



CHARACTERIZATION IN POSTMODERN NOVEL: ANALYSIS OF JOHN FOWLES' MANTISSA IN THE CONTEXT OF POSTMODERN CHARACTER*

POSTMODERN ROMANDA KARAKTER: JOHN FOWLES'İN MANTISSA ROMANININ POSTMODERN KARAKTER BAĞLAMINDA İNCELENMESİ

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Abstract

The concept of character is quite a problematic term in postmodern fiction since postmodern texts overtly subvert and transgress the conventions of characterization in the novels of previous ages. In relation to the paradoxical and ambiguous nature of postmodernism, character undergoes a radical transformation in postmodern fiction, and it cannot be pinned down with regards to the conventions of characterization. The character in postmodern fiction becomes a site where the ontological concerns of postmodernism that the text rests upon are reverberated. Thus, postmodern problematization of such contentious concepts as self, identity, essence, history writing, fiction, and fact is carried out and presented through postmodern characterization in the novel genre. Deprived of characters in the conventional sense, postmodern fiction can thus be claimed to establish its own conventions of characterization. Hence, this paper analyses John Fowles' *Mantissa* (1982) so as to discuss how postmodern fiction utilizes characterization to reverberate certain issues problematized in postmodern context and hence puts forth its own character conventions.

Öz

Postmodern romanın önceki dönemlerde yazılan romanlardaki karakter geleneklerine karşı gelmesi ve bu gelenekleri yıkması nedeniyle postmodern edebiyatta karakter kavramı bir sorunsal teşkil etmektedir. Postmodernizmin çelişkili ve belirsiz doğasıyla ilişkili olarak, postmodern romanda karakter önemli ölçüde dönüşüme uğramakta ve alışlagelmiş karakter özellikleri dâhilinde tanımlanamamaktadır. Postmodern karakter, metnin postmodernizmin ortaya koyduğu ontolojik sorunları yansıttığı bir alan olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu sebeple, postmodernizmin sorunsallaştırdığı özbenlik, kimlik, öz, tarih yazını, kurmaca ve gerçek gibi kavramlar postmodern romanda karakterler üzerinden tartışılmaktadır. Sonuç olarak geleneksel anlamda karakterden yoksun olan postmodern romanın kendi karakter geleneklerini ortaya koyduğu söylenebilir. Bu bağlamda bu makale John Fowles'ın *Mantissa* (1982) isimli romanını postmodern edebiyatın karakteri postmodernizmin sorunsallaştırdığı belli başlı meseleleri yansıtmak için nasıl kullandığı ve böylelikle kendi karakter geleneklerini nasıl ortaya koyduğunu tartışmak üzere inceleyecektir.

Makale Bilgisi

Gönderildiği tarih: 28 Ağustos 2017
Kabul edildiği tarih: 18 Ekim 2017
Yayınlanma tarihi: 27 Aralık 2017

Article Info

Date submitted: 28 August 2017
Date accepted: 18 October 2017
Date published: 27 December 2017

Anahtar sözcükler

Postmodernizm; Postmodern Roman,
Postmodern Karakter; John Fowles;
Mantissa

Keywords

Postmodernism; Postmodern Novel;
Postmodern Character; John Fowles;
Mantissa

DOI: 10.1501/Dtcfder_0000001548

The Novel-Characterization until Postmodernism

Considered to be an inseparable constituent of a literary work by numerous critics and writers, the concept of character has been critically elaborated since the emergence of the first theoretical texts that have aimed to explore and explain the nature of literature, literary text, and its components. An historical survey of the employment of literary characterization and its subsequent criticism, extending all the way from the classical ages to present times, show that literary characterization has undergone radical technical and thematic changes in the course of literary history.

* This article is based on the author's Master's Thesis entitled "Postmodern Characterization in Contemporary British Novel as Reflected in D.M. Thomas's *The White Hotel* and John Fowles's *Mantissa*."

Nevertheless, in novel, characterization can be said to have been conducted almost always around a representational function, and characters in novel have conventionally been aimed to represent the social, economic, and psychological realities of individuals. Nevertheless, the representational function of characterization is challenged and subverted in postmodern fiction to such a large extent that postmodern fiction can be claimed to put forth its own conventions regarding characterization. Hence, the aim of this study is to examine the ways postmodern fiction transgresses the conventions of novel-characterization conducted in the earlier periods, and to argue that characterization becomes a vehicle in postmodern fiction through which the text reverberates certain issues and concerns problematized and explored in postmodern context. To this end, the first part of this essay explores how characterization is conducted in the periods preceding postmodern fiction with an aim of laying bare the conventional aspects of novel-characterization since the birth of the genre. The second part of the essay examines the key tenants of postmodernism that play a significant role in the formation of postmodern character. Last but not least, the third part brings a textual exploration of characterization in John Fowles' *Mantissa* to illustrate how postmodern fiction explores certain postmodern concerns through its characters and thus sets a new mode for characterization in novel.

The birth of the novel genre can be considered a milestone in the history of literary characterization, and the novel's unique treatment of characterization indeed becomes an aspect that distinguishes it from the earliest forms of literature. Overly detached from real-life people, characters portrayed in the literary forms of the previous centuries mostly functioned as representatives of the manners, morals, and the values of the nobility or the Catholic Church. Accordingly, they were exceedingly idealized, mostly stereotypical and usually far-fetched from real life. Nevertheless, as agricultural society began to evolve into an industrial one in the beginning of the early eighteenth century, middle class acquired a distinct socio-economic power. Becoming more invested in getting a better education and engaging in cultural activities, the middle class constituted a new reading public. This not only paved the way for the birth of the novel genre but it also simultaneously brought an implicit demand for representing the experiences, needs, and the ordinary lives of the middle class in a realistic manner. As such, the eighteenth-century novel is distinguished by its depiction of life-like, down-to-earth, and probable characters in the constructions of which their authors deliberately refrained from embellishment in order to maintain authenticity.

The realistic orientation of the eighteenth-century novelists, which is retrospectively designated as “*formal realism*” (32) by Ian Watt in *The Rise of the Novel* (32), prescribed for novel-characterization the realistic representation of the human experience in its realistic setting and socio-historical context. Individualism, as one of the key tenets of the eighteenth century and one of the significant catalysers of the rise of the novel, resulted in the portrayal of characters who were marked by their economic self-sufficiency within the capitalist and economically competitive society that was developing due to industrialism.

The nineteenth-century, in which the novel genre established itself as a respectable form of literature, saw the continuation of the employment of novel-characterization on mimetic premises. In “The Art of Fiction”, which presents an anatomy of the nineteenth century novel, Henry James affirms the realistic orientation of the novel genre by claiming that “[t]he only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent life” (856). Most significant and forthright discussion on novel-characterization is sustained yet by another noteworthy novelist of the era, George Eliot. In line with the realist tendency of the era, Eliot, in *Adam Bede*, premediates portrayal of characters in such a manner that they represent the everyday struggles of ordinary people. She claims that,

There are few prophets in the world; few sublimely beautiful women; few heroes. I can't afford to give all my love and reverence to such rarities: I want a great deal of those feelings for my everyday fellow-men, [...] whose faces I know, whose hands I touch, for whom I have to make way with kindly courtesy (154).

Marked by its realistic representation of the social realities of individuals and their struggle for making a living in industrial society, the nineteenth-century novel hence drew characters who acted and spoke compatible with their economic, social, and cultural statuses.

The novel-characterization can be said to have undergone a significant transformation with the emergence of modernism, an experimental and innovative movement that characterized the cultural atmosphere of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The grand historical, socio-economic, philosophical, and scientific events and changes that occurred in *fin-de-siècle* Europe altered people's lives and their perception of the world in myriad ways, hence transformed indirectly the way the novel genre presented character and his experience in such a complicated environment. Technological progress and scientific developments,

despite easing people's lives in many respects, caused a significant disillusionment due to their being misemployed in the First World War and thus resulting in a large number of casualty, economic loss as well as an intense physical and emotional destruction. Given this, the optimistic notion of an ordered, rational, and comprehensible world was replaced by a pessimistic perception of the world that was assumed to be irresolutely chaotic and unordered. Yet a more ground-breaking influence on characterization in the modernist novel came with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theory. Freud's discovery of the unconscious, his analysis of the psyche dividing it into three components as id, ego, super-ego, and his interpretation of dreams to unfold the unconscious marked a new epoch in understanding the human psyche. Contrary to the notion of ordered and rational human psyche as perceived in the Enlightenment, the new perception of the human psyche as chaotic, repressive, irrational, and driven by impulses "*has led to new ways of looking at art, new ways of reading texts, literature in particular*" (Jouve 245).

Disillusioned by the modernization that simultaneously led to improvement and destruction and also informed by the philosophical and psychological developments taking place at the time, the writers of the period applied to formalistic experimentations in their fiction to represent the spirit of the age. Interested in the "*dark places of psychology*" (Woolf, *The Modern Fiction* 162), the modernist writers contested abiding by the conventional features of characterization such as lifelikeness and coherence. Instead, they inclined towards depicting the irregular and unorganized flow of thoughts, impressions, and emotions of characters by employing such narrative strategies as stream of consciousness and fragmented interior monologues. Even though characterization in modern novel was overly experimental, the representational function was still maintained; yet; its motive became representing the psychological realities of characters not primarily their social and economic circumstances.

As the historical survey of the characterization points out, despite having undergone various changes in time, characterization in the novel has for so long aimed at either giving a true picture of the human experience, and the tacit norm of character as expressive, representational, and mimetic has been maintained. The representational function of characterization, which constituted the basis of the birth of the novel genre, eventually brought along the portrayal of characters who, according to Aleid Fokkema, "*behave[...], think[...], dress[...], and function[...]*

roughly according to ways that are present in the culture in which the realist text originates" (57).

Characterization in Postmodern Novel

The conventionally representational function of characterization as discussed above is exposed to an extreme subversion and contestation in postmodern fiction, and postmodern novel has put forth a new outlook of character which accommodates the social transformations and new artistic expansions of contemporary society. First coined in 1870 by an English painter, John Watkins Chapman, to qualify paintings "*that were more modern than the French impressionist*" (Meinert, Pardeck, and Murphy 1), postmodernism has achieved world-wide acclaim as an artistic movement only around the mid-twentieth century, and has become the dominant mode in British literature especially in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Exceedingly bound up with contemporary state of the world where "*traditional forms of legitimation*" have been destroyed due to broad social, political, economic, and technological changes (D. Fokkema 22), postmodern fiction is marked by its problematization of metanarratives, the mediums of knowledge as well as conventional forms of representation. Accordingly, postmodern fiction puts representations of historical, scientific, and cultural knowledge into question, and it problematizes how this knowledge is acquired and also legitimized. Viewed from this perspective, while its precedent, modernism's concern was "*epistemological*", "*the dominant of postmodernist fiction*", as Brian McHale puts it, is "*ontological*" (10). Contrary to the modernist fiction which explored "*the ways of how to know the world we live in and how to represent it*" (D. Fokkema 20), postmodern fiction problematizes both the representability of the world and the mediums that attempt to represent it.

As regards characterization, all of these postmodern problematics translate well into character in postmodern fiction. Postmodern fiction contests the tacit norm of character which anticipates its conventionally representational function, and characterization indeed becomes a site where the problematizing, subversive, transgressive, and challenging nature of postmodernism is most explicitly reverberated. This transgression of the representational function becomes so radical and evident that numerous literary critics and theorists suggest that the concept of character is depleted in postmodern fiction. For instance, in "The Character of Character", Hélène Cixous recognizes the identification of the reader with the

character as the central motive of traditional reading, and she claims that in contemporary literature the reader cannot find a hero, namely a character, whom he can identify with. Thus, she defines “*the death of the hero*” (44) as

a death generally experienced by the reader as a murder, a loss, on which follows the reader’s quick withdrawal of his investment, since he sees nothing more to be done with a text that has no one in it? No one to talk to, to recognize, to identify with. The reader is loath to venture into a place where there is no mirror (44).

On a similar note, in “Character in Contemporary Fiction”, Brian Phillips points at “*the decline of character*” (636) in contemporary fiction, and he maintains that “[w]hile character remains essential to any idea of fictional narrative, and involvement in character remains the signature pleasure of fiction, still, when one opens the contemporary novel, character is not precisely one finds” (635). Such expressions as the death, decline, and absence of character result from the fact that postmodern character disintegrates the conventionally representational character whose very being is defined in relation to his ability to mirror the individual, human itself.

Postmodern character can be analysed as an outcome of numerous problematics that lie at the very heart of postmodernism, and postmodern perception of self proves to be one of the most significant of them. The notion of self, which constitutes one of the most focal questions of Western philosophy “*has become an essentially contested category, continually revised, devised, supervised, or denied*” (Hassan 428). The different viewpoints developed towards self, have substantially affected and determined the way characterization has been conducted in novel since the birth of the genre. Developed around humanistic view of self, which is singular, centred, and static, the eighteenth and nineteenth-century novels portrayed individualistic characters endowed with proper names, stable configurations, and a discernible socio-economic background. The modernist novel, despite contesting the supposedly rational, ordered, and organized self, did not suggest a decentring and disintegration of the self. In line with Freud’s situation of centre in the unconscious, the modernist novel focused excessively on the unorganized psychologies of characters to represent the changing perception of self.

Nevertheless, the view of self as comprehensible, intact, and singular is overly challenged in postmodern context most significantly in relation to the “*postmodern condition*” as Jean-François Lyotard would call it. Postmodern

condition, according to Lyotard, designates the current state of the world where there is an “*incredulity towards metanarratives*” (xxiv) due to the rise of economically and technologically developed, media-driven and consumer societies. With metanarratives, Lyotard refers to grand narratives such as the Enlightenment, Marxism, science, progress, technology, religion, and he claims that those narratives cannot legitimate themselves in postmodern societies. In relation to this, as Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein affirm, “[i]n the condition of postmodernity, the self is no longer a metanarrative [...] but one term among others for representing experience” (685). Accordingly, in postmodern context, one can no longer talk about a unitary concept of self; on the contrary, the idea of self becomes polysemous, disseminated, and diverse. Often contradictory to one another, these polysemic selves co-exist without culminating into a unified whole.

In his article entitled “Quest for the Subject: The Self in Literature”, Ihab Hassan similarly recognizes the plurality and diversity of the self in postmodern society, and he emphasizes that a single and static notion of self in postmodern fiction is not possible. Accordingly, he defines the chaotic state of the present society and its dismissal of self as follows:

Ideas clash; slogans fill the air; heresies follow heresies, become dogmas within a decade. The critical laity is in disarray. Sometimes, the smoke clears, the alarms subside, revealing the abstract body of a critic signaling to us through the flames. Some spectators cry, “Chaos, anarchy, nihilism!” Others rejoice bravely in the fray, or whisper seductively with Barthes, “Happy Babel.” Others still truculently proclaim, “Everything is ideology, everything politics!” How, then, see a subject, the self in literature, “plain”? (“Quest” 420).

Therefore, it can be claimed that in postmodern condition, self becomes rather fluid and fluctuating as the individuals are pervasively exposed to audio-visual images from all kinds of media. No longer an essential and ever-present being, self becomes a matter of display which is constantly presented and represented. It also turns into a commodity which is constructed, commercialized, and consumed within the capitalist order promoted by the electronic media. In line with this, self no longer creates the images; rather, it becomes the images that create and construct the self.

In postmodern fiction, character can be said to embody the postmodernist conceptualization of self by subverting the notion of centred self mainly through fluctuating between multiple names, identities, configurations, hence the selves. Rejecting the coherence, consistency, and rationality that define anthropocentric perception of self, postmodern character denies singularity and stability with regard to its own being by liberally traversing different time periods, adopting different identities, and roles. In relation to this, character in postmodern fiction proves to be extremely fragmented, discontinuous, and fluctuating.

Postmodern fiction, then, offers multiple selves and subjectivities that are constituted through discourses in the text. In this regard, language does not simply function to represent individuals or an external reality in postmodern fiction; instead, it creates and constructs both the characters and the world they are within. Therefore, the historical, and socio-economic context of the text as well as the other characters continuously construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct the postmodern character, and postmodern agent's identity proves to be "*largely other-determined, multiple, and always in process*" (Bertens 12).

As a result, postmodern character, which is constructed through language and discourses, negates the conventional notion of character which is largely perceived as the referent of human-beings. As Raymond Federman indicates in "Surfiction: A Postmodern Position", character turns into a "*word-being*" (44) in postmodern fiction. Federman explains the transformation of the character into word-being as follows:

[T]he people of fiction, the fictitious beings will no longer be called characters, well-made characters who carry with them a fixed personality, a stable set of social and psychological attributes (a name, a gender, a condition, a profession, a situation, a civic identity). These surfictional creatures will be as changeable, as volatile, as irrational, as nameless, as unnameable, as playful, as unpredictable, as fraudulent and frivolous as the discourse that makes them. This does not mean, however, that they will be mere puppets. On the contrary, their being will be more complex, more genuine, more authentic, more true to life in fact, because since life and fiction are no longer distinguishable) they will not appear to be what they are: imitations of real people; they will be what they are: word-beings (44).

As Federman affirms, the concept of character becomes rather problematic in postmodern fiction since the conventional theories of character, which revolve around the characters' representational function, do not account for the postmodernist view of self, its problematical ontology, and also its constructed nature. This explains why theorists and critics engaging in postmodern characterization put forward alternative terms for postmodern character that will contain postmodern concerns more properly. In an interview, for instance, Federman claims that “[c]haracters belong in old-fashioned realistic 19th century novels” (Amerika). Therefore, he regards “the notion of character [as] obsolete for him” and he states that he “invents VOICES – only voices” (Amerika) (emphasis in the original). On a similar note, A. Fokkema draws attention to the problematical status of the concept of character in postmodern fiction, and she maintains that

Critics seem to agree that character is outdated, that postmodern novel demonstrates that there are only fragile subject positions of, that language is the only constituent of self, and that multiplicity (of identity, of selves, of subjectivities) has superseded the unified, coherent, old stable ego. [...] Those who adhere to this view have no time for such critical terms as character, agent, protagonist, or heroine. The only term that is admitted is the one that allows for the constitutive role of language or discourse: the subject (13).

In addition to word-being, voice, and subject, theorists and authors opt for such alternative terms as “*subjectivities*”, “*figure*”, “*cipher*”, and “*cartoon*” to refer to postmodern character (A. Fokkema 60). On the one hand, these terms can be claimed to break the conventional bond between character and its supposed referent (i.e. human being). On the other hand, they can be said to install the elements of popular culture into the terminology of literature, which has traditionally been regarded as a part of high culture (A. Fokkema 60). In this sense, these alternative terms for postmodern character are aimed more to contain postmodern concerns than to refer to the representational function of characterization.

Given this, postmodern characterization can be considered a paradoxical category. It contests and subverts the representational function of characterization while it simultaneously attempts to represent the postmodern condition as well as the postmodernist conceptualization of self. Nevertheless, behind this simultaneous confrontation and reliance lies the problematic status of reality and its representation in postmodern state of world. In postmodern society which is girded

by computer technologies, omnipresent advertisements, and mass communication, the conventionally immediate relationship between reality and its representation is disrupted. Hence, in such a world where such notions as singular self and reality are no longer maintained, classical realism and its conventional means of representation can represent neither the society nor its individuals. Regarding the loss of the sense of reality in contemporary state of world and its reverberation in literature, McHale asserts that

[N]owadays everything in our culture tends to deny reality and promote unreality, in the interests of maintaining high levels of consumption. It is no longer official reality which is coercive, but official unreality, and postmodernist fiction, instead of resisting this coercive unreality, acquiesces it, or even celebrates it. This means ironically enough, that postmodernist fiction, for all its antirealism actually continues to be mimetic (219).

In line with McHale's ideas about postmodern fiction's being antirealistic yet still mimetic, postmodern characterization proves to be mimetic to a large extent. Yet, it should be noted that in postmodern fiction "*experimental characters simply constitute a new (and sometimes superior) representation of reality*" (A. Fokkema 68) which should not be confused with the mimetic tendency of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century novel. As A. Fokkema points out, "*[d]espite their apparent antimimetic tendency, [...] postmodern characters may point to a new concept of mimesis*" (68).

In "Meta-mimesis? The Problem of British Postmodern Realism", Amy J. Elias suggests the term "*postmodern realism*" to designate the mimetic mode in postmodern fiction. Putting emphasis on the shortcomings of the conventional ways of representation in representing the current state of the world, Elias argues that "*postmodern realism*" offers new ways of representation to project the problematical status of reality and self:

Postmodern Realism records the multiple worlds/texts within contemporary culture and recognizes the *inability* to evaluate society's conflicting values; it mimics the multiple selves of characters (more accurately, the self as subject within a textualized culture) and recognizes the problem of articulating an essential Self in this social context. Both of these definitions and limitations are realistic, postmodern Realism is true to the new definitions of self and society in a postmodern culture (12).

Given this, postmodern character, despite being a paradoxical category, complies well with the nature of postmodernism which itself celebrates multiplicity, contradiction and incoherence. As a result, even though postmodern character defies the representational function of characterization and breaks the conventional bond between character and human referent, it can be said to be representative and unrepresentative at the same time. Unlike the characters in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century novel, postmodern character does not function as a vehicle to reinforce the verisimilitude and authenticity of the text. Instead postmodern character becomes a tool through which a postmodern text problematizes self, reality, and their representations in fiction.

“You Can’t Not Exist And Actually Be. They’re Mutually Contradictory”:

Postmodern Characterization in John Fowles’ *Mantissa*

Published in 1982, John Fowles’ *Mantissa*, can be said to be one of the least known novels of Fowles as far as its critical reception is concerned. Despite the scarce and most often disapproving criticism, *Mantissa* is, in fact, “a highly suggestive work, subject to a variety of plausible interpretations” (Haegert 175) and also one of Fowles’ most technically experimental novels. *Mantissa*, in its narrowest sense, tells the story of an author, Miles Green, and his relationship with his muse, Erato, during the writing process of a novel, which turns out to be *Mantissa* itself. Through the dialogues between Miles Green and his muse, Erato, the novel explores such issues as the role of inspiration in the construction of a literary text, the authorial ownership, and the nature of literary production.

As regards characterization in *Mantissa*, it can be claimed that the way Fowles implements characterization proves to be one of the most significant aspects of the novel that contribute to its postmodern quality. The novel portrays only a few characters: Miles Green, Erato, and her disguises, Nurse Cory and Dr. Delfie, yet, these few characters still play a significant role in discussing and reverberating certain issues central to postmodernism. On the one hand, the characters in *Mantissa* serve to discuss and lay bare how postmodern fiction and contemporary literary theory approach to the issues of the nature of a literary text and authorial ownership. On the other hand, these characters resist to a large extent the conventionally representational function of novel-characterization and instead embody and reflect the postmodern perception of self as well as postmodern problematization of the representation of reality as discussed in the earlier part of this study.

To begin with, the most significant postmodern imprint in the characterization of *Mantissa* can be observed in its employment of an author-character, Miles Green. The character of Miles Green becomes a vehicle through which the novel explores the relationship between an author and a text and also how contemporary literary theory perceives this relationship. Conventionally, the author, as a God-like creator, is regarded to be the supreme originator of the text, and the literary text is thus assumed to mirror the cultural, social, and historical background as well as the psychology of its author. Nonetheless, with the arrival of formalistic approaches in the early twentieth century, this essentialist relationship between the author and text has started to be questioned, and a more distinct criticism to the author's dominance over the text has come with the emergence of poststructuralist approaches in the 1960s.

In his renowned essay "The Death of the Author", Roland Barthes argues that "*writing can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation, 'depiction' (as the Classics would say)*" (145), instead "*it designates exactly what linguists [...] call a performative, a rare verbal form*" (145). Thus, replacing the concept of the author with the "*scriptor*", Barthes asserts that "*the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text [and] is no way equipped with being preceding or exceeding the writing*" ("The Death of the Author"145). In line with Barthes, Michel Foucault sees the interpretation of a text on the basis of the author as a barrier before "*the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition, and recomposition of fiction*" (221). He argues that contemporary literary criticism does not aim to "*bring out the work's relationship with the author*" and thus considers the elimination of the author in understanding of the text as "*one of the fundamental ethical principles of contemporary writing*" (205).

Overly influenced by the poststructuralist approaches to the text, especially by Barthes and Foucault's ideas regarding the author, postmodern fiction undermines the notion of author from which the meaning emanates, and it shows "*a deliberate attempt to overlap the authorial voice with the narrating one*" (Cazzato 30) in order to explore the author's role in the text. As Luigi Cazzato indicates, "*author-narrator [...] obtrudes into his story, manifesting his/her will to be outside and inside fiction and, thus, challenging the separateness of fiction and reality, hence the autonomy of the text*" (31). Postmodern fiction achieves this collision not always by overlapping the authorial and narrative voice as Cazzato points out. It might also

maintain this overlap by presenting a character or multiple characters as the author of the text the reader is actually holding and reading.

In *Mantissa*, Fowles brings the authorial voice into the novel by depicting the novel's protagonist, Green, as the author of *Mantissa* itself and creating the illusion that the novel is written during the reader's act of reading. The critics who recognize Fowles' deliberate insertion of the authorial voice into the text through characterization suggest different terms for those characters. While Dwight Eddins calls those characters "*author-persona*" (208), Susana Onega opts for "*author-character*" (34), on the other hand, Mahmoud Salami prefers to use "*character-novelist*" (191).

The portrayal of Green as the character of the novel he simultaneously writes, recalling Roland Barthes' much noteworthy argument that the "*modern scriptor is born with the act of writing*" ("The Death of the Author" 145), depletes the conventional notion of the author as the sole creator and owner of a literary text situated both outside and temporally before it. Transmitting the role of the author into the text via Green, Fowles asserts that author co-exists with text itself. In the meantime, as a postmodern character, Green denies the object and passive position which is conventionally attributed to character. He is not only presented to be writing the text he is within but he is also given the opportunity to comment upon the structure, form, and content of the text he is part of.

The novel opens with Green waking up in a hospital room experiencing a kind of memory loss. Even though neither Green nor the reader is aware of Green's authorship at the beginning of the novel, Green's authorship is implied by Nurse Cory when she measures time with page numbers:

'How long have I been here?'

'Just a few pages.'

'Pages?'

She had folded her arms, and yet again there was the ghost of a quiz in her watching eyes. 'What should I have said?'

'Days?'

She smiled more openly. 'Good.'

'Why did you say pages?'

‘You’ve mislaid your identity, Mr. Green. What I have to work on is your basic sense of reality. And that seems in good shape’ (M 19).

The association of the time with page numbers becomes the first indicator for Green to become conscious of his presence in a book. Yet it is only in the end of the first part that Green recognizes his status as the author. His muse, disguised as Nurse Cory, takes a paper from the desk, claiming that it is Green’s story which he has just written. As she starts to read those papers, the novel turns back to its beginning. This analepsis points at the fact that Green’s act of writing starts the moment he wakes up from his sleep in the assumedly hospital room.

Even though Green is presented as the author of *Mantissa*, the novel also puts into question his authorship by exploring the function of inspiration in the construction of a literary text by depicting muse as character. Dr. Delfie and Nurse Cory, who are initially depicted as conducting a kind of sexuality-based treatment on Green, are revealed to be different identities Green’s muse, Erato, adopts in the course of narration. After Green comes to recognize his identity as author and Erato’s identity as his muse, the couple starts to discuss over such issues as the nature of a literary text, authorial ownership, and also the text they are part of. The sexuality between Green and his female muse, Erato, is eventually implied to be the symbolic representation of the writing process which is jointly conducted by the author and the muse.

This allegorical account becomes most evident when Nurse Cory, one of Erato’s disguises, associates Green’s writings with the birth of a baby. After Green has a sexual relationship with his muse, Nurse Cory takes some papers from the desk, and she impersonates a nurse who handles the new-born baby to its parent:

She came a step or two closer, beside the bed, and gazed down at the small sheaf of paper crooked in her right arms; then smiled coyly and roguishly up at him. “It’s a lovely little story. And you made it all by yourself.” [...] Now she seemed to be hinting that he was some scribbler, a mere novelist or something. [...] ‘Look Mr. Green. Listen.’ She bent her pretty capped head to read the top page, using a finger to trace the words, as she might have touched a new-born nose or tiny wrinkled lips (M 48).

The idea that the author and his muse play an equal role in the production of a literary text is reinforced when Green decides to end his relationship with Erato. When Green attempts to leave the room, the door of the hospital room

vanishes and the couple is trapped inside the grey room. Considering that all of the incidents and dialogues between Green and the muse symbolize the act of writing, itself, Green's inability to leave the room thus points at his inability of getting out of his own mind and also his inability to complete the writing process without the aid of muse. Erato's statement that "*you can't walk out of your brain*" (M 123) also confirms the fact that all of the incidents presented in the novel in fact take place in Green's own mind. As a result, this symbolic entrapment suggests that neither Green not Erato is the sole owner of *Mantissa*, contrarily, "*it is the muse as much as the author who writes the story, weaves the text*" (Haegert 179).

Fowles' overly stylized and symbolic use of characterization can be said to blur the distinctions between such narrative structures as author, character as well as reader. While the concept of author used to be perceived both separate from and hierarchically superior to the text and its constituents, *Mantissa* significantly rejects this conventionally hierarchical relationship by putting the author and the characters in ontologically equal positions in the fictional realm. Green and Erato simultaneously become characters, authors as well as the first readers of the same text, and thus fluctuate between subject and object positions. Although they are introduced as characters in the beginning, they are transferred to the authorial position in the course of the novel. Dwight Eddins similarly draws attention to Fowles' use of narrative units in flux, and states that

[Fowles] narrows the remove between himself and the characters – and thus between the reader-persona and the characters. Both author and reader as personae, however, are pulled deeper and deeper into the fictive web of the novel, and farther from their respective positions in reality (218).

As Thomas Docherty contends Fowles not only "*refin[es] the authorial voice out of the novel*" (119) but he also "*den[ies] the formal artificiality of the printed text*" (129) by presenting it as exposed to continuous acts of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction. He "*debunks the numerous human prototypes of a godlike authority figure*" (Hill 212) and in this way confounds "*the concept of a god-centered world*" (Hill 215) and instead "*accepts the concept of a hazard-centered world*" (Hill 215).

As such, it can be claimed that in *Mantissa* Fowles draws characters who are ontologically free from authorial power in a centreless fictional universe. In such a centreless and non-hierarchical fictional world, the characters' fate relies upon

chance rather than deterministic role of an author (Hill 215). Hence, Fowles' characters can be regarded as not essentially the author's products; on the contrary, their existence is presented as contextual, dependent on and limited to the covert and overt positioning and repositioning of the other characters within the text.

Another postmodern imprint in Fowles' characterization is observed in his presentation of muse - a mythological figure that symbolizes artistic inspiration - as a character. Green's muse, Erato, can, in fact, be regarded as an exemplar of what Umberto Eco calls "*transworld identity*" (230) in "*Lector in Fabula: Pragmatic Strategy in a Metanarrative Text.*" As McHale points out in *Postmodernist Fiction*, with "*transworld identity*", Eco refers to "*the transmigration of characters from one fictional universe to another*" (57). In postmodern fiction, the situation of already existent fictional characters in other fictional universes, as McHale points out, juxtaposes "*incommensurable worlds*" (57) and constitutes an "*intertextual zone*" (56). In *Mantissa*, Fowles thus can be claimed to "*violate, and thereby, foreground the ontological boundaries between fictional worlds*" (McHale 58), and blur the distinction between the culturally existent figure and the fictional character. Fowles' borrowing a mythological figure and inserting it into his fiction as a character thus serve to show that literary texts cannot be regarded as monolithic; contrarily, their construction and meaning are always and inevitably related and linked to other texts.

In addition to exemplifying transworld identity and reinforcing the intertextual quality of the novel, Erato can also be explored in terms of her failing to fulfil the representational function and embodying postmodern perception of self, which is fragmented, fluctuating, and decentred. One cannot indeed pinpoint a single certainty with regards to Erato's character for she displays an ontologically problematical status. As the muse does not have an existence in the empirical sense, her ontological reality is problematized and investigated throughout the novel by herself and Green. Green, for instance, gets frequently and overly confused with regard to Erato's ontology:

'First you don't exist. Then you've been endlessly screwed by other men. Come on, make up your mind - which is it, for heaven's sake?' 'I am perfectly capable of making the kind of comparison I might have made, had I existed as I actually am. If I was.' 'You can't not exist and actually be. They're mutually contradictory' (M 89).

Even though both Green and Erato agree that she does have some kind of existence, neither of them can exactly comprehend her unique ontology. Accordingly, every time they attempt to define the nature of Erato's existence, they find themselves lost in paradoxes not being able to reach a logical conclusion. Yet, considering that Green is writing a novel at the time and they are part of this book, they eventually come to conclusion that Erato is merely a figment of Green's imagination. When Green asks Erato "*who the devil do you think you are?*" (M 85), Erato confirms that she is merely a creation of Green's mind: "*I don't think, I know. I'm just one more miserable fantasy figure your diseased mind is trying to conjure up out of nothing*" (M 85).

Even though novel-characters are entirely fictional and do not have an empirical existence, they still have a unique ontology in the fictional realm. Regarded as particular individuals, characters are given human attributes and biographical backgrounds and are also portrayed within a social, historical, and cultural environment. Nevertheless, Erato's problematical ontology firstly as a mythological figure and secondly a figment of Green's imagination renders her existence doubly problematical as a postmodern character. Moreover, her lack of a distinct physicality as the representative of artistic inspiration hinders her from having a stable external appearance throughout the novel. Accordingly, in the course of narration, her outfits change, and she traverses between different personalities such as Dr. Delfie, Nurse Cory, a rocker girl, and a Greek maiden. Erato's display of a fluctuating and unstable character, points at how postmodern fiction displays self as plural and fragmented. Erato's fluid character highlights the fact that there is no longer a singular self, instead there are "*selves*" and "*subjectivities*" (A. Fokkema 13) which are devoid of essence and constructed through discourse.

To conclude, *Mantissa*, as a postmodern text, can be claimed to subvert the conventional aspects of characterization by transgressing the lifelikeness of its characters, breaking their bond with human-referents, and displaying them ontologically problematical. Fowles' characterization in *Mantissa* significantly contests the representational function of the novel-characterization observed in the earlier periods. The characters in Fowles' novel are not aimed to represent human beings, or their social and psychological realities. Instead they are aimed to embody the postmodern view of world where everything is discursive, textual and self is fluid and fragmented. Even though there are very few characters in *Mantissa*, the

text continuously preoccupies the reader with the thought that these characters might not even exist but merely be in the fancy of the other characters. As a matter of fact, all of the paradoxes and never-ending uncertainties regarding characters in the novel might actually be what is aimed for by Fowles himself, as an author who recognized the world he lived in too chaotic, full of ambiguities yet polysemous at the same time.

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