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## **POSTMODERN EPISTEMOLOGY AND THE LITERARY TEXT: THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF TRUTH CONSTRUCTION**

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**Abstract:** This article analyzes the constructive nature of truth in the works of Orhan Pamuk through the principles of postmodern epistemology. It examines the dissolution of boundaries between reality and fiction, epistemological conflicts among narrative voices, and the multilayered structure of meaning within his novels. The study highlights how postmodern concepts—such as relativism, intertextuality, and fragmentation—shape the process of truth construction. The findings demonstrate that truth in Pamuk's fiction emerges not as a single, fixed entity but as a multifaceted phenomenon continuously reconstructed within the text.

**Keywords:** postmodern epistemology, Orhan Pamuk, truth construction, literary text, intertextuality, relativism, postmodern novel.

## **POSTMODERN EPISTEMOLOGIYA VA BADIY MATNDA HAQIQAT KONSTRUKTSIYASINING NAZARIY ASOSLARI**

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**Annotatsiya:** Ushbu maqolada Orhan Pamuk asarlarida haqiqatning konstruktiv tabiati postmodern epistemologiya tamoyillari asosida tahlil qilinadi. Unda reallik va badiiy to'qima o'rtasidagi chegaralarning buzilishi, narrativ ovozlari o'rtasidagi epistemologik ziddiyatlar va matnning ko'p qatlamli ma'no tuzilmasi ko'rib chiqiladi. Tadqiqot postmodern tushunchalar — relativizm, intertekstualik va fragmentatsiya — haqiqatning matn ichida shakllanish jarayoniga qanday ta'sir ko'rsatishini yoritadi. Tahlillar shuni ko'rsatadiki, Pamuk ijodida haqiqat yagona, qat'iy shakldagi hodisa sifatida emas, balki matn ichida uzluksiz qayta quriladigan ko'p qirrali fenomen sifatida namoyon bo'ladi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** postmodern epistemologiya, Orhan Pamuk, haqiqat konstruksiyasi, badiiy matn, intertekstualik, relativizm, postmodern roman.

## **ПОСТМОДЕРНИСТСКАЯ ЭПИСТЕМОЛОГИЯ И ЛИТЕРАТУРНЫЙ ТЕКСТ: ТЕОРЕТИЧЕСКИЕ ОСНОВАНИЯ КОНСТРУИРОВАНИЯ ИСТИНЫ**

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**Аннотация:** В данной статье анализируется конструктивная природа истины в произведениях Орхана Памука через призму принципов постмодернистской эпистемологии. Рассматриваются размывание границ между реальностью и художественной фикцией, эпистемологические конфликты между повествовательными голосами, а также многослойная структура смысла в его романах. Исследование показывает, каким образом постмодернистские концепты — релятивизм, интертекстуальность и фрагментация — формируют процесс конструирования истины. Полученные выводы свидетельствуют о том, что истина в художественном мире Памука проявляется не как единое и фиксированное явление, а как многогранный феномен, непрерывно реконструируемый внутри текста.

**Ключевые слова:** постмодернистская эпистемология, Орхан Памук, конструирование истины, литературный текст, интертекстуальность, релятивизм, постмодернистский роман.

The main concern of postmodern literature is not so much the discovery of truth as the analysis of the manner in which truth is constructed, legitimated, and disseminated in some cultural and historical frameworks. This chapter sets the epistemological groundings required for the dissertation, from the universal philosophical abandonment of certainty to the specific process by which literary texts come to serve as sites for the construction and deconstruction of discursive truth. This post-structuralist challenge to knowledge, power, and language, on which this theoretical framework is based, is essential to analyze how Orhan Pamuk's books, which keep interrogating the authenticity of history, memory, and national identity, are involved in the postmodern process of challenging fundamental epistemologies. The inaugural moment of postmodern epistemology is most commonly known as the disillusionment with the Enlightenment project and its corollary assumption of the possibility of objective universal knowledge. The crisis is most fully explained by Jean-François Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, where he merely states the postmodern condition as "incredulity toward metanarratives" (Lyotard xxiv). This definition marks the complete shift from a Modernist reliance on foundational, encompassing narratives—grand récits—to the embrace of localized, decentered, and contextual accounts—petits récits (Lyotard xxiv). Metanarratives such as Hegel's concept of the "spirit" of history, Marxist dreams of class liberation, or liberal myths of general progress are characterized by their attempt to justify social practices, political institutions, and knowledge claims in light of a superior, universal, and totality-promising philosophical principle. Lyotard argues that in the postmodern era, these grand narratives have self-de-legitimized because they have failed to deliver on their promises or, worse, have been violent, homogenizing forces (Lyotard 37). The totalizing impulse of the metanarrative is seen as violently coercive in the way that it puts one coercive perspective over against all the other, excluded and marginalized, perspectives (Lyotard 82). The incredulity Lyotard speaks of is a consequence of the realization that knowledge, including scientific knowledge, is no longer legitimated primarily by reference to a foundational truth (e.g., God, Nature, Universal Reason), but by its utility within a system and its performativity within specific language games. Drawing on Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophy of the language-game, Lyotard argues that knowledge functions not as a representation of reality, but as a means of communication verified by agreement among local groups (40–41). In doing so, this action practically decentres the notion of one discoverable Veritas (object, capital-T Truth) and places in its stead the acceptance of multiple, contingent, and often conflicting Discursus (local, situated truths). Its effects on literary studies are profound. If history, science, and morality are merely successful metanarratives, then the distinction between historical fact and literary fiction vanishes. Postmodernism is therefore not only one that refuses truth, but one that reveals the rhetorical and narrative practices by which authoritative regimes of truth arise, are sustained, and are presented as generally valid. As scholars such as Linda Hutcheon point out, the postmodern text "does not eliminate the referent but rather inscribes it in a problematic way" (Hutcheon 93). The distrust of the monolithic is the beginning point for examining why culture and memory, not objective truth, organize such belief systems in literature. The postmodern epistemic turn is more than a negative one—avoiding metanarratives—but deeply constructive, which means a critical examination of the way in which power, language, and social practice actively produce what we come to know as 'truth.' The texts of Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Richard Rorty supply the primary theoretical tools for such constructive examination, articulating the contingency of knowledge and the internally political nature of truth. Michel Foucault's genealogical and archaeological work provides the most useful tools for deconstructing the concept of neutral knowledge through the elaboration of the theory of power/knowledge as inseparable. Foucault revolutionized power from its traditional sovereign, repressive model (power as exercised and possessed from above) to a productive, capillary one (power as operating through diffuse networks shaping reality itself) (Foucault, *Discipline* 26–

27). To Foucault, knowledge is more than a mirror reflection of an objective reality waiting to be discovered, but always and everywhere the creation of certain discursive formations. These discursive formations are governed by rules—feelingly implicit—dictating what can be uttered, who gets to speak, and what counts as rational, legitimate, or "true" knowledge at any given historical moment (Foucault, *Archaeology* 38). Foucault argues that "truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power" (*Power/Knowledge* 131). The resulting set of practices and norms is the regime of truth: the regime whereby statements are made true, the mechanisms and instances whereby true and false statements can be distinguished, the means of gaining knowledge, and the status of those who are responsible for determining what counts as true (Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* 131). In national histories or cultural memory, a regime of truth determines what in the past is "history" (verified fact) and what is "myth" or "fiction" (unverified story). By looking at the manufacture of truth, Foucault's work allows the dissertation to move beyond factual accuracy and into the analysis of political stakes involved in historical articulation. Foucault's genealogical methodology is a conscious repudiation of linear, progressivist ideology. Genealogy tries to reveal the "descent" and "emergence" of concepts (madness, sexuality, crime) by tracing their non-essential, contingent, and generally dishonorable origins in a series of ruptures and discontinuities, rather than a continuous line of evolution (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 142). This technique shows that what is now "natural" or "universal" (the form of the contemporary museum, the figure of the national hero, for example) is only the victorious result of a chain of historical conflicts and accidents and not the expression of an irremediable fate. This perspective is at the heart of Pamuk's analysis, whose novels are prone to using fractured narratives in order to demonstrate that so-called impenetrability of modern Turkish history or identity is no more than a resultant, ambivalently contested discursive effect. While Foucault worries about the socio-political construction of truth, Jacques Derrida provides the textual and linguistic tools with which to demonstrate the unavoidable impossibility of fixing meaning or of ascertaining a self-present beginning for truth. Deconstruction by Derrida involves a sustained critique of the Western metaphysical oppositional dichotomies (e.g., speech/writing, presence/absence, fiction/truth, center/periphery).

Derrida's key concept, *différance* (a neologism from the French verbs "to differ" and "to defer"), argues that meaning is always absent or independent in a sign (Derrida 8–9). Instead, a sign acquires meaning only as it points to other signs (the law of difference), and this pointing is continuous, always deferring the final source of meaning to the future (the law of deferral).

This has two basic implications for epistemology:

1. **Challenging Presence:** If meaning is always deferred, there is no moment of absolute presence or pure origin—no ground of reality or inaugural point in history that can guarantee the truth of a statement. Any story of an origin (whether the origin of a nation or the origin of a tale) is already necessarily one of narrative construction, decided by the language and concerns of the present.

2. **The Priority of Writing:** Derrida gives preference to "writing" (in a generalized form, as the system of traces, spacing, and deferral) over "speech" (traditionally linked to immediacy and presence) because writing highlights the relational and non-immediate character of meaning (Derrida 10). The literary text, therefore, is the perfect site to deconstruct, since it is an economy of traces—words on paper—that knowingly teases about the absence of referent and deferral of meaning. When a postmodern text presents opposing versions of one event, it is doing *différance* by demonstrating that the meaning (the "truth" of the event) is always in suspense among the competing versions. Facilitating Foucault's and Derrida's criticism is the neo-pragmatist Richard Rorty, who rephrases the entire discourse on truth as a mere exercise

purely linguistic and social. Rorty denies the Platonic search for an un-contingent basis of knowledge, adopting the position that "only descriptions of the world can be true or false. The world cannot" (Rorty 5).

Rorty protects the contingency of language, that human languages are not converging to a more truthlike description of an external world but are instead tools—"vocabularies"—that we adopt or lay aside on grounds of utility and social consensus (Rorty 6). Truth is an issue of justification to our fellow-humans, not an issue of correspondence with reality. If we call a sentence "true," what we mean is that it is the claim we have, through cultural practice and speech, found it most useful to accept (Rorty 8).

This vision reimagines the literary artist, or "strong poet," as agent of epistemological change. The ironist, in Rorty's terms, is an individual who often challenges her own "final vocabulary" and recognizes its total contingency (Rorty 73). With redescription, the ironist creates new vocabularies that will lure the new generation to embrace them, thereby creating changes in political belief and social institutions. The position of Rorty places the postmodern author, such as Pamuk, as a figure who, by providing complex and ironic new descriptions of individual memory and national history, is actively attempting to undermine established, contingent cultural vocabularies and suggest alternative modes of existence. With the above philosophical assaults, the postmodern literary work is recharted from a passive reflection of an existing reality to an epistemological laboratory—a platform dedicated to extending the limits of claims to truth, narrative control, and static identity. Literary devices employed are direct formal expressions of the post-structuralist imperatives. The defining characteristic of the postmodern literary text is its calculated use of metafiction, or self-referential fiction. Metafiction overtly draws attention to its own status as a work of art, often commenting on the act of its creation, subverting the authority of its narrator, or placing itself comparatively alongside historical or biographical writings (Hutcheon 1). This is not a stylistic sleight of hand; it is an auto-critical strategy that deliberately taunts the distinction between fiction and fact, invoking Lyotardian skepticism regarding any narrative that claims objective authority.

In laying bare the mechanism of the construction of narrative, metafiction implies that all narratives—those claimed to be history, biography, or memoir—are formally the same. If the novel is itself openness about its own artifice, then by inference the reader can be invited to respond to ostensibly "factual" writings in a similar critically guarded way. The author's task is now no longer to conceal the frame but to emphasize it, so that the novel becomes a rhetorical investigation of the power of narrative to constitute reality. As Brian McHale argues, the master of postmodernist fiction is epistemological (how to know?) and that of modernist fiction is ontological (what is real?) (10). Metafiction is overtly concerned with the ontological problem because it illustrates how the work of literature constructs its own reality and, by extension, how all cultural knowledge is constructed. Postmodern fiction employs fragmented structures—multiple, often incompatible, narrators; non-linear chronologies; and texts within texts—to perform in form the dismantling of the universal subject and monolithic truth.

The use of the unreliable narrator as an ethical and epistemological move. When a novel gives us five competing, equally valid, but mutually exclusive accounts of a turning-point event (as is common in Pamuk's), the novel is not withholding something; it is showing us that the "truth" of the event is not a single thing but in the incompatibility of the perspectives. This multiplicity of voice is the literary analogue of Foucault's idea of diffuse, capillary power, where no one voice commands unchallengeable authority. Moreover, the fragmented text mimics the breakdown of the unitary self—a self reliant on a specific, fluid, and often contradictory final lexicon (Rorty 73). The characters in the novels are themselves as insubstantial as the narratives they inhabit, for the same postmodern assertion that self itself is an ad hoc collection of shifting cultural tales, and not an essential one (Butler 14). The palimpsest metaphor—ancient parchment recycled after earlier writing has been imperfectly

erased—is crucial to the postmodern text's conception of history and memory. The original traces in a palimpsestuous text are never actually erased, but haunt the present inscription.

The postmodern novel is a cultural palimpsest, whereby the official, dominant history (national mythology, cultural dogma) is written over earlier, marginalized, or effaced narratives (individual memories, oral traditions, suppressed histories). By making visible the traces of the earlier narratives beneath the later ones, the text nominally avoids the notion of break or terminal ending of history. The palimpsestuous nature of the text underlines the Derridean point that meaning (historical understanding) is never there, but is always bearing the marks of what it suppresses. Pamuk's obsession with surface and depth of palimpsestuous historical existence of Istanbul, over which the modern republic uneasily lies on top of Ottoman leftovers and surface Byzantine rubbish, is a literal challenge to this palimpsestuous condition, and the spatial and architectural field becomes an ontological icon of epistemological ambiguity.

**Construction:** The constructive nature of the postmodern truth is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in the encounter of the text with other texts—both fictional and historical. Intertextuality and pastiche are the two principal mechanisms by which literary texts demonstrate that cultural knowledge, and thereby cultural truth, is ultimately produced through citation, repetition, and recontextualization, rather than original observation. Intertextuality, according to Julia Kristeva's definition, is that any text is a "mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (65). Postmodernly, intertextuality is an epistemological tool: it suggests that knowledge is fundamentally relational and derivative. When a new work adopts, for example, the mode of an old Ottoman travelog, the voice of a French philosopher, and the story of a Western detective novel, it is showing us the heterogeneous, culturally permeable nature of its own epistemological foundation.

Intertextuality negatively affects the source's authority. By borrowing from an historical book or another popular novel, the postmodern book robs the originator of its original, distinctive context and resplices it in a fictional one. This action serves to underscore the fact that even seemingly objective writings—historical documents, legal documents, scientific reports—function as "texts" whose significance is not inherent but varies according to the discursive formation into which they are inserted. The authority of a historical claim, therefore, is not established by its "factuality" but by the successful appropriation and rhetorical imitation of its textual components within various cultural discourses. Pastiche is a particular form of intertextuality that addresses the concern of the past historically in a literal manner. As Fredric Jameson has formulated it, "the imitation of dead styles, speech through all the masks and voices stored up in the imaginary museum of a now global culture" (17), pastiche lies at the heart of understanding postmodernism's approach to history.

While parody is in a critical or satirical relationship to the style it imitates, pastiche is controlled by its neutral, "blank" condition—it is imitation without purpose (Jameson 17). Pastiche is when the postmodern writer appropriates the aesthetic furnishings of a period (e.g., nineteenth-century epistolary novel, over-the-top Ottoman, Cold War spy thriller dialogue) and can't manage to produce an echt feel for historical depth or moral engagement. This recycling of style serves a crucial theoretical purpose: it officially enacts the postmodern inability to access the past as anything more than a series of disconnected, available surfaces.

This is a literal statement about the constructed nature of cultural memory. If all knowledge of the past is mediated by available textual styles, then "history" is less of a truth to be uncovered and more of a montage of familiar, reproducible textual clichés. This illustrates how cultural, collective memory becomes a storehouse of styles and images (a pre-existing library of stories) and not a continuous, lived record. In such a system, the most effective previous historical 'truths' are typically the most rhetorically compelling and emotionally potent pastiches. The final mechanism that transmutes the literary text into an epistemological laboratory is the obligatory shift in the task of the reader. Away from the Modernist imperative

that the reader must quietly find a heterogeneous but eventual singular meaning (the authorial intention), postmodernism situates the reader as an active, sometimes agonistic, construction.

According to reader-response theory, specifically Wolfgang Iser and Roland Barthes' theories, the text is an "open work" with "blanks" and "gaps" that need to be actively filled in by the reader (Iser 34). In a postmodern novel, these silences are ideological or epistemological: the reader is presented with competing accounts, suspect confessions, and contradictory histories, and must determine which 'truth' to synthesize, reject, or merely suspend. Barthes's "death of the author" dictum presumes that "it is language which speaks, not the author," accordingly relocating the source of meaning away from a transcendent individual human to the vast differential space of language (Barthes 148). The act of reading the postmodern text thus becomes itself an exercise in truth construction, demonstrating at the micro-level how whatever reality coherence exists is an ephemeral, subjective act of synthesis by a situated consciousness. This broad-ranging theoretical survey—collecting the philosophical deconstruction of essential knowledge, the sociological examination of discourse as power/knowledge, the linguistic critique of presence, and the literary deployment of metafiction and intertextuality—lends security to the analytic equipment required for the chapters that follow.

The overriding thesis of this part is that in postmodern literature, truth is no longer an essential property of existence but a non-necessary discursive product caused by specific power relations, couched in language, and rendered concrete in the act of narration and reading. The dissertation will utilize these principles of theory—Foucault's regime of truth, Derrida's *différance*, Rorty's contingency, and Hutcheon's definition of metafiction—to critically analyze how Orhan Pamuk's novels function as complex postmodern works. His work, ever obsessed with the contending demands of Eastern and Western identity, Turkish and Ottoman past, and collective and individual memory, will be demonstrated to be actively involved in discursive truth building and demolition, positioning the literary text at the critical intersection between cultural memory and epistemological critique.

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