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RESEARCH ARTICLE

HOW TO COPE WITH POSTMODERN TEXTS: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF INTERTEXTUALITY, PARODY, AND PASTICHE IN READING POSTMODERN TEXTS

POSTMODERN METİNLERLE BAŞA ÇIKMAK: POSTMODERN METİNELERDE METİNLERARASILIK, PARODİ VE PASTİŞ KULLANIMININ METİNSEL ANALİZİ

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Abstract

This work explores how postmodernism has developed its own literary style reflecting the social, political, religious as well as philosophical and intellectual mood of the era. Postmodern texts have been created and recreated out of a blend of varied texts from previous periods, and they succeeded in creating a more conscious and questioning audience. Throughout the postmodern period, readers replaced authors and writerly texts replaced readerly texts. Literary texts began to be deconstructed according to the notions and theories of scholars and philosophers such as Roland Barthes, John Barth, and Jean-François Lyotard. In an attempt to succeed in producing new texts, postmodern writers established a sort of textual relationship between metanarratives and little narratives, applying intertextuality that is in a close interrelation with parody and pastiche – two complicated terms often miscible to one another. This study seeks to clarify the meaning of postmodern literary works by highlighting some postmodern literary devices such as intertextuality, parody, and pastiche in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by John Fowles, *Night Train* by Martin Amis and *The Crying Lot of 49* by Thomas Pynchon.

Keywords: Postmodern Text, Deconstruction, Little Narratives, Writerly Text, Intertextuality

Öz

Bu çalışma dönemin felsefi ve entelektüel olduğu kadar sosyal, politik ve dini atmosferini yansıtarak postmodernizmin kendi edebi üslubunu nasıl oluşturduğunu incelemeye çalışacaktır. Postmodern metinler, önceki dönem metinlerinin yeniden üretilmesi ile oluşturulmuş ve bu anlamda daha bilinçli ve hatta sorgulayıcı bir okuyucu kitlesinin ortaya çıkmasını sağlamıştır. Postmodern dönem boyunca okuyucu yazarın yerini alarak, yazar için metinler (writerly text) okur için metinlerin (readerly text) yerine geçmiştir. Ronald Barthes, John Barth ve Jean-Francis Lyotard gibi düşünür ve eleştirmenlerin düşüncelerine ve teorilerine bağlı olarak metinler bir dizi yapı bozuma uğramışlardır. Postmodern yazarlar, yeni bir metin kurgulamakta başarılı olmak için üst anlatı (metanarrative) ve küçük anlatılar (little narratives) arasında bir ilişki kurmuşlardır. Bunu metinlerarasılık tekniğini kullanarak geçmiş metinlerin ya parodisini yapmışlar ya da pastiş kullanarak- ki bu iki terim birbirleriyle karıştırılır- eski metinleri günün şartlarına uyarlamışlardır. Bu çalışma John Fowles'ın *Fransız Teğmenin Kadını*, Martin Amis'in *Gece Treni* ve Thomas Pynchon'ın *49 Numaralı Parçanın Nidası* adlı postmodern eserleri metinlerarasılık, parodi ve pastiş gibi postmodern terimleri öne çıkararak inceleyecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Postmodern Metin, Yapıbozum, Küçük Anlatı, Okuyucu Merkezli Metin, Metinlerarasılık

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Literary movements develop in dialectical and reactionary ways that establish links to their preceding periods. Postmodernism, with its complementary devices, creates ways in which new literary elements can be understood in connection with previous periods. In this way, it offers meaningful interpretations for prior works. Postmodern texts furnish the reader with binaries such as author/reader, grand narrative/little narrative, readerly text/writerly text. Therefore, postmodern texts with their deconstructive characteristics tend to be a bridge between previous literary works and the texts especially produced during and after the 1950s. The cornerstones of this bridge consist of such literary devices as intertextuality, parody, and pastiche in their ability to recreate a new meaning by referencing it to the previous text(s). The aim of this study is to contribute to the creation of meaningful interpretations of postmodern texts by providing more concrete connections between these literary devices and selected texts *French Lieutenant's Woman* by Fowles, *Night Train* by Amis, *The Crying of Lot 49* by Pynchon.

Modernism lasted for about half a century until its connection with postmodernism. It is regarded as the age of fresh ideas, complex structure and the questioning of both conscious and unconscious realities. Unlike postmodernism, modernism rejects the literary traditions of the previous Victorian era to destroy the stereotype writing style. However, the postmodern way of writing does not break ties with modernism and its preceding periods but rather unites two distinct ages by reshaping previous works through varied literary devices. The roots of postmodernism date back to the end of the World War II, initiated by the thoughts of some prominent philosophers of the age such as Roland Barthes in *The Death of Author* (1967), John Barth *in The Literature of Exhaustion* (1967), and Jacques Derrida in *Of Grammatology* (1967). Barthes (1967) claims that postmodern texts are written in an attempt to give the reader an active role to comment on the function of the text rather than the intention of the author. That is, the roles are shifted, so readers create their own interpretations of the texts. Regarding reader-based knowledge, Zafer Ayar suggests that "postmodern fiction does not enable readers to get to resolution easily and they fail to present all the necessary materials readers need to establish the meaning. This meaninglessness and incredulity towards grand narratives of previous literary periods is reflected in the postmodern writerly texts whose purpose was to invite readers to produce his/her own meaning and reality" (132). As the postmodern writer enables the reader to make their own exploration, the basic characteristic of postmodern texts, the author deconstructs the text by using varied literary devices. The reader thus takes on a more active role; as Ayar writes, "By doing so, postmodern narrative gives the reader the

opportunity to discover the meaning through an interwoven or twisted plot structure that enables the reader to go through an inquiry throughout the whole reading process" (132). This reading process lets the reader make an internal expedition that reaches the unconscious imagination. Readerly texts, in contrast, as is the case in metanarratives, "imposes a meaning on the reader and Barthes argues that readerly texts encourage passive consumption, being designed to constrain the exercise of reader's imagination" (cited in Yaghoubi 2006, 106). Postmodern writing can be considered a means of counterattack to metanarratives since it has highlighted and then developed its own particular way of writing called writerly text. Postmodern texts have also emerged as a reaction to the previous metanarratives. Bran Nicol (2009) comments on Jean-François Lyotard's description of the movement as follows: "[p]ostmodernity, Lyotard argues, prefers 'little narratives' (petit recits), those which do not attempt to present an overarching 'Truth' but offer a qualified, limited 'truth', one relative to a particular situation" (12). Postmodernity, in other words, not only enables but requires the reader to conclude or recreate the story with their own possible postures.

Postmodern intertextuality, e.g., the acknowledgement and reference of previous works, is considered to be one of the most crucial postmodern writing methods that leads readers as well as writers to create a kind of connection between the past and the present with regard to literary genres. It gives readers an opportunity to perceive the events from writers' perspective of the previous centuries and comment on them in the vernacular of the present literary era. As Hutcheon (1988) explains, "intertextuality is a formal manifestation of both a desire to close the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context" (Hutcheon 118). Intertextuality suggests the ways in which the text can be reshaped from a new perspective. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Fowles uses epigraphs taken from different writers of the 19th century to incite curiosity about the events and characters for the reader. In the following epigraph, Fowles (1969) quotes from Tennyson's Maud to help the reader to understand the situation of Sarah in the related chapter: "And once, but once, she lifted her eyes, /And suddenly, sweetly, strangely blush'd/To find they were met by my own…TENNYSON, *Maud* (1855)" (Fowles 28). In the form of anachronism, the use of analepsis or flashback evokes a travel back in time. In this way, Fowles manages to associate Victorian society with that of his own day, and he consolidates his notion through referencing each opening quotation especially from the prominent authors of the Victorian Era.

Hutcheon's (1988) further explanation about intertextuality reinforces Fowles' (1969) use of epigraphs from different writers of the previous periods. She asserts that "It is not a modernist desire to order the present through the past or to make the present look spare in contrast to the richness of the past. It is not an attempt to void or avoid history. Instead, it directly confronts the past of literature and of historiography, for it too derives from other texts (documents)" (Fowles 118). Therefore, intertextuality enables the writer to connect previous texts with present works in order to contribute to the understanding of contemporary events. In this context, Fowles in his *French Lieutenant's Woman* establishes a set of intertextual links between his own web of plot and that of Victorian writers such as Thomas Hardy, Brontë Sisters, and George Eliot, whose works particularly deal with social issues of the period such as gender, love affairs, and class division.

> Ernestina wanted a husband, wanted Charles to be that husband, wanted children; but the payment she vaguely divined she would have to make for them seemed excessive. She sometimes wondered why God permitted such a bestial version of duty to spoil such an innocent longing. Most women of her period felt the same; so did men; and it is no wonder that duty has become such a key concept in our understanding of the Victorian age- or for that matter, such a wet blanket in our own.' (13)

The quotation accentuates a stereotype of the Victorian Period in that expectations of women and men alike are peculiar to social norms and relations of Victorian society. Most of these expectations make readers aware that the social perceptions of the previous period are being narrated from Fowles' later twentieth-century point of view. Fowles deconstructs the romantic love story of the Victorian Era and transforms it into the taste of his own time, namely postmodern period.

Postmodern parody is used as a device to reinterpret formerly written texts in an ironic manner to draw attention for certain occurrences throughout the plot. As is the case in postmodern literature, several writers of the period mastered the use of parody in their works and presented events to create awareness through an entertaining way. This literary device gives the reader a chance to rethink about specific occasions more intensively from an objective perspective. The device also allows for creation of new meaning; as Hutcheon (1988) writes, "Parody is a perfect postmodern form, in some senses, for it paradoxically both incorporates and challenges that which it parodies" (Hutcheon 11). However, postmodern texts present this incorporation and challenge by diverting the traditions and

conventions of the text written beforehand, thus parody functions as a critical literary device in this case. In common with intertextuality and pastiche, parody references earlier texts; however, it differs from such devices with its ridiculous manner. So, postmodern readers realise both positive and negative aspects of the situation in question. A notable example written in the form of parody is Martin Amis' *Night Train* (1998) that not only diverts the stylistic devices of detective fiction, but it also deconstructs the traditional plot structure of formerly written conventional crime stories that are a combination of setting of the scene, interrogation and resolution respectively.

> "You saved my life. I'd do anything for you. You know that." He reached down for his briefcase. From it he removed a folder. Jennifer Rockwell. H97143. He held it out toward me, saying "Bring me something I can live with. Because I can't live with this."
>
> Now he let me look at him. The panic had left his eyes. As for what remained, well, I've seen it a thousand times. The skin is matte, containing not a watt of light. The stare goes nowhere into the world. It cannot penetrate. Seated on the other side of the desk, I was already way out of rage. (Amis 26)

The quotation suggests that the writer both re-routed the ordinary course of events of detective stories and deconstructed the plot structure. Amis believes that absurd mimicry and adaptation of detective stories need to be shifted for the reader to have a different viewpoint and realise the main point of the events through humor. The writer presents the events in a way that the deconstructed elements fit into the cases and gives the text a new meaning by transforming them into a funny tone. In the quotation above, the traditional way of writing detective stories is deconstructed, and the usual sequence is avoided. Rather than investigating the crime of Jennifer Rockwell, detective Mike Holihan analyses the attitudes of Jennifer's father and makes inferences. This unusual outgoing is the essential characteristic of parody that presents even a very serious event in a mocking way. "Parody, according to [Fredric] Jameson, has a critical edge: it challenges and subverts which it mimics" (cited in Malpas 25). The aim of parody in *Night Train* is both to criticise the attitudes towards the events and undermine the interrogation process through a fitful and inconclusive inquiry into the death of Jennifer Rockwell. The strategy Amis employs fits into the tenets typical of postmodern plot structure. He parodies traditional detective fiction by deconstructing the end of his fiction with a failed resolution contrary to the

expectations of the reader:

> On the fucking street Colonel Tom. For a year she was second-guessing her own head. Bax Denziger told me she'd started losing it on the job. And talking about death. About staring at death. And things were coming apart with Trader because she was sizing up some other guy. …
>
> I won't be here. Listen, I'm fine. I'm really good- really, Wait… That's better. I'm just upset with all this. But now it's made. And you just have to let it be, Colonel Tom. I'm sorry, sir. I'm so sorry.
>
> Mike…
>
> It's down. (71)

In the closing part of *Night Train,* Mike Holihan desperately accounts for the failed interrogation of suicide -or homicide- and he informs Colonel Tom about the death of her daughter. The ending of the novel suggests that Holihan reaches no concrete findings, and Amis does not complete his fiction in parallel with the expectations of the reader. Therefore, the expected genre is subverted; as Norman (2019) writes, "From this perspective, *Night Train* adopts and distorts the narrative conventions of the hard-boiled procedural but offsets such knowing strategies through appeals to authenticity through style" (45). This distortion of the conventional genre appeals clearly to the taste of the postmodernity, thus the adaptation of parody.

Pastiche, a literary device used in postmodern writing, is an imitation of style of a previous work, without the mocking tone of parody. The aim of this literary device is to blend previous related texts to highlight various parts of the novel. Pastiche is not considered as plagiarism since it does not copy texts wholly but uses them in a certain subverted way. As McArthur (1992) explains Pastiche as "a text consisting wholly or largely of direct borrowings from one or more other works. [...] It is different from plagiarism, which conceals borrowings in an attempt to deceive" (756). Moreover, pastiche, unlike parody, does not necessarily endeavor to make fun of other texts and tends to borrow parts in varied quantities from other texts are able to establish an intertextuality between different literary works. Nicol comments on this relationship between texts citing: "Barthes contends that literary composition is not and never has been an original activity, but a matter of the author rearranging previous literary and linguistic conventions rather than creating something completely new" (61). So such literary devices like parody and pastiche enable authors to appropriate previous texts and imitate them to some extent. In *The Crying of*

Lot 49, Pynchon uses pastiche to make the narration interrelated to other texts. Oedipa goes after the real version of *The Courtier's Tragedy* and finds a book whose "paperback is supposed to be a straight reprint of the book she now held.' Puzzled, she saw that this edition also had a footnote" (70). *The Crying Lot of 49* is a combination of pastiches of different literary genres. Pynchon designs the web of events in accordance with the fragmented structure of post-war society of the postmodern era. In order to create a multidimensional perspective in his novel, he includes such sub-genres like science-fiction, fantasy and a taste of detective fiction that refer to the fragmentation of consumer society. Nicol (2009) describes the novel as "an inversion of the Oedipus story. Where Oedipus is able to solve a riddle and discover hidden truth, Oedipa is patently unable to do either. Her quest is failure" (94). As a distorted pastiche of *Oedipus* by Sophocles, in *The Crying of Lot 49*, Pynchon chooses a role of failed mission for his main character: an inverted version of pastiche of detective fiction in which Oedipa never reaches a solid solution for the riddle about an underground organization named 'Tristero'.

> Either Oedipa in the orbiting ecstasy of a true paranoia, or a real Tristero. For there either was some Tristero beyond the appearance of the legacy America, or there was just America then it seemed the only way she could continue, and manage to be at all relevant to it, was an alien, unfurrowed, assumed full circle into some paranoia. (Pynchon 126)

Oedipa has complicated thoughts about this secret structure, yet she fails to sort out the riddle about Tristero, and she cannot come to a final decision about this structure. "Oedipa, like the classic private-eye, needs to know; she must struggle to bridge the gap between appearances and reality, she must question the reliability of every piece of information, every source" (Mchale 22). Yet, she has many questions in her mind, wondering if "she has really discovered a secret network; this discovery is simply a delusion; a vast conspiracy has been mounted to fool her thinking she has discovered a secret network; or she's imagining such a conspiracy" (Nicol 95). Accordingly, *The Crying of Lot 49* is a subverted pastiche of traditional detective fiction that normally reaches solid resolution.

To conclude, postmodernity by its very nature features several literary characteristics related to their historical, social, cultural, religious, political aspects, creating a kind of fragmentation. This fragmentation is reflected in postmodern narrative which makes it hard to understand the implicit meanings of the work. Literary devices, such as intertextuality, parody and pastiche, deconstruct the plot and subvert traditional

ways of writing to make the work difficult to comprehend. The roles have been shifted with the author giving the reader an active participation in the text to let them discover their own truths. Postmodern style also allows the reader to engage with existing knowledge in order to determine the implicit meaning of the work. This study has attempted to contribute to the ways in which postmodern readers can cope with literary devices. In this way, it has aimed to encourage the reader to interpret literary works in their own way of understanding. Postmodern works in this study such as *French Lieutenant's Woman* by Fowles, *Night Train* by Amis, *The Crying of Lot 49* by Pynchon have potential to open the door for the reader to make concrete connections between intertextual literary devices included consciously or unconsciously in texts by writers in this literary turbulent period.

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