Araştırma makalesi/Research article

The Parody of Myth/Metaphysics and Estrangement Effect in Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri (Efrasiyab's Tales)* by İhsan Oktay Anar

İhsan Oktay Anar'ın Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri'nde Mit/Metafizik Gülünçlemesi ve Yabancılaştırma Etkisi**

Vedi Aşkaroğlu[***]
Dinara Ashimova[****]
Nurzat Dyussenov[*****]

Abstract

Every age has its own dynamics as regards politics, social life, culture, power relations, and perception of art. Accordingly, the twenty-first century is a period

*** Prof. Dr. Giresun Üniversitesi Fen Edebiyat Fakültesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü. Giresun-Türkiye/ Giresun University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature. Giresun-Turkey.vaskaroglu@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-7060-4139
**** Dr. Abay Üniversitesi Doğu Dilleri ve Tercümanlık Fakültesi Çok Dillilik Enstitüsü. Almatı-Kazakistan/ Abay University, Faculty of Oriental Languages and Interpreting, Institute of Multilingualism.Almaty-Kazakhstan. dinara.mazhitovna88@mail.ru, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-4083-1506
***** Dr. Felsefe Enstitüsü Siyaset Bilimi ve Din Çalışmaları Almatı-Kazakistan/ Institute of Philosophy, Department of Political Science and Religious Studies, Almaty-Kazakhstan. eurasiainnovation@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7788-3444

when postmodern view of the world forms the central, dominant approach in literature. The novel is no longer "created" but "produced" through such new concepts as parody, pastiche, collage, intertextuality, and metafiction with a desire to incorporate a polyphonic worldview, create the effect of alienation, and show the relative nature of what has been called "real(ity)". In this article, first a brief theoretical discussion of the postmodern parody, which is achieved through the use of intertextuality and irony, is presented. The theoretical basis of such narrative techniques are constructed, pertaining to how they can be handled, evaluated, used in literary analysis through the formation, and the maintenance of new discourses might be clearly understood. Then, the use of "parody" and "irony" in "Efrasiyab's Tales" is analyzed and how the mythical, metaphysical beliefs, ideas, and values are parodied in the newly created context is reflected. Through the analysis, it is indicated that postmodern texts, as exemplified in "Efrasiyab's Tales", present various appearances of what is accepted as real(ity) and lead the reader into questioning and (re-)evaluating it from different perspectives. In the article, how the author uses and parodies so many mythological stories, names, scripts from the holy books of Judaism, Christianity, İslam and even Buddhism is discussed in relation to the main texts. Some ideas, beliefs, rituals and practices are handled in an ironic way and parodied so that the reader is forced to re-evaluate all s/he has as ideology, belief, religion, culture (or anything belonging to culture and civilization) in the modern world.

Keywords: *Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri, postmodernism, parody, estrangement, myth, metaphysics*

Öz

Her çağın siyaset, sosyal yaşam, kültür, güç ve iktidar ilişkileri ile buna uygun biçimde ortaya çıkan sanat anlayışını yansıtan kendine özgü bir yapısı bulunmaktadır. Buna göre, 21. yüzyıl, sanat ve edebiyatta 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısında ortaya çıkan postmodern dünya algısının merkezde olduğu ve baskın eğilim gösterdiği bir dönemdir. Bu dönemde, diğer türlerin yanında, özellikle roman türü çoksesli dünya algısını sunmak, sorgusuzca kabul edilen kavramlar, düşünceler, inançlar ve değerlerin yabancılaştırılmasını sağlamak ve gerçek(lik) adı verilen her türlü algının göreceli doğasını göstermek amacıyla gülünçleme (parodi), ironi, kolaj, metinlerarasılık ve üstkurmaca gibi tekniklerle ("yaratılmaz") "üretilir". Bu makalede ilk olarak metinlerarasılık ve ironi kullanımıyla elde edilen postmodern gülünçlemenin (parodi) kısa kuramsal bir tartışması yapılmış, daha sonra ise, "Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri"nde gülünçleme ve ironi kullanımı irdelenmiştir. Romandaki mitsel, metafizik inançların, düşüncelerin ve değerlerin yeni oluşturulan bağlamlarda nasıl gülünçleştirildiği çalışmamızda sunulmuştur. Çözümleme yoluyla, "Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri" ile örneklemi oluşturulan postmodern metinlerin "gerçek(lik)" olarak kabul edilen şeyin çeşitli görüngülerini ne şekilde sunduğu irdelenmiştir. Metnin okuru sorgulamaya ve "gerçek(lik)i" farklı yönlerden yeniden değerlendirmeye nasıl yönlendirdiği ortaya konulmuştur. Makalede halk hikâyeleri ve hatta mitolojik anlatıları bir derlemesi olarak da görülebilecek olan İhsan Oktay Anar'ın

Musevilik, Hristiyanlık, İslamiyet ve Budizm gibi inançların metinlerinden / kutsal kitaplardan alınan pek çok mitolojik hikâye, isim ve anlatıyı nasıl şakacı / alaycı bir şekilde kullandığı ele alınmaktadır. Bazı fikir, inanç, ritüel ve uygulamalar ironik bir şekilde ele alınmış ve parodisi yapılmıştır. Böylece okuyucu günümüz insanının sahip olduğu ideoloji, inanç, din (ya da kültür ve medeniyete ait herhangi bir şey) olgularını yeniden değerlendirmeye zorlanmaktadır. Romanın sunduğu bağlamdan yola çıkarak makalede yer alan tartışma ve değerlendirme sonucunda, dinsel/metafizik inançların yüzyıllar boyunca hem Doğu'da hem de Batı'da güç ve otoriteye sahip olanlar tarafından, sunulan yapılandırılmış mitolojik ve dinsel söylem kullanılarak güç ve iktidarın hizmetinde taraflı ve tek yanlı olarak inşa edildiği ortaya çıkmaktadır. Romanda, doğaüstü olayların ve metafizik varlıkların yer aldığı hikâyelerin söylemlere nasıl dönüştürülüp dinleyicilere sunulduğu ortaya konulmaktadır. Bu nedenle makale, okuyucuların dikkatini insan yapımı mitik ve dinî inançlara çekmekte ve onları ''gerçek'' olarak kabul edilen her şeyin aslında insan toplulukları arasında insanlar tarafından söylemlerle oluşturulduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri, postmodernizm, g*ülünçleme (*parodi), yabancılaştırma, mit, metafizik*

Introduction

Artistic production in terms of postmodern concepts tends to encompass all kinds of items/people/subjects/themes and to incorporate them into the literary text. In accordance with the concept of 'self-reflection' or 'self-signification', the content of a fictional work is designed with such all-inclusive diversity that readers can make deductions according to their own potentials. Removing all limit(ation)s as regards style, expression, themes, approaches and language, postmodern narratives can produce old narratives in a new way, simply by referring to old texts, mentioning or just implying names, setting, themes, ideas and events. By creating intertextual relationship, the author both exploits and re-produces the aesthetic, cultural, historical or social heritage of the past. The only thing s/he can do is to establish intertextual relations because artistic 'creation' is no longer possible, instead there is only 'production'.

Postmodern discourse tries to show that classification, as a modernist tool of understanding the world, is ideologically selective, and it excludes conflicting/secondary/discordant/opposing thoughts, and establishes a biased or subjective reality. Mixture of various narrative styles and even genres in the same literary work, presented as hybridization, paves the way for a possible incorporation of conflicting materials, techniques, characters and perspectives into the text.

No longer possible to be defined with modernist terminology, the postmodern text is produced as only 'self-signifying' ('self-reflexive') entity, and therefore, it cannot have any generalizable symbolization. 'Self-signification' can be defined as "a closed topological space that 'continuously generates and specifies its own organization through its operation

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as a system of production of its own components, and does this in an endless turnover of components" (Maturana & Varela, 1972:141). In this topological space, everything or every person is only a sign of itself, not signifying anything out there. Similarly, in postmodern literature, human typologies replace characters depicted in detail. In this new domain of signification, postmodern indicators may correspond to some abstract concepts, or within a multi-layered semantic structure, to multiple and variable meanings. Therefore, the symbolic dimension is not unidirectional; it can be interpreted differently according to each reader, and produces multi-layered meaning(s). What makes the multiple meanings different from those in previous literary genres or movements is the postmodern alienation effect based on the use of intertextuality. "In a broad sense, the mentioning of semi-textual indicators such as an era, a genre, a tradition, etc. or directly quoting names of authors or the title of a novel, tragedy, poet, historical hero, or one of the holy books," (Aktulum, 2011: 435-436) is a way of constructing intertextual relations. In this way, there is no field, sacred value, moral or ideological teaching that the postmodern author cannot reach and exploit as a subject. With the help of referencing, the author does not have to narrate, describe or explain anything in detail as s/he can establish a cognitive connection with the reader's rooted perception of any literary or artistic work, historical event, concept, thought, or practice.

Positioning itself against modernist thought, postmodernism aims to do away with the limitations imposed on the reader's imagination and to refute approaches that might reject the subjective, the marginal or the different. It aims to help the reader reinterpret and understand life by establishing an intertextual relationship in order to ensure diversity and pluralism. Each text that emerges is the result of the "absorption and distortion" of another text (Ecevit, 2014:149). It has an alienating effect and thus transforms old perspectives, teachings and ideologies in new contexts as desired.

An important feature of postmodern novel is the use of parody with a new function. By establishing intertextual relations and making quotations or adaptations from previously produced texts, the novel provides access to a vast wealth of images offered by previous texts. While postmodern parody paves the way for questioning the old texts, it also creates new images. Although postmodern parody has to make use of precedent texts, this is not a kind of nostalgia: "Intertextuality is the act of consciously or unconsciously creating new meaning or developing meaning" (Sakallı, 2006: 166). Postmodern parody brought to the fore through intertextual relations does not aim to recreate history, on the contrary, it functions to break the perception based on history. For this, it changes the context of old texts and presents them again in different contexts. Thanks to the new presentation, it also breaks the effect of the old texts. It also overthrows the old with an ironic point of view. It brings to light the ideological elements underlying ancient texts. By means of parody, it becomes possible to invalidate the existing rooted perceptions, as "artists create ways of seeing and representing that have social meaning" (Harvey, 2012: 44). Through parody, art begins to acquire a new meaning and purpose. By destroying the taken for granted values, a new value chain is created. However, these new values are always in flux and they constantly bring new and different values to the fore.

Parody as a term is often confused with the meaning it has in modernist texts, often as a form of mockery. However, in many artistic activities, parody might be used in different forms. It can be used as a tool for respect and glorification, or to humiliate, disrupt the influence, or make fun of something. Therefore, it may not be correct to perceive postmodern parody as a literary tool that just mocks old, unique or original styles. Postmodern parody does not ignore the context of the old texts to which it refers, but instead it shows that they have changed, and therefore, the values they created have also disappeared. As time and setting have changed, people cannot have the same perception of reality and values. Postmodern parody is not a means of defining what might be right and wrong, valuable or unworthy, moral or immoral. It simply separates something from the labels attached to it, allowing the reader to stick a label of their own.

Postmodern irony, on the other hand, directs people's attention to the system of values created by discourses and contexts. By making some formal and linguistic changes, irony can replace old meaning systems with new ones. Sakallı determines the importance of form in the signification process as follows: "There is a constant interaction between people or between languages, thoughts and ideologies. Interaction does not occur only at the level of language or discourse, but also at the level of style" (2006: 164). Postmodern irony examines the relations of form and literary production. It aims to destroy the established ways of seeing by interacting with previous texts. It shows the subjectivity, difference and variability in perception. Generalizations, taken for granted truths, established values and beliefs are reassessed with the use of irony. Postmodern parody also begins to operate at this stage, and by using irony, it tends to reproduce the past in the present. It is both ironic and critical. Its prior aims are to drain the "poison" existing in the modernist representation of reality and to "neutralize" it. Therefore, it has both a destructive criticism and a constructive productivity. It ridicules the "image as a reflection of a deep reality" (Lucy, 2003: 70), the type of image used by modernists, and suggests that reality cannot be objectively reflected. The novel usually deals with different values, people, and periods using various ways and hides some realities. This type of "concealing image" (Lucy, 2003: 70) is a common feature of both modernist and postmodernist novels. The "absence of a deep reality" gives a postmodern perspective, and postmodernists argue that modernist realities produced as central values such as gender, race, ethnicity, or class are hidden by modernist literature. According to Lucy, "Reality never exists "within" or "for" the language system, so reality is not identical with any part of the language system that works to convey or show "reality". What exists in the system instead is simply what functions as reality" (2003: 50). The parody and irony used by the postmodern novel break the old images and replace them with new and only self-signifying images.

"Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri" is a postmodern narrative text, produced by İhsan Oktay Anar in the form of a novel composed of a main narrative line backed up with some stories told by the characters in the novel. As a postmodern text, it makes references to various texts, names, places, beliefs, ideas and religions and handles them in different contexts so as to force the reader to question them through the use of postmodern parody. That intertextual nature of the novel is woven skillfully by the author to help the reader question such beliefs

and ideas, re-evaluate them through new lenses, and see the human-made nature of what is generally accepted as God-given or holy. This is the selective, unilateral nature of almost all the previously produced texts, which put another concept or truth into the center and define all the rest according to such a center. Once the center is constructed through discourses, a hierarchy is produced with such a centrist approach. Depending upon what is put in the center such as male, bourgeoisie, Christianity, the white race, Europe, or the West, the system with its economic infrastructure and institutions begins to create, strengthen and maintain its hierarchy through the discourses it employs. The main function of parody and irony as postmodern narrative devices appears at this point: they operate by making references to previous texts and showing their biased nature, which includes some values and excludes and labels others as undesirable. In this article, the function of postmodern parody in "Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri"will be discussed and how some ideas, beliefs, concepts and traditions taken for granted are handled through the 'estrangement (or alienation) effect' will be analyzed.

Parody of myth and metaphysical perception

There are many references to previous literary and non-literary texts in "Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri" in order to make an estrangement (or alienation) effect through the use of parody and irony. The first definition of such an effect was made by Bertolt Brecht as"playing in such a way that the audience was hindered from simply identifying itself with the characters in the play. Acceptance or rejection of their actions and utterances was meant to take place on a conscious plane, in the audience's subconscious" (cited in Willett, 1964: 91). The main aim here is to force the reader to question and thus perceive the different and sometimes conflicting views about the "taken for granted reality" of some concepts. "Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri" is a very rich text in terms of intertextual relations, in particular with metaphysical and mythical narratives, ideas, texts and perception. No external world is depicted or reflected, but the author has invented a narrative to create the illusion of a real world; "the artist is only as good as his/her art. S/he can unite life and faith is the supreme purpose can reveal different/ flexible endings/meanings or encompass/show cultural diversity to explain all previous and future historical experience and epics/myths/archetypes" (Toth, 2009: 27). And at this point, the main issue is not to believe in the reality of the presented fictional world but to reconsider and re-evaluate the possibility of such a world. Even such concepts as possibility and reality are to be questioned.

The first intertextual relationship established in the novel is between "Doctor Faustus" and "Death" in the novel. "The Tragical History of the Life and Death of Doctor Faustus" is a play written by Cristopher Marlowe, and is known shortly as "Doctor Faustus". The protagonist of the play, Faustus, is virtuous, hungry for information, but is getting closer and closer to death. "Like modern man, Faustus is the victim of splitting of will. He rejects Christianity because it would hamper his boundless desires, yet he cannot escape Christianity" (Golden, 1985: 203). Despite his deep religious belief, his hunger for knowledge turns into a test in the narrative. Mephistopheles (the character representing the Satan) is trying to win a

victory against God by seducing such a faithful and virtuous person as Faustus. As a man of science, Faust's tragic weakness is his hunger for knowledge. Knowing this, Mephistopheles appears in human disguise, tells Faustus that he can save him from the nearing death, and offers him a very long life and the ability to fulfill some of his wishes. However, as a deal, Mephistopheles asks for something in return: Faustus will sell his soul to Mephistopheles. Faustus, who is already afraid of death, readily accepts the offer. With his newly gained status, first, he listens to songs by Helen of Ancient Greece, which indicates his delicate taste and fondness of art and literature. He sees different parts of the world, which he has wondered for a long time. He satiates his hunger for knowledge. However, the seemingly long time granted by Mephistopheles begins to erode, and the inevitable end approaches. Fear begins to grow in Faustus and he regrets his decision. Now that he has sacrificed eternal salvation and infinite life in God's Paradise, there is no turning back. While waiting in despair to be taken to Hell, he implores God for forgiveness and screams out how regretful he is. However, he has no salvation and the end is clear. As a result of man's weaknesses and fear of death, Mephistopheles wins a victory over God, by alluring and seducing the human, the most important (and superior) being God has created.

The intertextual relation constructed here serves to the re-evaluation of some ideas and beliefs through the use of parody and irony. "The literary artist of this age, where meaning is questioned, handles previously created texts, instead of creating original worlds with certain meaning generating power, and plays with these texts on the level of parody and pastiche" (Ecevit, 2014: 73). In "Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri", Death, depicted in human clothing as an allegorical figure and assigned the duty to take the lives of certain persons when the right time comes, evokes Mephistopheles. Just like the agreement Mephistopheles makes with Faustus, Death makes agreements with the people whose lives he is assigned to take. Through the use of de-familiarization linguistic devices and fictional techniques, Cezzar Dede and other characters are transformed from "socially well defined, directed towards certain aims" into "undefinable, shattered, out of setting and so, open to be designed and shaped in new forms" as new subjects (Best and Kellner; 1991: 90-91). As the representations of the new forms, or subjects, first Death ironically accepts to gamble with Apturrahman, whose life he is supposed to take: "- "I know you like playing games. For example, would you fancy, like, man to man, a game? Just to make it more exciting, we'd better have a gain; if I win, you give me 100 years, well? Agreed?" (EH: 11). The second stage is that he makes an offer to Cezzar Dede. This proposal is about story-telling, which marks the basic construction of the novel. Both Cezzar Dede and Death will tell one story in turn, and Cezzar Dede will live an hour longer for each story. The intertextual relationship in the third stage is again between Death and the character named Tall İhsan. This agreement arises out of obligation in a tragicomic situation. Death, who tries to get into the room where İhsan is lying on a bed, mounts onto the shoulders of Cezzar Dede, but he finds himself in a desperate situation when İhsan's guard dog attacks him. So he is forced to ask for help from his supposed victim. "I'm Death. As you might guess, I've come to take your life. Come on, rescue me! Help me climb up through the window." (EH: 235) He tells that he will let İhsan go if the latter saves him from the dog.

The relationship between Mephistopheles and Death is handled by changing the context and personality traits. In contrast to Mephistopheles, who negotiates with God, knows human nature well and represents evil, with a very serious description, Death is just an ordinary character with various weaknesses, dependent on time and space. Death is reduced to a cartoonish personality. He wears slippers, can be beaten in wrestling by a small child, and even needs the help of another person in fear of being bitten by a dog. In *Doctor Faustus*, on the other hand, Mephistopheles is depicted as a very wise creature, plotting against man, while at the same time, he has a strong enough personality to triumph over God. In the novel, Death only wins in his agreement with Apturrahman, while he is the loser in his agreements with Cezzar Dede and Tall İhsan. Death, which is normally the symbol of seriousness with no possibility of showing any sign of emotion on his face, smiles when a small girl accuses him of spoiling their comfort. She curls her lips in an angry and touchy manner, upon which Death cannot help smiling, an act erasing all his identity as a metaphysical, religious concept. The agreements Death makes with others are related to actions and situations such as gambling, storytelling and fear of the dog, while Mephistopheles's agreement with Faustus deals with universal concepts of humanity, death, and fear of a person who is confronted with death. Ironically, while Faustus accepts the agreement in return for unlimited power, quenching his hunger for knowledge, and leading a long and prosperous life, all of which are aristocratic concerns and expectations, the only concern of people who deal with Death is to get a longer life, just a reaction to get rid of a basic fear. In the first agreement, there are noble humanitarian concerns such as virtue, knowledge, and religious belief. Yet, in the second agreement, we encounter the parody of some essential elements in human life, such as the fear of death. The main aim in parody can be "to reveal a ridiculous incongruity (between the ideal and the reality) by removing the form of a literary work from its subject and replacing that subject with another contradictory subject, thus creating a mocking effect" (Aytaç, 2003: 361). In the novel, Death is parodied as a weak person both physically, emotionally and mentally. He is physically weak as a small child can even beat him in wrestling, and he cannot even rescue himself from a dog. Emotionally, he is liable to sympathize with his supposed victims and in the last scene he cannot help smiling. Mentally, he is not equipped with the necessary talent and knowledge or observation skills to easily find, catch and take the life of Tall İhsan. These all help to demolish the myths of "death", "immortality", "fear of death", and "the angel of death".

In the novel, a total of eight tales are told by Cezzar Dede and Death. Some of the stories have intertextual relations with mythology and myth. The tale titled "A Pilgrimage Journey" begins with an expression which states that it is fictional / made up by saying "They (this pronoun shows an anonymous narrator, source of information) narrate that …" (EH: 57) although it is told with a concrete place and time description; "… Fifty years ago, there was a village in Diyarbekir called Divana." (EH: 57). In the tale, the blood feud theme between two villages is handled with an ironic style and is parodied. "This hostility began when, around ten, fifteen years ago, a Zengefil minstrel composed a folk song in which the breasts of Divana women are likened to melons, and he played it on the radio" (EH:60-61).

1204

In "A Pilgrimage Journey", a fantastic situation is created, in which supernatural events happen. When the rival village's imam intends to go on a pilgrimage, Divana villagers also decide, just for retaliation, to send their imams on pilgrimage. The transformation of the imam of Divana in Diyarbakır is narrated. Since the old imam of the village is nearing death and starting to get demented, the villagers who want to raise another imam instead, send a child named İlimdar to theology high school. This child is very unsuccessful, but somehow eventually manages to become an imam. İlimdar, who has strange behaviors, is someone who hangs with ordinary people, plays cards, participates in folk dances with people before worshipping ceremonies, does not recite the proper prayers, unable to deliver proper sermons, and constantly listens to and sings folk songs. However, one day, a teacher who is coming to the village is attacked by street dogs and flees from them, leaving his books behind. İlimdar finds the books and reads one of them, upon which his perspective of life is transformed. The book is about a wise man and his teachings. What is presented differently from the others in this story is the change experienced by İlimdar.

In order to break the perception behind some social events, the parodied situations are thus emptied and turned into an element of humor. Since the village's landowner meets all the expenses, he includes his own father and son into the pilgrimage journey. Extraordinary events take place, and the son of the landowner is depicted as mentally abnormal. This is a direct link to the modern myth of "wolf man", "man wolf" or "lycanthrope". In Oxford Dictionary, "lycanthrope is a synonym of werewolf, referring to a person who, according to medieval superstition, could assume the form of wolves" (2021). The young boy is chained to the back of the bus because "The boy already knew what it was like to bite the ears and how it tasted. So he bit the poor man's ear with no hesitation" (EH: 67). He is able to run extremely fast, and is not harmed by the wild wolves having gathered around; he is even accepted by the wolves as if one of them. When the bus, having traversed a long distance at a great pace, stops, everyone (including the reader) thinks that the child must be torn into pieces, but contrary to expectations, "The scene he saw was astonishing: even after such a distance, such speed and such turbulence, the wild looking boy was still alive. As he had no slightest wound, or no torn part in his clothes, he must have run all the way" (EH: 66). It turns out that there is a mysterious bond between the wolf pack following the bus and the child.

Instead of Mecca, the imam heads to the East where Vuda (Buddha) is supposed to dwell. The imam goes to a Vudiz (Buddhist) temple and is welcomed very well by the Vuddies (Buddhists). Although the old man is aware that they are not visiting the "right" place, he prefers to keep silent. In the Vudiz temple, the child is healed with a single prayer. The child, who has never been able to utter even one single word in his life, begins to speak immediately upon hearing a prayer just for once in a language he does not even know. He repeats the prayer perfectly in his native language and "Strange, the boy was both fixed and moving," (EH: 75). He starts to ascend into the sky with his eyes closed, sitting cross-legged. The boy's tongue is unraveled, and having attained Nirvana, he is appropriated by the Vuddies who heal him. In Merriam Webster's Dictionary, nirvana is defined as "the final beatitude that transcends suffering, karma, and samsara and is sought especially in Buddhism through the extinction

of desire and individual consciousness" (2022). Having witnessed such a supernatural event, the imam, who takes him to the Vudiz temple, records the hymn the child sings while in an ecstatic state.

The imam, whose life has completely changed, decides to go to the mountains where they met the wolf pack. At the top of the mountain, he manages to have to the child's hymn heard by the wolves at the expense of freezing to death. He plays this sound to the wild wolf pack accompanying the child on the bus journey. As soon as the wolves hear the sound, they all calm down and start to howl.

In the story, an intertextual relationship is established on conceptual level between motifs such as "*the discovery of one's self*", "*respect for nature*", "*the discovery of the true essence of human*", "*search for God in oneself and in nature*", and the "*teachings of Buddhism*". Although it seems possible to make a further and more detailed symbolic analysis based on these fantastic / unrealistic events, it would not be wrong to say that the story as a postmodern element parodies the concepts of *imam*, *religious perception*, *madness*, *pilgrimage*, *piety*, *truth*, *imagination* and *fiction*. Although it is not an obligatory function of all postmodern narratives, Anar makes the concepts invalid and does not suggest any other values / concepts in their place.

At the end of the story, Death accuses Cezzar Dede of not telling a story about religion and claims that he does not feel the fear of death. Cezzar Dede tells that he chooses to explore life through beauty and love instead of death, destruction and ugliness; "Maybe only with deceit and great foolishness, those who see ugliness in others are themselves ugly. But I know the world not with fear but with beauty" (EH: 82). Anar shows how such religious texts as the Bible, the Torah and the Koran might infiltrate the reality of the world, instilling concepts such as fear / terror / despair / ugliness into the minds of readers as shown with the depiction of Death. The isolation of humans from beauty through fictional creativity (as in the example of holy texts) is a blindness to their own nature and beauty of the world. What is more tragic is that the human mind perceives the world with pessimism and might make it ugly through her/his own hands as suggested in the dialogue quoted above. Cezzar Dede suggests that the world be perceived through beauty and optimism.

The use of ironic language marks the questioning and perception of destructive power of narration. The religious perception, materialized and equated to the changing daily interests of common people up to a level of bigotry, is shattered through this ironic discourse. A valid, deeply rooted, taken for granted and widespread perspective is displaced by a postmodern technique and the reader is forced into becoming aware of different points of view and various faces of reality.

In "Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri", the intertextual relationship is also established with religious books, such as the Holy Qur'an and the Bible, the prophets in them such as Solomon (Soleiman), Joseph (Youssef / Yusuf), Pharaoh (Firavun), and such religious motifs as the forbidden fruit myth and Adam and Eve. The contexts of these myths are adopted directly as they are presented in the holy texts, they are placed in the story and turned into preliminary

texts. By this way, a new context is created and it is made possible that the previously held views about concepts, figures, beliefs and ideas can be questioned by the reader. As a widespread feature of postmodern texts, the author does not replace the elements questioned by new ones. Instead, questioning itself seems to be the main target.

In another story titled "World History", the lives of two different people, one a merchant and one resigned from worldly affairs, are told. The story is full of fantastic items typical of fairy tales such as "genomes", "fairies", "white-beard wise-man", "two-headed giant", "devil", "demons", "seven dwarfs" and "three bandits". Events start to operate in the context of a dream, where the dream turns into reality in the narrative, and reality is transformed into a dream. In the mirror motif, for example, the spirit twin of Ehriban at the same time lives with her as long as she keeps looking at her image in the mirror. These elements also strengthens the fantastic aspect of the narrative and functions to break the representation of reality. Generally, the known concepts of bad and good can turn into each other; good becomes evil, and evil becomes good at any moment through new contexts constructed in the narrative.

The "World History" tells the story of a rich merchant who has changed after a dream. Despite his religious life, Abtülzeyyat is overly fond of entertainment and food. One day, he dreams of a mystic hermit, who advises him to distribute his property to the poor and invite him to find himself in the mountain of Acıpayam. However, Abtülzeyyat denies this in the dream and invites the hermit to join the entertainment life with him. Thus, the hermit, whose name is Salih, gets angry with the merchant, curses him, and even attempts to punch him. When he wakes up, things start to go bad and he slowly loses his fortune. Religious perception and situational irony are also included in the story. "Irony tries to teach that social, historical and existential reality is only constituted by discourse that corresponds to art, therefore, the only true historicity is individual reality that creates its own discourse and defines its own identity" (Hutcheon, 1987: 182). The multiple perspectives according to which reality can be perceived are presented in the novel through the use of irony. The tradesman sheikh, for example, whose knowledge and advice is sought by many people in the bazaar, buys Abtülzeyyat's trading house for a very low price after he advises the latter to follow the advice of the dervish he meets in his dream. He loiters the property of Abtülzeyyat, whom he encourages to leave aside worldly affairs and lead an ascetic life, by ignoring money and property. The created ironic situation parodies those apparently pious clergymen, who regulate their religious life, allowing these people to be questioned again.

Abtülzeyyat sets out to find Salih (the dervish in his dream) and encounters great obstacles such as hunger and thirst and undergoes dangerous adventures. He takes refuge under the tree of knowledge and tastes its fruits. After a while, a very beautiful girl appears. He begins to chase her with the intention of forcing her into sexual intercourse. Yet, when she enters a cave, the girl turns into a very strong young man, and this time he is chased by her with the same intention. He manages to escape and takes refuge in a village. This story is a direct reference to the forbidden tree in Aden. The events that befall on him are almost the same as those experienced by Eve. The tree of knowledge here is the tree in Aden, whose

fruit is forbidden by God for Adam and Eve. Just like Eve, having eaten the fruit, Abtülzeyyat becomes lustful.

After learning the path to follow from the villagers, he sets out for the mountain. On the way, he first encounters four men, all of whom are brothers. He saves his collar from these men who see him as Uncle Salih. Then, he encounters three bandits, who are also brothers of the first group. They do not kill him because they take him for their uncle, too. Finally, he passes by a double-headed giant (twin brothers with united bodies) and reaches the top of the mountain. Abtülzeyyat, who starts to wait for Salih here, sees the reflection of his face in the water after a year and realizes that he is Salih himself.

The story also includes story within story. In the secondary story, the contrasting personalities and lifestyles of two brothers, Salih and Feyyuz, are discussed. While Salih is a devout, harmonious and hardworking type, Feyyuz is presented as a rebellious, evil character, hungry for knowledge, dealing with black magic. Salih falls in love with a girl named Hürmüz and begs his pious father to negotiate marriage with her family. This marriage is permitted only on condition that Hürmüz's sister Ehriban marries Salih's brother Feyyuz. Desperate, the father summons his son Feyyuz to his presence, and makes the weddings of both. Feyyuz and Ehriban have seven children, each competing with one another in committing evil. Feyyuz and Hürmüz die and, according to traditions, Salih is forced to marry Ehriban. In a night of drunkenness, Salih has sexual intercourse with Ehriban, an act he would never normally commit. As a result, a child, with a single body and two heads, is born. This child is a combination of evil and goodness. While one is fasting, the other drinks and spoils his brother's fasting. While one is drinking, the other recites hymns and spoils his pleasure. They are very similar to the divided self in a dual person who constantly quarrels and torments each other.

The main story line focuses on the theme of journey and self-discovery. In Abtülzeyyat's journey full of innumerable tortures and hardships, his biggest struggle will be against his own ego. As a postmodern technique, there is a person presented first in the identity of Abtülzeyyat, who is the one with whom Salih quarrels in his dream. Then the person who experiences this situation becomes Salih himself. This time, in the same event, he, as Salih, argues in a dream with a merchant named Abtülzeyyat. The person who is advised first becomes the advisor, the one who is led, turns into the leading figure. Presentation of the event from both perspectives appears as a postmodern element, a technique perhaps used for the first time in fiction. Thanks to postmodern approach, many perspectives are made possible. The story presents different perspectives from the same mind;

- *A character/type is transformed from his real being person into his own image*. This is a reference to Narcissus myth, where Narcissus, a very beautiful young man, falls in love with himself when he sees the reflection of his face on the surface of water. Abtülzeyyat, sees his own reflection on the water in the well. "As soon as he saw his reflection on the deep water surface he understood everything" (EH:130). He immediately realizes that the person he seeks is not another person, Salih, but

himself. This is also a reference to the discovery of human potential, suggesting that the human is the main source of all good and evil on Earth. Unlike the Narcissus myth, however, Salih is in a miserable condition and he is very ugly. Therefore, although he discovers the potential within himself, this potential is not beauty at all.

- *The image appearing in a dream becomes a reality*. Although a direct connection is difficult to construct, in most religions there are many dream motifs, which are taken as signs of warning about an approaching disaster, danger, or as heavenly revelations, foreshadowing good or miraculous events. "When Aptülzeyyat fell asleep, he saw himself in his dream as a very hungry book worm, just like the spirit in the World History. He began to eat the book biting the phrase "forbidden fruit" written on the very first page. On the second page, he tasted "the agony of fall". He ate "Christ's Flesh", and discovered the taste of "His Blood". He passed "The Plague", "The Wars", "The Disasters" and many more and came to the last page" (EH: 120).

- *One character is presented with double identities, though he has the same personality*. This kind of technique used in the novel deals with the idea that "each person in the world has a twin", a deeply rooted belief in Eastern cultures. This idea has, most probably, developed out of the myth of Noah's Flood. According to this myth, every species are admitted on board the ship, in doubles from both sexes. Yet, there is a rule for the species to be accepted, which is a truly pure belief in God. The pairs admitted were like the two halves of a whole, so their offspring were created by the division of this unity.

- *The same character/type with double identities is involved in a dialogic (or monologic) discussion with himself (or his other self)*. This is a reflection of the concept of split personality, yet it can also be interpreted as Adam, the original source of humanity, who possesses both the good and the evil within himself. "He noticed Abuzer and Alemdar, who were conjoined twins. Their trunk was one but heads were two" (EH: 125).The creation myth sheds light on the human nature, and is used by many to explain how evil can become so extensive both on individual and, socially and politically, on a universal plane. Peace, understanding, comprehensiveness, inclusion, plurality, humanism, empathy, philanthropy and other similar concepts are counterbalanced with such negative aspects as war, biases, exclusion, othering, monism, enmity, antipathy, racism, misanthropy and so on.

- *A character/type looks at his own image in the mirror and it becomes alive*. This is the deeply rooted belief that the image reflected in the mirror is the devil /Satan himself. This belief is also directly related to the creation myth, where Eve is deceived by the devil, incarnated as the serpent. The serpent tries to seduce Eve and force her to commit the crime of tasting the forbidden fruit, which will lead the humans to be exiled from Paradise and sent to Earth to pay for their original sin. The serpent manages to seduce her by using an object, similar to a mirror, in which Eve sees her own reflection, yet unable to understand that it is her own one.

1209

- *The shadow becomes the main person while the person turns into a shadow*. This is a kind of parody directed upon the concept of reality and metanarratives such as Enlightenment, Logic, Reason, Patriarchy, Capitalism, Communism, Christianity, Judaism or Islam, each of which tries to explain the world in a holistic approach, creating a center of its own. It can also be interpreted as the pseudo-perception of the human, ideologies, religions, cultures, sciences and other domains. There are some questions at this point: for a shadow, we need a source of light and an object upon which the light is reflected. In this case, a centralist point of view emerges, the light is the divinity, or the essence as Plato put it, the object is the human, the main material of the divine creation, and the shadow, the pseudo perception of the matter, and of course, the human. However, with the suggestion that the shadow can become the main person and vice versa, then the center and any explanation based upon a centrist approach is shattered. In other words, any kind of explanation stemming from a central point of view will leave out many others, and although at first sight it might seem reasonable/logical, not one generalization can comprehend the whole and therefore it cannot reflect/define reality.

- *A girl becomes a man*. The novel also explores sexist views and in a humorous way tries to shed some light upon the constructed nature of gender roles. According to a widely accepted belief, the rainbow marks the border between the two worlds, and any person who can pass through it to the other side is transformed into the opposite sex. This belief is used as a parody, combined with the cave as another setting, and source of mystery (it can even be said that the "cave" refers to Freud's "id", but we do not choose it as it is a modernist term/perception). When the man chases the beautiful girl with the intention of raping her, she manages to escape into a cave, passing through the rainbow, so she becomes a man, and this time she begins to chase him with the same intention. This marking change can be interpreted as the relativity of power relations. As throughout history, it has been the male who has made the decisions, rules, beliefs, social codes, laws and education, the gender roles have been determined in accordance with their wishes, ideas and interests. Yet, like the change of sex in the story, the hint is given that if history had been created with the females in power, then the same intentions would still be, just as strictly and evil as they have been so far. Therefore, the oppression does not stem from the sex of a person, but the identity of the one in power. In the story, the hunter becomes a hunt and the hunt is transformed into a hunter, which we interpret as a clear sign of power relations.

Conclusion

Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri, a novel by İhsan Oktay Anar, is produced in the form of postmodern narrative, making use of such techniques as intertextuality, parody and irony. By employing these narrative techniques, the novel deals with such themes and topics as death, meaning of life, identity crisis, religion, fear of the unknown, tale-telling, legends, myths and mythologies. Anar creates intertextual relations with many texts, ideas, beliefs, religions, names, tales and persons from different times and cultures. He sometimes parodies these, sometimes approaches with an ironical tone, and sometimes just constructs cognitive or emotional relations.

In *Efrasiyab's Tales*, the following mythical / metaphysical concepts, ideas, beliefs and themes are parodied and offered to the reader for questioning through the creation of contexts: blood feuds, the content of folk songs, the role of clergymen, praying and prayers, religious sermons, wolf man, Buddhism, Islamic beliefs and practices such as pilgrimage to Mecca, such religious figures as Solomon, Joseph and Pharaoh and their life stories, gnomes, fairies, white-beard wise-men, two-headed giants, devils, demons, seven dwarfs and three bandits. All these elements are sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly handled and the reader is exposed to various perspectives so that they can question and evaluate these from different perspectives. The main tool in handling these elements is postmodern parody, which is diffused into almost every line in the novel.

İhsan Oktay Anar develops new narrative methods to base his way of handling the concept of reality. The main methods he uses in "Efrâsiyâb'ın Hikâyeleri" are based on the transformation of one entity into its opposite or another entity, a technique which astounds the reader and forces him/her to become aware of various and conflicting dimensions of one single issue. In the novel, the following transformations are employed by İhsan Oktay Anar: (1) a character/type is transformed from his real being person into his own image; (2) the image appearing in a dream becomes a reality; (3) one character is presented with double identities, though he has the same personality; (4) the same character/type with double identities is involved in a dialogic (or monologic) discussion with himself (or his other self); (5) a character/type looks at his own image in the mirror and it becomes alive; (6) the shadow becomes the main person while the person turns into a shadow; (7) a girl becomes a man.

Through these narrative techniques, the concept of objective reality is destroyed and relativity is provided with all dimensions. However, not suggesting any new perspective instead of the intentionally destroyed ones, the author leaves the center blank. He intentionally does not suggest anything to be placed in the center, for such a suggestion would mean that he has a preference and that his approach is selective. This would also mean that the previously specified and constructed center is not "good" enough, so he is suggesting a "better", "truer", "more convenient", "more real" center. This is completely compatible with the idea of relativity. Instead of a signification relationship, the author suggests self-signification, in which a sign does not signify anything out there, but just reflects its own "self", if there is any.

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