolutely True Diary Of A Part-Time Indian*

Sherman Alexie Jr. was born in 1966 in Wellpinit, Spokane Indian Reservation, USA. A Native American writer, Sherman has written poems, novels, and short stories focusing on Indian's lives. In most of Alexie's stories, he powerfully and effectively portrays the resilience of Native American women in keeping their families together, as well as the complex relationships between Native American fathers and sons. (Tanritanır, The Father-Son Relation in The Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven By Sherman Alexie and in teh Red Headed Woman by Orhan Pamuk 205)² He had hydrocephalus at birth, and at six months old, he had surgery. At the age of eight, he lost his grandmother, who was his spiritual leader, and he was physically weak, so he developed a strong relationship with reading. He was successful academically and began attending an all-white school outside of his reservation. The inspiration for novel comes from the years he spent attending school with white students. He won the National Book Award for Young People's Literature. He had a scholarship to Gonzaga University in Spokane, where he studied for two years. He later graduated from Washington State University.

Junior lived a reservation, is the protagonist. He was born with hydrocephalus. Despite the doctors' pessimistic predictions, he fought and survived despite some health problems. Due to his condition, he was bullied by his peers in his community. His closest friend was a dog named Oscar, but because his family was poor. Alcoholic father shot Oscar under an apple tree. As a human, his closest human friend is Rowdy. Rowdy, who was abused by his father, is a bully to everyone at school except Junior. His sister spends her life in the basement of their house, and dreaming of writing a book. Junior, who is intelligent, has expectations for the future. Since he is already bullied in his own camp, he wants to use his potential by getting the education that white people get. He goes to Rearden High School, an all-white school. Junior begins to experience economic difficulties because the school is approximately twenty-two miles away and his father often lacks gasoline. Sometimes he hitchhikes, sometimes he walks. On the first day, he starts to have feelings for Penelope, who will be his girlfriend. Later, Roger, the toughest basketball player at school, makes a racist joke and Junior punches him despite his physical inadequacy and they become friends from that moment. The common situations he experienced with Gordy, the smartest student in his class, such as exclusion and being intelligent, made them friends. Despite the difficulties he experienced at Rearden High School, Junior had the opportunity to develop his physical abilities as well as his academic success. The protagonist has a crisis of identity and is further affected by the deaths. Junior, stuck between two different cultures, societies, family ties, and mind-sets, has overcome difficulties by clinging to the concept of hope.

² Translations made by author.

2. Hope in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*

Sherman Alexie's novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* deals with topics such as poverty, lack of belonging, loneliness, racism and poverty. Hope was a guide in addressing these issues.

Junior's life was typical of many who lived on the reservation. They were poor. They did not have access to the same education, economic opportunities, or living standards as white people. The reason for the bad things they experienced is based on their past. The Indians were brutally killed in their own camps by the Europeans who set foot in America. After the massacre, there was assimilation. Here are a few things that can be said about Indian history:

Indians who taught the first European settlers how to plant corn and hunt likely never imagined that their kindness would lead to genocides and cultural extinction that would destroy their own communities. For Indian tribes, who have become enslaved on their own lands, living on this continent has now become increasingly difficult. (Tanrıtanır and Yağıznel, *The Lives Of Assimilated Native Americans In The Works Of Louise Erdrich's The Bingo Palace, The Painted Drum And Sherman Alexie's The Lone Ranger And Tonto Fitfight In Heaven* 23).³

He was the child of an alcoholic father. Despite having a smart sister, she confined herself to the basement after finishing high school. Going to university is not something commonly associated with Indians. His family was not given a chance because they were poor. The situation was not much different for Junior. He thought poverty had taken the hope out of his life and he would either give up hope in his life like the others on the reservation and live a poor life and condemn his own children to such a life or there would be a breaking point. The hardest part of poverty for Junior was that when his dog got sick he could not take it to the vet and had to let his father shoot it with a rifle. Junior knew his mother was going to tell him the truth because she gave him a serious look and her eyes were no longer gloomy. "I'm sorry, but we don't have any money for Oscar." "I'll pay you back," I said. "I promise." "Honey, it'll cost hundreds of dollars, maybe a thousand. (Alexie 17).

He lost his best friend due to poverty. Despite this great devastation, Junior believed that circumstances could change. He first got this idea when he entered high school from his geometry teacher, Mr. P, to whom he had thrown a book. The decision to study with white people and to develop his potential came about in this way. For thirty years, the same geometry textbooks were repeatedly circulated to students, and encountering his mother's book became a reason for resistance against the poverty he was living in, rather than losing his hope. At first, he tried to analyze and understand what he experienced, reacted, and reached hope. Agnes Adams is my mother. My Mother! And Adams is her maiden name. So that means my mother was born an Adams and she was still an Adams when she wrote her name in that book (Alexie 35). Although leaving the reservation and interacting with new people caused him difficulties in both areas, his decision to go to Reardan High School was a hope for a bright future. Once he gained that hope, he knew he shouldn't give it up.

Arnold Spirit Jr. faced significant identity struggles due to the racism he encountered. Being born with hydrocephalus and experiencing physical difficulties, being excluded from society and experiencing peer bullying were seriously discouraging issues. Because of his physical appearance, he is exposed to nicknames with various bullying messages. Beyond physical appearance, there is a war waged against one's origins. Racial barriers begin with the limited free health care provided by the government on the reservation and continue even among his people where he lives. I went to Indian Health Service to get some teeth pulled so I could eat

³ Translations made by author.

normally, not like some slobbering vulture. But the Indian Health Service funded major dental work only once a year, so I had to have all ten extra teeth pulled in one day (Alexie 11).

According to these lines, American society clearly allows its own local people to live within its own boundaries within limited means and grants them limited rights to live. Despite facing racist attitudes due to his congenital illness, Arnold Spirit Jr. did not lose his drive to fight for a better life and maintain his expectations from life. Being the only Indian in an environment with white people, he showed courage and developed hope for receiving a good education. Junior wanted to walk towards hope because everyone knew that the concept of hope was in the white person.

Junior begins to receive the same education as white students. He is excluded and approached with suspicion by his classmates. His teachers do not take him seriously and speak to him mockingly. Despite all the bullying he experienced, Junior improved himself physically as well as academically. He became one of the most important players on the school basketball team. The chain of racism that whites live in is broken by the close friendships he has with Roger, the most popular kid in school, Gordy, the smartest, and Penelope, the most beautiful girl, and their respect for Junior. It is possible to say that for the small segment living within a multicultural environment, the life they want to live is a matter of choice. They try to construct their identities to either adapt to society or pursue their free will. In any case, they are forced to make choices. Their choices determine their place in life. (Kara and Tanritanir 52) Even for his closest friend Rowdy, the decision to attend school with white people was seen as a betrayal. The Indians had internalized their own race and the potential for exclusion. Junior's pursuit of a better education caused him to be labelled as arrogant or a traitor: They didn't beat me up too bad. I could tell they didn't want to put me in the hospital or anything. Mostly they just wanted to remind me that I was a traitor. And they wanted to steal my candy and the money. (Alexie 77). Junior, who said that he had never been subjected to violence by his family, and his refusal to go to the reservation education despite not being subjected to violence by his best friend before, caused him to be subjected to violence by his best friend: "I touched his shoulder. Why did I touch his shoulder? I don't know. I was stupid. Rowdy spun around and shoved me. Don't touch me, you retarded fag! he yelled. My heart broke into fourteen pieces, one for each year that Rowdy and I had been best friends. (Alexie 53). Even this behaviour of his closest friend is a potential for racism. According to one study; The lack of social sensitivity and the development of empathy and respect are related to children learning their behaviour from adults and organizing their future social relationships with the attitudes they model. (Philips 89). Junior knew he had to overcome both physical and psychological violence because his hope was being challenged. He was determined to pursue hope: They were filled with hope. I don't know if hope is white. But I do know that hope for me is like some mythical creature: Man, I was scared of those Reardan kids, and maybe I was scared of hope, too (...) (Alexie 52). Junior experienced an identity crisis with the whites by carrying the identity of an Indian, and also experienced the same crises due to accusations of treason in his own region as an Indian. He did not feel like he belonged in any area he lived in. The things he knew, or was told, were these; You kept your hope. And now, you have to take your hope and go somewhere where other people have hope (Alexie 46). He experiences the feeling of not belonging to any race or community. As his geometry teacher once said, taking his hope and leaving created contradictions in his life. He felt like a stranger. The devastation caused by alienation and the sense of not belonging has found a new mold through Junior's achievements. Junior symbolizes a new mutation that emerges within a broken system, rotten societies, and worn-out mentalities. The name of that mutation is 'hope', which was believed to be found only in white people. It was the reason for the life of an individual born with an Indian disease.

Sherman Alexie added a note section to his book. He added his life story. His own words about the alienation he experienced are as follows: You could belong to the same tribe, and live on the same reservation only fifteen miles apart, and be the same age, but you could still be strangers to each other (Alexie 219). It can be said that Sherman Alexie portrays the times when Junior searches for hope and finds it to the reader. The survival instinct depicted in J.G. Ballard's *Drowned World* can also be observed in this book, and even the real world, it can be expressed through these words: People who have lost hope, in order to reach hope, leave their lands and aim to reach water by preferring the element of survival (Tanritanır and Karaman, *Ecology Dystopia And Fictionalization* 99) In other words, he shared his own hope. The novel contains the belief that racism, poverty, and lack of belonging will bring hope at some point.

3. **The House On Mango Street**

In 1954, Sandra Cisneros was born in Chicago. She has seven siblings. She studied at Loyola University of Chicago and the University of Iowa. She teaches creative writing at all levels and with every age group except preschool and first-grade students. She is a visiting writer at many universities, including the University of California. Her first book, *The House on Mango Street*, won the Columbus Foundation's American Book Award in 1985.

The House on Mango Street is a novel that brings together a series of sequential stories. The book tells the life of Esperanza, a Mexican-American, Latina girl. Despite being her family's first residence, Esperanza had different expectations for the house. She does not like the house. It is a house in a poor neighbourhood. They spend time in the neighbourhood with Lucy, Rachel and her sister Nenny. While they feel like they grew up in the neighbourhood by wearing high heels during their adolescence, they take off those high heels after being kissed by an old man, never to wear them again. The girls start to make friends with Sally, who is older than them. Esperanza is not happy with the idea that men are an escape route to escape from her father's abuse and violence. The traumatic things Esperanza experiences in her neighbourhood make her want to leave that neighbourhood even more. She wants to have her own home. However, no matter how far she moves away from there, she understands deep down that she will carry Mango Street and that it is better to help the women on that street instead of leaving there.

4. **Hope in *The House on Mango Street***

The House on Mango Street proves that hope is the most powerful and lasting motivation factor for people. Hope plays a certain role in giving meaning and direction to the characters' lives. In her book, Sandra Cisneros divides her own life into stories to inspire women by demonstrating that hope should not be discouraged. Through a young Latina woman's gender and identity struggle against life and communication themes, optimism is expressed.

The search for identity is at the center of this novel. In addition to low socioeconomic status, there is an identity crisis created by belonging to a different or minority community. A study on otherness in American literature states: The concept of otherness has historically represented groups that have often been excluded, marginalized, and oppressed in American society like Latina, Native American or lesbian and gay. (Marek 173). Although racial otherness causes a hopeless experience, the main character Esperanza's Spanish name means 'Hope'.

The sense of hope that Esperanza experiences cannot be based on individuality. Hope is a social collective. Her friends and the people of Mango Street, who support character development, want hope. According to Marine, she says that she can find a real job in the city centre because the best jobs are in the city centre, because you can always wear nice clothes and because you can get married and go far away in this way. Marin, like Esperanza, is an

example of escape and hope. They feel like fairy tale characters. There is joy and happiness. There is also pride in being more feminine and the joy of stepping outside of their identities. Although the tramp's harassment causes demoralization, they have a hopeful discourse: We are tired of being beautiful. (Cisneros 28).

Esperanza begins to understand how devastating marriages are for women in the people around her. The attitude towards women seems promising but then ends in suffering. For example, Rafaela's marriage is so dramatic. Her husband locked Rafael in the house because she was so beautiful. Rafaela listens to the music in the bar from afar, dreaming various dreams of freedom and hope.

The fact that female roles are figures that serve the patriarchal system against social norms plays an important role in Esperanza's character development. Like Rafaela, Marin, and Sally also experience problems in the male-dominated world and experience physical and psychological violence. While Marin dreams of marrying a rich man, she thinks that the important thing is for a woman to be liked by a man and expresses What matters, Marin says, is for the boys to see us and for us to see them (Cisneros 19).

Sally is abused. There are talks of dreams that one day things will change. Sally sometimes dreams of going far away, dreaming of a nice house and a room of her own. Esperanza witnesses the struggles these women go through. Instead of despairing, she clings to the meaning of her Spanish name. She searches for hope. She believes that her hope grows stronger as she writes. She believes that one day she will have the house she wants and that one day she will move out of that street. One day I will pack my bags of books and paper. One day I will say goodbye to Mango. I am too strong for her to keep me here forever. One day I will go away (Cisneros 71).

Despite all the difficult situations that Alicia has experienced, what she wants from life is very clear. Her expectations are clear. Experiencing the devastation of her mother's death has been a light for her to move on with her life. She is a girl who is full of expectations from life in terms of education. She is a girl who is full of life expectations and education. In fact, not only the main character named Hope is after hope, but also the desire of every character in the book to discover them, the desire to be saved and being a woman are so important for the concept of hope. For Esperanza, hope is seen as a quest to find herself and even reach the house she dreams of.

There is a belief that the characters in the novel can create social change. It is also possible to call it rebellion. The gender norms that the characters face add hope to the characters' hope. It teaches the characters the concept of self-esteem and encourages them to dream. This book has a hopeful and also, powerful depiction of strong women struggling with difficult situations such as gender roles, race, and poverty.

Conclusion

Hope is an emotional concept that can be explained with expressions such as expecting positive things from the future. It is a source of motivation for people to take action. It is a source of power for individuals to overcome difficulties. Dreams show resistance with hope and are shaped with patience. Hope is not only an individual emotional state, but also has the power and durability to create a social collective.

In *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, the concept of hope serves as a new theme that tells the two sides of the story. Junior lives a dual life on the Spokane Indian Reservation and at Reardan High School. Junior's decision to go to Reardan is a radical

decision full of hope. Getting the chance to experience life beyond the reservation can contribute to the formation of a new identity. It is an opportunity to purify the, alcoholism and violence that Indians experience in their home. On the other hand, there is the situation of facing racism and alienation. The story based on this source of hope is a reflection of real experiences. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian* is the tragicomic life of a child who takes refuge in hope despite an unfortunate past. Their intercultural interaction reveals the search for identity in two different societies. Despite the guilt of being with white people on the reservation, it becomes a motivation for hope. (Saleem, Amin and Javed 37-38)

As a result, Alexie demonstrates that hope is not merely a passive expectation but also an active emotional state that inspires and increases motivation and urge.

In *The House on Mango Street*, it is possible to see Esperanza's hope in her desire to care about others. Along with her desire to escape from Mango Street, she wants to return and help the people living there. Esperanza also reminds herself from time to time that she cannot change who she is and her past. This situation displays the collective consciousness of hope. As a result, Cisneros conveyed the hope of the character she created based on herself to the reader. Thanks to Esperanza, she proved that hope cannot be shaken by destructive actions such as poverty and racism and that hope will rise with society.

All in all, Sherman Alexie and Sandra Cisneros created the plot of their books based on their own life stories. The common point of these experiences is based on multiculturalism. The term multiculturalism means the belief that different cultures within a society should all be given importance. In this sense, it seems that this term is supportive of togetherness in terms of racial and social boundaries (Tanrıtanır and Astam, *Multiculturalism in The Analogical Novels: A Pale View of Hills and A Tale of Time Being* 31) Character developments and plot similarities are similar, even down to the branch the authors cling to in the difficulties they face. The most concrete thing seen is the concept of hope, which seems passive. Junior and Esperanza have revealed the active power of both opposing society and rising with society to shape their lives.

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