

POSTMODERN AESTHETICS AND DOUBLE-CODING IN EARLY NARRATIVE TEXTS: “FROM ONE THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS” TO “DON QUIXOTE”

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ABSTRACT. *This article explores the emergence of postmodern aesthetic principles in early narrative texts that predate the formal rise of postmodernism as a literary movement. Works such as One Thousand and One Nights, The Decameron, Candide, and particularly Don Quixote by Miguel de Cervantes are examined as precursors of postmodern narrative techniques. The study focuses on literary devices such as double-coding, irony, parody, satire, and stylistic heterogeneity, demonstrating how these elements function simultaneously on multiple semantic levels. Special attention is given to the contrast between elevated and colloquial discourse in Don Quixote, which anticipates postmodern narrative playfulness and reader-oriented multiplicity of meaning. The article argues that these early texts not only influenced modern narrative forms but also laid the conceptual groundwork for postmodern literary experimentation.*

Keywords: *postmodernism; double-coding; parody; irony; early novel; narrative discourse; Don Quixote*

Although postmodernism is conventionally associated with the cultural and philosophical shifts of the late twentieth century, contemporary literary theory increasingly acknowledges that many postmodern narrative strategies appeared much earlier in literary history. As Linda Hutcheon argues, postmodernism is less a rupture than a mode of re-reading and re-contextualizing earlier forms through irony, parody, and self-reflexivity (Hutcheon, 1988). From this perspective, early narrative traditions such as *One Thousand and One Nights*, *The Decameron*, and *Candide* can be understood as precursors that anticipate postmodern aesthetics through narrative plurality and genre hybridity.

Within this historical continuum, *Don Quixote* by Miguel de Cervantes occupies a central position. Frequently described as the first modern novel, the text simultaneously deconstructs medieval chivalric romance while constructing a new form of self-conscious narrative (Watt, 1957). This dual function aligns closely with postmodern strategies, particularly in its ironic treatment of literary tradition and its destabilization of narrative authority.

One of the most significant postmodern elements in *Don Quixote* is double-coding - the coexistence of multiple levels of meaning within the same textual structure. On one level, the novel operates as a parody of chivalric romances, exposing their artificial conventions



and exaggerated heroism. On another level, it offers a profound meditation on the nature of reality, illusion, and authorship. This dual address allows the text to appeal simultaneously to popular audiences and intellectually sophisticated readers, a technique later theorized as a defining feature of postmodern narrative (Hutcheon, 1988).

The dialogic relationship between Don Quixote and Sancho Panza further reinforces the novel's postmodern sensibility. Don Quixote's elevated, archaic, and idealized discourse contrasts sharply with Sancho Panza's pragmatic, colloquial language rooted in folk wisdom and proverbs. According to Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism, such interaction between competing voices destabilizes monologic meaning and produces semantic openness (Bakhtin, 1981). In *Don Quixote*, this linguistic and ideological tension undermines rigid distinctions between high and low culture, anticipating postmodernism's rejection of hierarchical aesthetic values.

Moreover, parody and satire in the novel function not merely as comedic devices but as instruments of literary self-reflection. Cervantes repeatedly foregrounds the fictionality of the narrative, questioning the reliability of authors, translators, and historical sources. This self-referential strategy closely resembles metafiction, a core postmodern technique that problematizes the boundary between reality and textual construction (Waugh, 1984). As a result, the reader is encouraged to actively interpret and negotiate meaning rather than passively consume the narrative.

In light of these features, *Don Quixote* may be viewed as a transitional text that bridges classical narrative traditions and postmodern literary experimentation. Its use of double-coding, dialogism, parody, and narrative self-awareness demonstrates that postmodern aesthetics are not confined to a specific historical period, but rather emerge through recurring literary strategies that challenge fixed meaning, genre stability, and authoritative discourse.

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