

**THE ROLE OF FRAGMENTED NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN POSTMODERN
ENGLISH NOVELS**

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Abstract: This article examines the function and significance of fragmentation in several postmodern English novels, focusing in particular on *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *Midnight's Children*, *White Noise*, and *Atonement*. The article examines how fragmentation, in addition to being a stylistic device, serves as a philosophical and cultural response to the chaotic nature of truth, identity, and history in the postmodern era. Using textual analysis and comparative methodology, the study demonstrates how fragmented narrative structures reflect the fractured experience of modern life. The results suggest that the aesthetics and ideological concerns of postmodern English fiction revolve around fragmentation.

Keywords: Postmodernism, fragmented narrative, metafiction, historiographic metafiction, ontological instability, reader participation.

**РОЛЬ ФРАГМЕНТИРОВАННОЙ ПОВЕСТВОВАТЕЛЬНОЙ СТРУКТУРЫ В
ПОСТМОДЕРНИСТСКИХ АНГЛИЙСКИХ РОМАНАХ**

Аннотация: В данной статье исследуется функция и значение фрагментации в нескольких постмодернистских английских романах, в частности, в романах «Женщина французского лейтенанта», «Дети полуночи», «Белый шум» и «Искушение». В статье рассматривается, как фрагментация, помимо того, что является стилистическим приемом, служит философским и культурным ответом на хаотичную природу истины, идентичности и истории в постмодернистскую эпоху. Используя текстовый анализ и сравнительную методологию, исследование демонстрирует, как фрагментированные нарративные структуры отражают раздробленный опыт современной жизни. Результаты показывают, что эстетические и идеологические проблемы постмодернистской английской литературы вращаются вокруг фрагментации.

Ключевые слова: Постмодернизм, фрагментированное повествование, метафикция, историографическая метафикция, онтологическая нестабильность, участие читателя.

**POSTMODERN INGLIZ ROMANLARIDA PARCHALANGAN HIKOYA
TUZILISHINING ROLI**

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqola bir nechta postmodern ingliz romanlarida parchalanishning funktsiyasi va ahamiyatini ko'rib chiqadi, xususan, "Frantsuz leytenantining ayoli", "Yarim tun bolalari", "Oq shovqin" va "To'lov" ga e'tibor qaratiladi. Maqolada parchalanish uslubiy vosita bo'lishdan tashqari, postmodern davrda haqiqat, o'zlik va tarixning tabiatiga qanday falsafiy va madaniy javob sifatida xizmat qilishi ko'rib chiqiladi. Matn tahlili va qiyosiy metodologiyadan foydalangan holda, tadqiqot parchalangan hikoya tuzilmalari zamonaviy hayotning singan tajribasini qanday aks ettirishini ko'rsatadi. Natijalar shuni ko'rsatadiki, postmodern ingliz fantastikasining estetikasi va mafkuraviy tashvishlari parchalanish atrofida aylanadi.

Kalit so'zlar: Postmodernizm, parchalangan hikoya, metafiksatsiya, tarixshunoslik metafiksiyasi, ontologik beqarorlik, o'quvchi ishtiroki.

Introduction: In the latter half of the 20th century, postmodern English fiction arose as a response to both modernist experimentation and realist traditions. Postmodern authors expanded the skepticism of modernist writers toward reality, history, and narrative authority itself, whereas modernist writers challenged subjectivity and perception.

According to Jean-François Lyotard (1979), the postmodern condition is characterized by "incredulity toward metanarratives", arguing that grand, unifying stories (like progress, enlightenment, or Marxism) have lost their credibility in a technologically advanced, knowledge-based society. Lyotard analyzes how knowledge, science, and technology have changed, becoming fragmented, decentralized, and subject to market forces, shifting from a quest for universal truth to a focus on localized "language games". This rejection of universal explanatory systems profoundly influences literary form. If grand narratives collapse, then narrative structure itself must also fragment. Furthermore, Lyotard introduced the term 'postmodernism', which was previously only used by art critics, into philosophy and social sciences, with the following observation: "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives".¹

Similarly, the deconstructive philosophy of Jacques Derrida (1967) emphasizes the instability of meaning, arguing that language constantly defers final interpretation. In literature, this instability manifests through disrupted chronology, unreliable narrators, multiple endings, and textual self-awareness.²

As a result, fractured narrative structure becomes a formal embodiment of postmodern philosophy rather than just a stylistic innovation. This essay examines the ways in which fragmentation functions in a few postmodern English novels and explains why it becomes essential to the aesthetics of the time.

Literature review: Postmodern narrative techniques have been extensively studied by academics.

In the postmodern condition, Jean-François Lyotard makes the case that "incredulity toward metanarratives" is a hallmark of postmodernism. Fragmented storytelling is directly impacted by this mistrust of large narratives.

In a poetics of postmodernism, Linda Hutcheon presents the idea of "historicographic metafiction," which describes how postmodern novels blend historical occurrences with self-aware narrative devices. Hutcheon claims that fragmentation is a reflection of historical knowledge's volatility.³

In postmodernist literature, Brian McHale makes the case that postmodern literature moves away from modernism's epistemological concerns and toward ontological ones, or inquiries into the nature of reality itself. A structural technique for representing several alternative universes is fragmentation.⁴

Moreover, metafiction is defined by Patricia Waugh (1984) in metafiction as fiction that intentionally highlights its inherent artificiality. Fragmented forms and narrative breaks reveal fiction as a product.⁵

¹ Lyotard, Jean-François (1979). *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*.

² Derrida, J. (1967). *Of Grammatology*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

³ Hutcheon, L. (1988). *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Routledge.

⁴ McHale, B. (1987). *Postmodernist Fiction*. Methuen.

⁵ Waugh, P. (1984). *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. Methuen.

Thus, fragmented narrative forms are intimately associated with philosophical skepticism, historiographic revision, and metafictional experimentation, according to prior studies.

Materials: Comparative technique and qualitative textual analysis are used in this work. As primary texts, four significant postmodern English novels were chosen:

- The playwright Harold Pinter adapted the 1981 British romantic drama film *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, which was directed by Karel Reisz and produced by Leon Clore. It is based on John Fowles' 1969 book *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Carl Davis composed the music soundtrack, while Freddie Francis did the photography.

Jeremy Irons and Meryl Streep feature in the movie. Hilton McRae, Peter Vaughan, Colin Jeavons, Liz Smith, Patience Collier, Richard Griffiths, David Warner, Alun Armstrong, Penelope Wilton, and Leo McKern are among the other performers who appear.

The movie was nominated for five Oscars. Pinter was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay, and Streep was nominated for Best Actress.⁶

- India's transition from British colonial authority to independence and division is the subject of Salman Rushdie's second book, *Midnight's Children*, which was released by Jonathan Cape in 1981 and featured a cover designed by Bill Botten. Saleem Sinai, the main character, narrates this postcolonial, postmodern, and magical realist tale within the framework of historical occurrences. The use of fictitious narratives to preserve history is a self-reflexive approach.

Midnight's Children won the Booker Prize and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize in 1981, and it sold over a million copies in the UK alone.⁷

- Don DeLillo's eighth book, *White Noise*, was released by Viking Press in 1985. The U.S. National Book Award for Fiction was given to it.

One of the best examples of postmodern literature is *White Noise*. It introduced DeLillo to a far wider audience and is regarded as his breakthrough piece. *Time's* List of the 100 Best Novels featured the book. The Panasonic Corporation first opposed to DeLillo's plan to call the book *Panasonic*.

Director Noah Baumbach turned the book into a movie in late 2022, which starred Adam Driver and Greta Gerwig.⁸

- James McAvoy, Keira Knightley, Saoirse Ronan, Romola Garai, and Vanessa Redgrave feature in Joe Wright's 2007 romantic war tragedy *Atonement*. It is based on Ian McEwan's 2001 book. Starting in the 1930s, the movie follows a crime and its effects over a period of 60 years. It was filmed in England and produced for StudioCanal. It was released in theaters in the United Kingdom on September 7, 2007, and North America on December 7, 2007, precisely three months later. Universal Studios is the distributor for the majority of the world.⁹

Results: Several important functions of fragmented narrative structure are revealed by the analysis:

1. Fragmentation and narrative authority: The narrator presents several possible outcomes in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Reader participation is increased by this structural fragmentation, which compels readers to make interpretive decisions.

⁶ The French Lieutenant's Woman (film) - Wikipedia <https://share.google/Mtt76pSBuQmJaIDkV>

⁷ *Midnight's Children* wins the Best of the Booker". The Man Booker Prizes. Archived from the original on 21 November 2008.

⁸ Grossman, Lev (January 11, 2010). "White Noise (1985), by Don DeLillo". *Time*. Archived from the original on November 9, 2013. Retrieved August 4, 2014.

⁹ "Atonement (2007) - Financial Information". *The Numbers*. Retrieved 8 March 2021.

2. Historiographic doubt and fragmentation: Saleem Sinai, the narrator of *Midnight's Children*, uses fractured personal memory to rebuild Indian national history. His narrative contradictions are indicative of what Hutcheon (1988) refers to as historiographic metafiction, which combines fictitious instability with real occurrences. The book shows that history is narratively generated rather than fixed.

3. Ontological plurality and narrative fragmentation: *White Noise's* narrative fragmentation reflects consumer culture and media overload. The volatility of contemporary life is replicated through disconnected discussions and sudden scene changes. Postmodern fiction emphasizes ontological instability, according to McHale (1987). The fragmentation of the book reflects how media saturation and consumer culture have affected modern reality.

4. Moral ambiguity and fragmentation: The last revelation of *Atonement* completely reorganizes the story (McEwan, 2001). The text raises doubts about the ability of narrative to actually "atone" for previous transgressions. This change in metafiction supports Waugh's (1984) argument that narrative truth is undermined by postmodern fiction.

Discussion: In postmodern English novels, fragmented narrative structure serves a number of interrelated purposes.

First, Lyotard's (1979) mistrust of large narratives is embodied in fragmentation.

Second, it backs up Hutcheon's (1988) assertion that history is shaped by narrative.

Thirdly, it exemplifies the ontological multiplicity idea proposed by McHale (1987).

Fourth, it supports the idea that metafiction is a self-reflexive narrative disruption, as proposed by Waugh (1984).

Fragmentation is therefore an ideological statement about reality and knowledge rather than just a visual experiment.

Conclusion: In conclusion, fragmented narrative structure is an essential manifestation of postmodern philosophy and cultural consciousness rather than just a creative experiment in postmodern English novels. The postmodern situation is characterized by skepticism about great tales, as theorists like Jean-François Lyotard highlight. This skepticism is formally reflected in fragmented storytelling. Jacques Derrida's discussion of meaning instability, Linda Hutcheon's concept of historiographic metafiction, Brian McHale's ontological plurality, and Patricia Waugh's analysis of metafictional self-awareness all come together in the structural fragmentation of postmodern fiction.

The examination of *White Noise*, *Atonement*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, and *Midnight's Children* shows that fragmentation has several interrelated functions. In addition to reflecting media-saturated and multiple realities, it undermines historical certainty, challenges narrative authority, and turns readers from passive recipients into active interpreters. These works demonstrate that reality is layered rather than unitary that truth is produced rather than fixed through fractured chronology, numerous perspectives, narrative gaps, and other endings.

Consequently, it is important to view fragmented narrative structure as a purposeful and significant tactic that reflects the postmodern world's complexity, unpredictability, and plurality. It enables writers to question established modes of representation while encouraging readers to take part in the continuous process of meaning-making. At the core of postmodern English fiction is fragmentation, which serves as a philosophical statement about knowledge, identity, and reality in modern literature as well as an aesthetic device.

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