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POSTMODERN PARADIGM AND CURRENT STATUS OF LITERARY STUDIES IN THE WORLD

Abstract

This study aims to present a general consideration for the postmodern paradigmatic shift and the reflection of these debates about literature studies which has had an important change in 20th century. It is a well-known fact that application of positive scientific methods has been inadequate about the expected results. The first reason behind this assumption is that it examines the phenomenon of literature and these natural sciences methods are not conductive to analyze these artistic methods. Postmodern paradigm presents a more comprehensive ground for the arts and the sciences dealing with arts. Due to the identicalness between arts reception and reviewer, it finds problematic applying the scientific methods to artistic facts art and objectifying the analysis carried out by the artistic sciences. In fact, postmodernism in the literature analysis have began effective in the late of 1980s, but it can be mentioned about the relativist and indeterminist traditions dating back to 1960s. After 1980s, Eurocentric theories such as Poststructuralism, Intertextuality and Reader Response; theories based on social criticism such as Critical Theory and Feminist Theory began to join to these same postmodern objections. These objections’ common features can be listed as multidisciplinary versus scientific decomposition, eclecticism versus mono methodology; quantitative versus qualitative.

Key words: Literary Studies, Literary Scholarship, Postmodernism

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POSTMODERN PARADIGMA VE DÜNYADA EDEBIYAT ÇALIŞMALARININ BUGÜNKÜ GÖRÜNÜMÜ

Özet

INTRODUCTION
Debates regarding postmodern science have had various different effects on the discipline of literature. First, it has been widely acknowledged that the application of the methods of positive sciences to literary science has not met the expectations. As a matter of fact, although Postmodernism began to exert its influence literary studies after the 1980s, its roots date back to the 1960s because European-based theories such as Poststructuralism, Intertextuality and Reception, non-European theories like Postcolonialism and theories based on criticism directed towards the society such as Critical Theory and Feminist Theory began to combine their ways through Postmodern objections.

On the other hand, there are various reasons for the objections that literary science raises to the Positivist methodology. The first of these is its analysis of literature, which is an art. Postmodern paradigm, on the other hand, provides a more understanding ground to art and to sciences that study art. It finds it problematic, due to the association between the receiver of art and the analyst, to apply scientific methods to artistic phenomena and the objectivizing by art sciences of what they analyze. In literary analysis, too, analysis depends on the background, sensitivity and experience of the one doing the reading. The remedy that men of literature have found to transcend subjectivity and not digress from being scientific is to adhere to a method tightly and be careful while implementing it.

Basic Elements of Postmodern Paradigm in Scientific Methodology
The common points of these objections can be listed as interdisciplinariness against scientific differentiation, eclecticism against a single methodology and qualitative pattern against quantitative pattern.

Interdisciplinariness is the best way to comprehend holistically the sciences, which deepen within themselves and constantly divide into new sub-disciplines, and see the larger...
bonds between phenomena. Today, traditional disciplines such as linguistics, anthropology, sociology, philosophy, geography and history began to fade away while new hybrid disciplines and cultural studies which were born out of their interrelationships such as information sociology, literary sociology, culture science, politics, ethnology, pragmatics and sociolinguistics, and new hybrid areas of study such as media studies, women studies and Postcolonial studies started to appear. During the last fifty years, literary works have been analyzed using methods that have been adapted from social contexts such as Feminist, Marxist or gender studies or areas of study outside of literary science such as psychoanalysis, philosophy and history. These are new academic fields that fit the trends of the age and cater to its needs. Literary studies, too, began to open up to other social sciences and their terms, discourses, methods, techniques and interpretations after the 1980s in both Continental European and Anglo-American academic traditions.

Another result of the convergence of sciences involves exchange of interdisciplinary theories, methods and subjects. As a consequence of this exchange, studies based on the eclectic method, which attempts to explain phenomena using methods of different disciplines together, have multiplied. Qualitative design, on the other hand, is a contribution of hermeneutic/receptive paradigm to social sciences.

The continuing effect of positivism is still valid in literary studies because, like other social sciences, literary science has not been able to easily rid itself of the traces that its long-lived courtship with Positivism has left on its character. The reason why the stages of scientific methodology have not been totally abandoned in literary studies is that “basic methods such as comparison, assumption, analysis and synthesis are common to all regular sciences” (Wellek and Warren, 1973: 50).

The Positivist effect is most visible in applied studies because the Positivist methodology does not consider acceptable a theory devoid of a practical aspect. Indeed, today, literary science has an “applied literature” as a field of study just like applied linguistics and applied sociology. In addition to these, Darwinian literary studies, which deal with the evolution of literature by associating it with biological evolution, and ecocritics are other areas of study located somewhere between natural sciences and literary science.

Circles advocating Postmodernism in literature argue that scientific methods can be used only in a limited number of fields such as determining the historical and social contexts of the literary text and its author, edition critique and literary sociology.

Postmodernism as an artistic age, began to determine literary trends after the second half of the 20th century. Postmodern works of art expect a dynamic critical attitude from readers due to its critical and pluralistic values. Readers must stage a reaction against globalization, which was brought about by modernism, monuculturation and all kinds of normatism, and be active and productive in the face of works of art. After all, being able to perceive the pluralistic harmony of polysemious and multi-layered works of Postmodern times and objecting to the prevalent truths, authorities and cultures require being equipped with such critical skills.

Postmodern literary theories have had to pull themselves together to be able to understand postmodern texts because the new art contains a sociocultural and critical content. Postmodern theories such as Feminist Theory, Critical Theory, Reception Aesthetics and Poststructuralism, some of which have become a paradigm by making super-sciences suggestions while others have engaged only in literary criticism, agree that no literary theory
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can bring a final explanation in regard to the text and that each theory is an interpretation with an elusive nature. Especially, Reception Aesthetics and Poststructuralism make the meaning in literary texts totally relative.

**Postmodern criticism**, on the other hand, takes shape in accordance with the propositions of Postmodernism. These propositions have influenced the nature of literary criticism and all of its terminology. This is so much so that today a more neutral term “interpretation” is preferred over “analysis”, which has been borrowed from natural sciences and bears a covert claim for scientificness”. Today, instead of “analysis”, which contains an analytical “differentiation” that refers to a structuralist approach, “interpretation”, which has a more understanding/hermeneutic (interpretive) nature, is preferred.

The **methodology of Postmodern paradigm** also opposes the erstwhile conflict among the environment-author-work-reader and attempts to understand the work holistically through eclectic and multiple perspectives. It does not blame the flexible and relative character of literature, as Positivism did, for the fact that analytical efforts aimed at literature have not become a science; on the contrary, it attributes this to its methodology, which tries to imitate natural sciences. Positivism is the wrong solution to evaluate a literary work.

According to Wellek and Warren (1973: 2, 13), a literary critic is no different from “someone who writes articles on the history of painting or a musician” in terms of interpreting an object that he holds in his hand. Besides, literature does not have to imitate the method of natural sciences because it has always had unique, consistent and logical methods that do not belong to natural sciences. The fact that social sciences such as theology, philosophy and linguistics generated consistent knowledge before the emergence of modern science is an indication of this.

According to Charles P. Snowa, “literary science” is not a discipline that has its own unique nature, functioning, terminology and methodology but one that leaves its material at the analysis stage (Snow, 2001:60).

**Current Status of Literary Studies in the World**

The scene of today’s literary academy under the shadow of Postmodernism is multipartite and diverse. It is seen that literary studies are organized in different forms under the influence of different scientific paradigms and academic traditions. A huge variation is observed across the world especially in regard to the naming and organizing this scientific field. Since the Renaissance, when works of art were first handled scientifically, various different terms such as “critique”, “philology” and “literary science” and “literary studies” have been used in the Western academic traditions to describe literary studies. Literary studies were conducted within national linguistics in Continental Europe until the mid-20th century and universities gradually became institutions that had little to say to one another.

Literary studies in France in the 19th century, which were generally biography and text-based, tended to become a discipline under the title of literary science (science de la literatür) mostly under the influence of structuralist paradigms in the 20th century. Indeed, a French literary theoretician of Bulgarian origin Todorov defines literary language as “literary discourse”. Likewise “the subject of literary science is not the literary work itself: It is a specific discourse called literary discourse”, it is what makes a work a literary one (Yücel, 2007: 77).
Literary studies in Germany began to be expressed with the concept of literary science (literaturwissenschaft) in the late 19th century. However, during the mid-20th century, especially under the influence of Frankfurt School, when “high level works of literary works” were no longer the only objects of study, literary studies became a part of the culture studies whose borders were not clearly. In the past ten years, focus has shifted from traditional branches of science to studies on culture science and attempts have been made to reveal the interaction of German culture with other cultures through comparisons. A culture scientific literary study regards language as a cognitive performance linked to speaking and writing rather than as an idealized elevated artistic discourse. Accordingly, both literary and linguistic studies see no harm in incorporating new elements such as films, soap operas and art installations into their fields of study.

Literary science, which got on track to become a science with the paper entitled “Literature and Science” by Matthew Arnold in the Rede Conference (1882) in England, which possesses one of the most important of the Western science methodologies (Emre, 2012: 87), has an academic organization that is considered within the scope of national philologies.

Unlike the European-centered approach that sanctifies information, American academic tradition preferred the term literary science (literary scholarship) prior to 1950 (Foerster, 1941), but then it began to use the title literary studies.

The term literary science (литературоведение) used by the Russian academia has been largely influenced by the German School. However, contrary to the eclectic German methodology, Russian methodology is more doctrinarian. On the other hand, Japan, which follows American school, has its own literary methodology.

Despite all this disintegrated appearance, it can be said that disagreements on the goals and methods of literary criticism have decreased. Universities began to follow the academic trends in the world more closely with the process of globalization, which began in the 1990s, which caused the canons of national literary science to back down in the face of global canons. This integration has added an unprecedented wealth of methods and approaches to all literary studies. Due to this perspective, even genres such as strip novels and pulp fiction, which are considered to be non-literary, have begun to be studied. Many literary critics are attempting to carry methods and controversies of film critiques, media studies and intellectual and social history to literary readings.

Conclusion

However, the process of globalization has not been able to turn literary studies into a uniform field. Thematic, methodological and theoretical interests changing from country to country, from university to university and even from department to department become dominant in the form of fashions that change from time to time. For example, conservative critical approaches such as New Criticism and Structuralism are still prevalent in some European Universities. Critical Theory and approaches related to it that prioritize the socio-cultural context of the text such as pedagogy and discourse analysis dominate Anglo-American circles. While solutions that comply with the scientific method through the relationship of theory-method is common in some, a traditional criticism that does not take an interest in theory and method is widespread in some others.
The format of literary criticism displays a wide range of varieties from the strict formality of a scientific article to the free style of an essay. In other words, the fact that the cultural heritage, tradition of criticism, and the infrastructure of theory and education system are different from one another differentiates all methodological processes, notably terminology.

On the other hand, it cannot be argued that thinking on literature as an artistic science and literary criticism is taking place only in academic circles. Today, there is a significant artistic literary criticism in almost all countries that attempt to understand and analyze texts outside of academic circles. Indeed, this is an approach that considers controversial the importance of theory and practice in dealing with a text.

REFERENCES


