



FROM NARRATIVE TRADITION TO POSTMODERN LITERATURE



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ABSTRACT

Products that belong to narrative tradition present in cultural structures of societies are the most important elements of social life. These elements both keep the cultural structure together and are narrative types addressing emotional sides of people. Undertaking this mission in today's modern society, novel is a continuation of this narrative tradition. Turkish society intensively used myth, tale, folktale and epic in pre-novel times and with the works produced in these types it gained an important place in world literature. In this work, we try to clarify development from narrative tradition to novel, with reference to novel to postmodern literature and the formation process of postmodern literature.

Keywords: Literature, narrative tradition, novel, postmodernism, modernism

ANLATI GELENEĞİNDEN POSTMODERN EDEBİYATA

ÖZ

Toplumların kültürel yapısında yer alan anlatı geleneğine ait ürünler sosyal yaşamın en önemli unsurlarıdır. Bu unsurlar kültürel yapıyı bir arada tutmakla birlikte, insanların duygusal yönüne hitap eden anlatı türleridir. Günümüz modern toplumunda bu misyonu yüklenmiş olan roman türü bu anlatı geleneğinin devamı niteliğindedir. Türk toplumu roman öncesi efsane, masal, halk hikâyesi ve destan türlerini yoğun olarak kullanmış ve bu türlerde verdiği örneklerle dünya edebiyatında önemli bir yer edinmiştir. Bu çalışmada anlatı geleneğinden romana, romandan hareketle postmodern edebiyata uzanan gelişimi ve postmodern edebiyatın oluşum sürecini belirginleştirmeye çalıştık.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Edebiyat, anlatı geleneği, roman, postmodernizm, modernizm.

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In Turkish society the word “novel” as of the first meaning calling to the mind in our day is used as the name given to works spoken among people and telling tales. Also called as “folk narrative” narration types, the beginning of this type is firstly based on myths.

In the occurrence of the myths, effort of people’s putting the meaningless events into a meaningful form and explaining them had an important effect. However, events’ being given the meaning over time and their occurrence reasons becoming clear cause myths to lose their up-to-dateness. Like myths another narrative type that has a “function” is epics. Having the legendary elements in it, different from myths, epics are kind of narratives including the responsibility of transferring the lessons necessary for the existence of nation to following generations. Tales are narratives that are just based on the satisfaction of curiosity feeling emerging because of folk narrative and correspond with myths in terms of having so many extraordinary elements but haveno function as the myths do. Other than these narrative types, Dede Korkut tales which are a mixture of fable-epic-tale and folk tales which are very close to modern age's tale type are works with folk narratives of Turkish literature.

We can characterize each pre-novel texts having importance in Turkish literature as their era's novels. The sentence that “Casein epics, tales, folk tales and novels is the actual element, the others come together to create the work.” (Aktaş, 2005: 11) combines these texts on the ground of “event.” Although they unify under the ground of event, these texts have different features from each other.

Present-day novel in Turkish society has taken place since the second half of the nineteenth century. Taken as the example by the Ottomans during the renewal process, West influenced Ottoman society in the types of novel and short story as in many areas. “By this time Turkish society had provided his need of fiction-narrative with a number of traditional types such as folktale, masnavi, tale, legend.” (Gündüz, 2009: 763)

As poem coming to the fore in the literature life of Ottoman resulted in narration types' staying in the background. Masnavi was one of the most important and striking types in Ottoman literature which made an important headway in the field of poetry. Masnavi is not an ordinary poem in terms of content. We can refer Masnavias the novel of east culture within the scope of evaluation concept and free environment brought by modernism. It can be said



that East civilization squared the circle by gaining this type to literature world. East civilization gained the novel which was produced in the form of prose by West civilization to the literature world in a poetic form much earlier than West civilization.

Many researchers try to clarify the relation between masnavi and novel by examining the masnavis in accordance with the rules and base of novel. One of these researchers is Şerif Aktaş. The opinions of the researcher in his article “Roman Olarak Hüs-n-ü Aşk” (Hüs-n-ü Aşk as novel) doesn't draw attention to proof of the work being a novel but the similar points between the two types. He examines the masnavi in his work beginning with the sentence of “With this writing we don't want to allege that mesnavis and at the same time Hüs-n-ü Aşk are novels.” (Aktaş, 1983: 94) by using the review methods of novel and with his words “As in the european-style tales and novels in the Hüs-n-ü Aşk masnavi” equates the work with European examples.

In his article of “Hüs-n-ü Aşk as an example of Bildungsroman” which he regards Hüs-n-ü Aşk as a “Bildungsroman” which is a novel type, with the examples of couplets he gets from Masnavi he considers the change and the advance of “Aşk” had as the qualitative change and advance which are the characteristic features of “Bildungsroman” equal. From the point of events the “Aşk” had in masnavi, it is understood that Hüs-n-ü Aşk masnavi accords with structure of novel type “Bildungsroman” if it is taken under the perspective of its reflecting the plot in the novel type and the cast of it formed by elements representing individuals such as Hüs-n and Hayret.” (Bayram, 2007: 27)

Mehmet Kahraman states in his article “Leyla and Mecnun novel by Fuzuli” that such masnavis should be called as a novel. “Today, art of novel is branching out, new methods and techniques are being used. The works done under the name of postmodernity means finding support of the ages passing to modern novel and having classical lines in a sense.” (Kahraman, 1997: 186) If taken from this perspective it has a feature of rocking the modern novelists' world and leading them in terms of subjects and contents.



Masnavis in classical literature had the function of novel type in social life before the Tanzimat. Therefore, as reasons for existence, contents and many formal elements of these works -in spite of the partial differences- join in the same place (Ayyıldız ve Birgören, 2009: 189) masnavi should take its place in the classification of novel type.

Şeyma Büyükkavas Kuran who establishes a relationship between masnavis and postmodern novels brings a different point of view to the relation between masnavi and novel. In her article “Mesneviden Romana Uzanan Sebeb-I Telif Yolu Üst Kurmacayamı Çıkar” she states that postmodern applications weren’t used only in postmodern novels but also in ancient narratives by establishing a relationship between the “sebeb-itelif” (causes of copyright) parts of some salient masnavis in Turkish literature and metafiction which gives the reader the story of forming of the work in postmodern novel. “In masnavis the poet presenting the sebeb-i telif (causes of copyright) pursued the goal of behaving humbly, leaving the responsibility of doing /producing something, taking the tradition shelter against reviews, carrying conviction. Today authors purposely or unconsciously continue this tradition by changing or improving it with the reasons of being original, arousing attention, providing new expression opportunities, obtaining the readers' confidence and depending this increasing the plausibility.” (Kuran, 2006: 199) emphasizes Şeyma Büyükkavas. The most obvious feature of this change is the author's concern of providing readers different approaches and originality.

In Ottoman society folktales and masnavis met the requirement of tale for many years. In these works telling the tale whose outlines were certain with a new style wasn’t bothering the readers who knew the course of events intales more or less. After all, the reason for followers to follow these narrations wasn’t the simple sense of satisfaction of curiosity. The common feature for both of these types is that their followers approach the work by esteeming not the topic but especially the style. Written with this culture between Taaşşuk-u Talat and Fitnat “Muhayyelat-ı Ledünn-I İlahi, Akabi Hikayesi, Hayalat-ı Dil, Müsameret-name, Temaşa-i Dünya ve Cefakar ü Cefakeş" were the first texts which were produced by Turkish written narration while approaching the example of novel in western sense.” (Gökalp, 1999: 186) These works reflect the transition process. Making the transition from oral to written



culture clear, this process is also the indicator of the transition between divan and folk literature which exist in traditional structure of Ottoman and modern literature.

In the western literature as in the eastern literature “the need for narrating and listening of people was met by tales, myths, sagas, fables, folktales and romances after epics.” (Çetişli, 2004: 36) We can associate the romances read in the west before novel with folktales in eastern culture. Folktales can be studied under the types of love tales and heroic tales. Similarly having the types of “knight novel, pastoral novel and pikaro (pikaresk) novel” (Çetişli, 2004: 37) the other features of romances we can associate with folktales are being the mixture of poetic - prose and existence of legendary events and individuals as in folktales. In the west Don Quixote became the work that finished the romance era and was regarded as the “first” novel as it emerged as a reaction to this delusiveness.

When we look at the originating point of novel in Eastern-Western culture, a clear parallelism can be seen in terms of formation and development. That depends on emergence of all the civilizations from a common source. The elements which became ordinary in time steered the civilizations into new search and evolution. Postmodernism is the reflection of this new search and evolution in the last century.

Formation and Features of Postmodernism

The roots of modernism, the opponent of postmodernism, are in the rationalism of Descartes. The first example of rationalism in literature was given by Cervantes. Cervantes’s making his character, who is always reading romances, dream by the effect of these romances is a reaction to romances accordingly to imaginarieness. This loyalty to rationalism makes Cervantes one of the first pointers of the Enlightenment. Even Milan Kundera considers Cervantes as equal with Descartes in terms of value he gives mind by saying “For me the founder of the modern era is not only Descartes but also Cervantes.” (Kundera, 2009: 16) Getting rid of the darkness of Middle Age thanks to renaissance and reform movements which were the other output of rising rationalist movements, Europe mind inclined to human and “mind” which weren’t used much in the times when they were sold place from heaven with humanism, human more than god took place in the concept of “Enlightenment.” “The idea of modernism establishes itself on a perception of continuous and linear progress as a project of



enlightenment. This progress has a specific purpose according to philosophy of enlightenment; aforementioned purpose is stated as ideal social order. Here another valid antecedent for the projection of enlightenment can be emphasized. To assume an ideal social order means to put a concept of absolute truth in the thought system at the same time. As it is known the concepts of natural society and natural law which can be taken as the beginning of Enlightenment philosophy are accepted as the reflection of a kinda secularized idea of absolute reality. Modernization projection has the feature of being secular above all. The ideational dimension which comes into prominence in the exchange line from Renaissance and reformation to enlightenment can be defined as the demystification of knowledge and science. Thus science and grounding were ceased to be a spiritual process, they were come down to a position of being an intelligent -based feature of an individual.” (AslanveYılmaz, 2001: 97)

Making everything into a rule with the sublimating of mind was common especially in the 17th century France. Even in the same century French Academy was founded to specify the rules of literature. Classicism which dominated the French and European literature after Humanism period also got its share from this prescriptivism. This value given for mind and scientific methods held till the end of 19th century when the effect of Realism and Naturalism was dominant “on condition that the beginning of the 19th century romanticism is excluded.” (Ecevit, 2001: 23) Again in this century the possibility of living the traditional things in European life which was evolving from village to city, from agriculture to industry and mechanization with Industrial Revolution finished, everything belonging to the past was started to get rid of with the phenomenon of urbanization. However, this renewal process (modernity) ranged what to be done to reach the happiness which it committed to people with an imperious manner. This proto-type of modern individual showed an urban character which was dependent to positivism and sciences as mentioned before.

The dependence to science revealed a scientific even empirical literature by the appliance of philosophical thoughts such as positivism and determinism which are very close to scientific idea to literature/novel. The survey and observation of Realism; the testing method of Naturalism can be taken as an indicator for how scientifically the matter is approached. The prescriptivism of Modernism in other disciplines also showed itself in



literature and the first “novel as real novel”’s which were said for modern novels in literature started to form in that period. This one was a novel which was related to mind and truths, human-directed with all its aspects; not having romance effect as in the traditional novel, not a typifying novel. The events are ranged chronologically, the author doesn’t interfere with the event in any way, for this “it is made to have a real and miscellaneous enlightenment which is wanted to present to readers by including point of views of author and other characters besides themain character. Developments in question in the point of view contribute to author’s being excluded from the novelvery much.” (Çetişli, 2004: 44) This is again an accuracy of modernist thought which can be explained with objectivity principle. This objectivity is provided by quitting the technique of “narration” which is used by Romantics and by using techniques related with demonstration throughout novel.

Demonstration Technique is a presentation, a form of reflection engaged by realists. Realists find “telling” presentation format of omniscient’ narrator as being inconvenient because it damages the realism. It damages the realism because with this form of expression adopted by the narrator, add his own personality, description, comments-and even-critics to the work, hence the reader's interest were gathering over him more than the work. (Tekin, 2004: 196) The author presents the events through dialogues to draw the readers’ attention to the work rather than him, even the narrator. This process provided rise to the dramatic novel in time. “At the first stage in creating the modern novel, there is a dramatic novel. The first feature that separates the dramatic novel from the traditional novel is the concern of giving realities of the world of the novel objectively in the dramatic novel. For this purpose, the novelist is obliged to ensure the dramatic techniques in his work in order to stay largely out of the world of the novel.” (Kantarcıoğlu, 2004: 29). However, the influence of modernism on the societies and literary was not permanent. Quantum physics and Einstein's relativity theory in scientific terms suggested opinions contrary to the the idea of invariance of modern science, the relativity of the relativity theory, quantum physics brought the imprecise information against the exact and immutable, indisputable informationby saying that there might be two different possibilities of modern science at the same time. With these items, “being mythologizedand instrumentalized mind with Adorno and Horkheimer’s idioms considerably took away from the foresight of the ideal of the Enlightenment in period of Enlightenment. Rapid rise of science and technology despite the people and lack of any value,



ethical principles inverted a historical depression. Besides the problems of meaning of the subject instrumentalized and disappeared on the basis of this crisis, There was the growth of inequality, going worse not going better, unhappiness of more people, wars, genocides and the devaluation of values increasingly as a result of increasingly globalized capitalism. In such a case, progress in each side, governments who shout innovation, great narratives predicted a beautiful future, these all lost the credibility. The gradual weakening of the social opposition reduced the belief in a transformation. Media's putting the government's discourses into words and person's being created by this way and new reality turned most perception upside-down. There is no belief in the great ideals." (Esgün, 2006: 99-100). Highly depressed humanity found the solution in ending the modern period. This end forms a new beginning that it is postmodern period.

As postmodernism is clarified with its opposing identification to modernism, to comprehend postmodernism properly the thought structure and application of modernism should be known. We can make the differences between modernism and postmodernism clear as below:

Modernism	Postmodernism
Having central control and authority	Being lack of central control and authority
Political investments in the level of nation and state	Personal political approaches
Idea of having progress with science and technology	Opposition of technology, doubt
Indispensability of the original	Removing the defect from the imitation and its power
Big media organs	Extensivity of small medias
Centralization of knowledge	Being lack of central knowledge
Clarity of class distinction from the point of culture	Disappearance of desintegration among layers by clarifying cultural interaction
Art is for art as the art is original.	Art is for people as art is an indicator of culture.
Severity is at the forefront because of the	Opposition against reaction and severity is



importance of life.	clear because of certain rules of life.
Integrity and “we” notion is at the forefront.	Ego feeling is clear, interpersonal competition
Determinism	Indeterminism
Clarity of object	Clarity of subject
Representative of the past, primitive	Representative of the future, advanced
Elements which are real and substantial are clear	Elements which are dreamy and spiritual are clear
Rules, time and place are clear	Irregularity, time and place are indefinite

(Birkök, 2004: 3-4)¹

Although the important application important for postmodernism was even used in modern works before, it is different in terms of usage and purpose. For example; in modernist works metafiction was used; but while modernism did this for increasing impartiality and credibility postmodernism, used it for emphasizing to fictionality of the work on the contrary. Even again in a modernist work an element of another work is used, this usage is made for creating a harmony and supporting the work; however, in postmodernism what exactly to be wanted to catch with pastiche-parody is on the contrary incompatibility; it is important to highlight this work being clearly a fiction as an output of indicator world as Plato said, not showing that it is real with these imitations. We can exemplify this situation for the concepts of setup, irony and play. “If the setup causes a threat into the text, directed to its nature; a discontinuity and a incoherency among the organs forming its nature, it becomes a feature of postmodern text, or else it doesn’t have any difference from the setups used in modern texts. The same thing is acceptable for the concepts of irony and play, too. If irony includes a showing a flaw or attrition in modern way, this is a postmodernist feature, or else if it doesn’t mean making fun of a problematic situation, this can’t help being one of the review types which are not much different from humor.” (Emre, 2006: 158) This and similar examples are some of the differences in the applications of modernism and postmodernism.

¹Bu tablo Cüneyt Birkök’ün “Modernizmden Postmodernizme: Yeni Problemler” adlı çalışmasında örnek aldığı ve orijinal metnin, Georgetown Üniversitesi akademisyenlerinden Martin Irvine’in üniversiteye bağlı <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/pomo.html> adresinde bulunan çalışmadan esinlenerek oluşturulmuştur.



According to its adherents, postmodernism continues its development process. Thus, it exists in social life as an era which humanity still lives and at the same time keeps its development. It is almost impossible to define the umbrella term of the area which span supposedly. Because postmodernism emerged by criticizing its making its own rules a dogma after modernism declining all the dogmas before it.” (Fedai, 2008: 307) That’s why all the definition trials related to postmodernism can only help introducing its different ways.

We can state opinions about the definition of postmodernism as below:

- “According to Best and Douglas Kellner passing modernism as prefix – post bring to the term, anti modern
- According to Vattimo a disengagement, a liberation -in positive meaning- from modernism,
- According to Arnold Tonybee a pitiful deteriorate,
- According to G. Merquior an extreme state of postmodernism by correlating to modernism with prefix “post”
- According to Matei Calinescu “a new face of modernity”
- According to Wolfgang Iser a development in modernity
- According to Andreas Huyssen a split from modernism
- According to Eagleton the total of reactions against modernism
- According to Octavia Paz more modern outlook of modern
- According to Micheal Ryan a ironic approach to modernism

(Emre, 2004: 23-24)

Result

Although the postmodernism we are trying to introduce has affected not only literature but also art, architecture, theatre, cinema, psychology as well as a number of scientific branches; as within the features of postmodernism, it should be stated that there isn’t even an agreement on using the term of postmodernism. It hasn’t got a philosophy in terms of theory as there aren’t common properties in the structure of postmodernism. However, inportmodern point of view, the “moment” within it, should be accepted as it is. Some of the researchers mention that postmodern case expression must be used instead of postmodernism from the



facts of the formation, the configuration and the properties of postmodernism. Nonetheless; it is important to know that there can't be a discussion about which one is true for postmodern writers, because in the reflection of postmodernist understanding the clearness to all ideas, thoughts, and applications is a distinct feature. This pro-freedom point of view of postmodernism is making clear this style and tendency for this style day by day.

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