

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46991/AFA/2022.18.1.128>

**NARRATIVE CHALLENGES AND METAFICTIONAL
AWARENESS IN POSTMODERN LITERATURE:
READING ALI SMITH'S *THE WHOLE STORY*
AND OTHER STORIES**

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One of the widespread features of the literary postmodern, and one of its most relevant aspects in epistemic terms, is the foregrounding of the narrative dimension and the problematizing of “facts”. These narratological elements are both influenced by, and have an impact on contemporary notions of subjectivity and reality. In postmodern literature the “factuality” of the story is made questionable from different angles, and this is due to several aesthetic and stylistic elements which will be discussed with reference to Ali Smith’s collection of short stories *The Whole Story and Other Stories* (2004). This is an exemplary text of the literary postmodern, since it represents a unique instance of the dissolution of “factualities”, in which metafiction plays a relevant role. “Facts” in these stories are improbable, suspended, and indeterminate due to a narrative strategy which routinely questions “events” and/or exposes their epistemological constructedness. Readers of these short stories are not only trained into an awareness of metafiction as a major component of the narration, but they are also often left in a state of bewilderment leading to a more or less amused disbelief, or to a profound epistemological questioning.

Key words: *the Literary Postmodern, metafiction, unreliability, “facts” in fiction, fabrication of truth, forms of fabulation, fluid subjectivities.*

Introduction

In 2007 I discussed aspects of the postmodern, concerning in particular “the cloning and recycling of discourse” (Locatelli, 2007, p. 151), i.e., the proliferation of writing that grows upon itself, by making a widespread and potentially shrewd use of prior texts. I suggested that postmodern fiction often

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Received: 19.04.2022

Revised: 22.04.2022

Accepted: 08.05.2022



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re-writes prior texts in a gesture of both homage and admiration, and/or of disfigurement and iconoclasm. As a follow-up on that proposal, I will now argue that in postmodern literature the “factuality” of the story is made questionable from different angles, and that this is due to a number of aesthetic and stylistic elements, which can be found in significant postmodern works, for example, in: Antonia Byatt’s *The Biographer’s Tale* (2000; see Locatelli, 2007b), Julian Barnes’s *Flaubert’s Parrot* (1984; see Locatelli, 2007a), John Berger’s *Photocopies: Encounters* (1997; see Locatelli, 2007a).

In the following pages I shall discuss these elements in Ali Smith’s *The Whole Story and Other Stories*. These short stories are eloquent examples of the challenge to factuality, because it is impossible to gain in them a definitive and reliable perspective on the narrated events.

“Facts” in inverted commas, and metafiction: traces of the postmodern in literature

One of the widespread features of the literary Postmodern, and one of its most relevant aspects in epistemic terms, is the use of metafiction, i.e., the foregrounding of the narrative dimension (Waugh, 1984): another one is the problematizing of “facts”. I wish to propose that both of these narratological elements are influenced by, and have an impact on contemporary notions of subjectivity and reality.

What is at stake in literary postmodernism is the dismantling of neopositivist certainties on the nature of “facts”, i.e., on the possibility of ascertaining and explaining them through scientific verification, i.e., through both experimental and rational procedures. “Facts” have become extremely problematic also in another sense, i.e., in what has been called “the age of the global spectacle” and more recently, the age of “post-truth” (D’Ancona, 2017; Fuller, 2018; McIntyre, 2018).

The debate between Jean Baudrillard (1983, 1988, 1995), and Christopher Norris (1990, 1992) over the power of the image is highly significant of the postmodern epistemological context. The French philosopher’s approach suggests that it is impossible to grasp real as such, but only images and representations of “the real” make up the postmodern mindset and knowledge of facts. The distinction between image and reality is blurred in a general cultural politics of mimicry and counterfeit. Baudrillard’s approach has been sharply criticized by the British philosopher Christopher Norris, who warns against what he perceives as an uncritical image worship, an attitude which

risks fostering sensationalism and misinformation. These elements are proper to a cultural situation that seems to have been escalating in the past thirty years or so, with the widespread circulation of “fake news” and the advent of the so called “post-truth”.

And yet, literature seems to have interrogated the nature of “facts” long before the onset of the realm of the multi-media, and it has certainly always carried a metalinguistic self-consciousness. What seems “new” in postmodern literature is the pervasiveness of metafiction, as well as certain philosophical dimensions of suspicion and skepticism towards totalizing narratives, that Jean-François Lyotard has called “grands récits” (1979; see also Fokkema, 1984; McHale, 1992).

Moreover, one of the several paradoxes of postmodern literary fictions is that the challenge to the scientific verification of “facts” often involves, as we shall see, a parallel thematic foregrounding of “scientific theories” through minute descriptive details of physical and biological elements that are perhaps meant to confirm credibility for scientific theories, but that also deconstruct such credibility (by showing that while not being truth, credibility works as accepted truth).

Ali Smith’s *The Whole Story and Other Stories*: narrative strategies for the creation of unlikely, undecidable, and unreliable plots and subjects

Ali Smith’s 2004 collection *The Whole Story and Other Stories* is an exemplary text of the literary postmodern, since it represents a unique instance of the dissolution of “factualities”, in which metafiction plays a relevant role.

“Facts” in these stories are improbable, unlikely, or indeterminate. This is due to a narrative strategy which routinely questions “events” and/or exposes their epistemological constructedness. Readers of these short stories are not only trained into an awareness of metafiction as a major component of narration, but they are also often left in a state of bewilderment leading to a more or less amused disbelief, or to a profound epistemological questioning. In fact, in *The Whole Story and Other Stories* the reader is presented with diverging perspectives on “the real”, through significant narratological variations such as:

- 1) double or multiple conclusions of the story;
- 2) a series of continuous shifts in the narrator and the speakers’ perspectives;
- 3) the use of disclaimers, and elliptic suspensions;

4) the use of multifocal gazes and intersecting voices that shape subjectivities as *fluid* and *undecidable*.

In short, “the whole story” – as the ironical title of the collection suggests – cannot ever be “whole”.

The metafictional dimension is particularly evident in Smith’s writings, for example, in the short story *erosive*¹ which starts with the following *metafictional* sentence, that aims to make the reader aware of the fictional dimension of this narrative: “What do you need to know about me for this story? How old I am? how much I earn a year? what kind of car I drive?” (Smith 2004, p. 115) This story is also organized in subsections that are called respectively: “beginning”, “middle”, and “end”, and that seem to metafictionally promise the well-constructed plot of traditional narratives. However, this short story is a parody of traditional texts, since its temporality is not diachronic and linear, as one would expect from the titles of the subsections (“beginning”, “middle”, and “end”), but it is simultaneous, i.e., synchronic: “Look at me now, here I am at the beginning, the middle and the end *all at once*, in love with someone I can’t have” (Smith, 2004, p. 115; emphasis mine).

The reader, who is denied a classical chronology, eventually realizes that the narrator (who is also the protagonist) aims to convey her/his experience of the a-temporality proper to a *coup-de-foudre*, which upsets the usual sense of time. In this sense, in the story there is no beginning, middle and end, but just a simultaneity.

Readers, as I have suggested, experience similar and yet different versions of the same events, or of how these events are lived by different characters. For example, in the short story *the start of things* we find a dual shift in the narrator/character perspectives. So that we have two apparently identical (at least verbally), and yet emotionally very different versions of facts. The first homodiegetic narrator tells the reader: “I lifted the letterbox cover and posted the key through the door. I heard the lightness of it hit the mat. I heard your laughing stop. I let the cover fall shut and I turned my back and went” (Smith, 2004, p. 199). Just a few pages later the other character, now also turned narrator, provides, from the inside of the house, the following account: “The key hit the mat and I stopped laughing. I stood by the front door and listened. I tried to check through the window. I couldn’t see anything but my own reflection and the reflection of the room behind me” (p. 203).

In several of Smith’s stories we notice the repeated use of disclaimers on the part of the narrator, and the recourse to unfinished sentences (as in *the*

universal story and *the shortlist season*). In the latter one reads an inconclusive and open-ended passage in which a man is talking about an art exhibit to some younger men:

[...] the man was an authority on something. Of course, it has its own inherent narrative, he was saying, but its narrative is.

Its narrative is. But I don't know what. (Smith, 2004, p. 168. Emphasis mine).

Truncated sentences and elliptic suspensions are frequent devices to dissolve the tangible dimension of “facts”. Sometimes we find the variation of smaller narrative elements such as:

- 1) the incongruent change of a single word;
- 2) the repetition of one or more paragraphs with the slightest difference (as we have seen in the short story *the start of things*).

This means that readers often experience narrative contradictions and unreliability. The shifts in the narrators' perspectives on the same events are frequent, as well as the projection of one character's supposedly unique experiences onto another, as in the short story *believe me*, a Pinteresque exchange between a couple dealing with bigamy, real or fantasized (readers don't know for sure) by one of the protagonists.

Subjectivities are often blurred. In the short story *being quick*, just like in most of Smith's stories, the gender of the characters “You” and “I” remains typically and masterfully undefined. Characters do not have a name and they are constructed merely through personal pronouns (I/You), so that trying to surmise what their gender is becomes a futile endeavor. Smith's fabulation spells a view of subjectivity as dynamic and polymorphous, a notion that is highly significant if we subscribe to the idea that identity is always shown through narrative. We are the stories we tell of/to ourselves, and/or the stories others tell (themselves and others), about us.

The multifocal voices and gazes in the short story *being quick* convey a sense of the self as linguistically constructed through verbal exchange and discursive negotiations, and as something unstable and ultimately undefinable once and for all. Characters are often unaccomplished and open-ended, like the plots of their stories, which is also precisely how contemporary social psychology defines subjectivity. A. Duszak, from a postmodern social

psychology perspective, reminds us that: “human social identities tend to be indeterminate, situational rather than permanent, dynamically and interactively constructed” (Duszak, 2002, pp. 2-3; see also Brockmeier & Carbaugh, 2001).

In her study of Ali Smith’s novels *Girl Meets Boy* (2007) and *How to Be Both* (2014), Maria Micaela Coppola has aptly suggested that Smith’s fictional selves are elusive and do not provide stable definitions (Coppola, 2015). However, most characters in *The Whole Story and Other Stories* are fleshed out in detail; they are odd types, unsettled, eccentric, and sometimes seemingly mentally disturbed; they are often socially marginal, or holding menial jobs for a meager pay. They belong to the Scottish lower classes. *Scottish love song* and *paradise* are two stories indicative of Smith’s sharp eye for realistic detail, and yet characters remain highly improbable, even “unreal”, because they are often defined through the eyes and voices of other unreliable characters, who contradict themselves, but remain the narrators that readers “have to trust”, at least to some degree, however incongruous their accounts.

The universal story: incompleteness, contradiction, playfulness and metafiction

In order to illustrate the narratological features I have identified so far, I propose to examine in detail the first short story in the collection, i.e., *the universal story*, because we can discern in it a compendium of the narrative strategies of the postmodern.

The title is clearly magniloquent in its claim to universality, i.e., to the grandest of “grand narratives”. “Universal” is a term deeply mistrusted in the postmodern cultural context, where “totalizing” and “encyclopedic” attitudes are the targets of a very cautious, if not radically skeptical epistemology. In this sense “universal” could/should be taken ironically, thereby reversing its meaning, not only by restricting it to a narrower and/or local perspective on specific events, but also by putting the term itself (“universal”) under questioning or erasure.

The fact that the title of the first piece, *the universal story*, is echoed, with a slight variation, in the title of the entire collection should not escape our attention. *The Whole Story and Other Stories*, in fact, promises a complete, trustworthy and definitive account of the narrated events, but what the collection stages is an entirely different rendering of “facts”, which remain fragmentary, uncertain and idiosyncratic.

The prevailing tone of *the universal story*, is metafictional, and proper to a narrative that insists on talking, not about “facts”, but about itself. Let us examine closely the opening passage:

*There was a man dwelt by a churchyard.
Well, no, okay, it wasn't always a man; in this
particular case it was a woman. There was a woman
dwelt by a churchyard.
Though, to be honest, nobody really uses that word
nowadays. Everybody says cemetery. And nobody says
dwelt any more. In other words:
There was once a woman who lived by a cemetery.*
(Smith, 2004, p. 1)

Here the narrator adopts a direct style by addressing the (implied) reader as if to involve her/him in a face-to face and rather informal conversation. Notice the use of colloquial expressions such as: “Well”, “ok”, “to be honest”. This tone establishes a sort of familiarity between the narrator and the reader, which is reminiscent of the classical narrative pact and of Grice’s linguistic norms of cooperative exchange (Grice, 1975).

However, this scheme is radically challenged by the narrator’s frequent disclaimers on the information just provided (“Well, no, okay,”). Moreover, the gender shift that flatly contradicts protagonists in the first sentence (man/woman) also represents gender as relative to a temporal dimension, it is part of the whole disclaiming strategy and suggests a postmodern view of gender as performative (Butler, 1990): “There was a *man* dwelt by a churchyard.”/ “Well, no, ok, it wasn’t *always* a man; in this particular case it was a *woman*. There was a woman dwelt by a churchyard” (Smith, 2004, p. 1, emphasis mine).

The passage unfolds with two more disclaimers (“Actually no” “ – no”): “Every morning when she woke up she looked out of her back window and saw – *Actually no*. There was once a woman who lived by – *no*, in – a second-hand bookshop” (Smith, 2004, p. 1, emphasis mine). The reader, at this point, is puzzled by the disclaimers and gender shift, and yet – and this is one of Smith’s most valuable narrative features – the reader is captured by the narrative (of which s/he tries to make sense). The reader cannot put the book down, because its very indeterminacy turns her/him into a reading “addict”.

This apparent paradox suggests that postmodern narratives are self “propelling”, in ways in which traditional narratives are not. In the latter it is mostly curiosity which motivates the reading, as well as the need to find a likely progression and a plausible unity of the story. In other words, in classical narratives curiosity seems to prevail, often in the form of what Peter Brooks has called “reading for the plot” (1992). In postmodern narratives curiosity has an ancillary role, and the pure “pleasure of the text” seems to be its driving force. I would say that the postmodern short story often turns into a game, a ludic experience more than a logical exercise.

Another feature of Smith’s narrative style is the frequent use of ellipsis, suspension, and incompleteness: “Every morning when she woke up she looked out of her back window *and saw –*” (Smith, 2004, p. 1 emphasis mine). Readers are never told what she saw, the reading fails to be informative, but they go on reading.

There are also metaphorical allusions that give an uncanny cohesion to the story in the following passage: “She lived in the flat on the first floor and ran the shop which took up the whole of downstairs: “There she sat, day after day, among *the skulls and the bones* of second-hand books” (Smith, 2004, p. 1, emphasis mine). “Skulls and bones” recall the aforementioned “churchyard” or “cemetery”. The unity of the story, if any, is therefore not linear, but metaphorical, since the reader, given this metaphor, may assume that “the woman” of the first paragraph who “dwelt by a churchyard” is the woman who lives “[...] among the skulls and the bones of second-hand books”.

From the location of the bookshop the narrative shifts to a short passage on the historical “facts” of the village in which it is situated, a passage, itself not exempt from contradictions such as: “The supermarket also stocked books, though hardly any” (Smith, 2004, p. 2). This is followed by an almost surreal story of a fly landing in the bookshop window, over a copy of Francis Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*. A mixture of descriptive observation and scientific jargon provides a “historical” account on the biological life of the fly and its “activities”. The digression of the fly is essential to the deconstruction of the whole story and is typically postmodern. Furthermore, in this case, postmodern fiction fictionalizes science in a unique, and parodic, way. This parody is conveyed by excessively minute scientific descriptions from biology and anatomy and turns scientific propositions into a comical discourse².

Moreover, by turning the fly into the main “character” of a story, Ali Smith also shrewdly decenters the anthropocentric perspective and “the story of the

fly” resonates with one of the relevant concerns of postmodern culture, i.e., the controversial meanings of the Anthropocene, the major negative impact of human activities on the biosphere at large.

Another “story” follows that of the fly and it is devoted to the “peregrinations” of the 1974 Penguin edition of *The Great Gatsby* on which the fly had landed. This arrangement of stories as Chinese boxes is a special feature of *the universal story*. The story of the 1974 book unfolds by tracking the line of owners/readers of the novel up to that of the last customer and beyond.

Readers are told that the 1974 edition of *The Great Gatsby* was bought by a Rosemary Child in a Devon bookshop; she and her fiancé Roger gave it to a Cornwall hospital, where it was read by a patient, Sharon Patten, who smuggled it home and gave it to her schoolfriend David Connor who, after graduating from University, sold it with a lot of other books to a girl Mairead, whose name is clearly ironical (Mairead/May read?) since she “didn’t like English”. She was a shrewd student in economics, and sold the books, making a profit, to a first-year student Gillian Edgbaston. Gillian left the novel in her rented flat whose owner, Brian Jackson, packed it in a box until his mother Rita found it and re-read it. When she died Brian gave her books to a registered charity, who auctioned it and the book finally reached the second-hand bookshop owner who put it in the window. It was then sold to a very odd character whose eccentric sister had asked to buy over three hundred copies of *The Great Gatsby* in order to build a boat with which to navigate the river in Felixstowe Port, a container port in Suffolk, where it obviously sank. One is left to wonder whether the sister who had a passion for building boats out of materials of which boats are not usually made (such as daffodils, sweets, clocks, photographs, and books) is simply mentally disturbed or if she is a figment of the brother’s imagination, or simply a playful unlikely diversion of the story-teller on an improbable character. The reader will never be told for sure, some characters remain elusive, and “facts” will typically recede, and/or remain unreliable.

This story-within-the-story is also a shrewd reflection on the uses of literature and books. The idea of use-value versus market-value of books is combined here with the postmodern issue of recycling and waste.

Moreover, this story-within-the-story of *The Great Gatsby* reminds knowledgeable readers of Don De Lillo’s postmodern classic *Underworld* (1997), i.e., specifically the story of the ball that Cotter Martin, a black boy, retrieves during a memorable game between the New York Giants and the Brooklyn Dodgers, and that is passed on to a number of subsequent owners

who represent diverse strata and aspects of American society. Ali Smith's short stories are likewise highly representative of specific English and Scottish social realities, even when perceived through the eyes of unreliable narrators.

The conclusion of the short story seems to be a rather traditional return to the beginning, but this is far from being a closing of the circle. In fact, even if the incipit is recalled almost verbatim, we have not one but two conclusions: there is one conclusion for the "woman" and one for "the man". Moreover, the narrator even provokes the reader into a metafictional recollection of the beginning: "The woman who lived by the cemetery, *remember*, back at the very beginning? She looked out of her window and she saw – *ah, but that's another story*" (Smith, 2004, p. 13 emphasis mine). Again, we find a suspension of meaning and a mimicry of a narrative end.

The narrator (re)turns then to "the man" and addresses the reader as follows: "And lastly, what about the first, the man we began with, the man dwelt by a churchyard? He lived a long and happy and sad and very eventful life, for years and years, before he died" (Smith, 2004, p. 13). It is clearly a mock conclusion, a banal and uninformative plot, a provocatively stereotypical ending.

A double "conclusion" spells the radical inconclusiveness of this postmodern story against the totality and the all-encompassing systems of traditional "well written" stories. Virginia Woolf's vitriolic judgment on Arnold Bennet and his well-constructed plots come to mind (Woolf, 1984): "Mr Bennett [...] can make a book *so well constructed and solid in its craftsmanship* that it is difficult for the most exacting of critics to see through what chink or crevice decay can creep in. [...] What is the point of it all? Can it be that, owing to one of those little deviations which the human spirit seems to make from time to time, Mr. Bennett has come down with *his magnificent apparatus for catching life just an inch or two on the wrong side*? Life escapes; and perhaps without life nothing else is worthwhile." (Woolf, 1984, pp.158-59, emphasis mine). One surmises that Ali Smith wanted to steer away from Bennet's model.

***Gothic*: or strategies to face the ambiguities of "historical truth"**

The short story entitled *gothic* comes to terms with historical "factuality" and is a tale of ambiguous "historical truth" (Locatelli, 2010, 2011).

The characters, all of them customers in a bookshop, are a strange assortment of types whose "reality" is hard to ascertain since their gestures are

prevalently nonsensical. We find a man with a wet handkerchief, who hangs it over the back of the lectern while he reads *The Chronicle*, a man who falls asleep while leaning on the shelves, one who steals books to whom the staff gives the nickname of “Maniokleptic”, two old ladies to whom the narrator gives the names of ‘Raincoat’ And ‘Mrs.Stick’, and readers are even told that two people have died in the shop. But the most disquieting character is someone who pictures himself as the author of a history book on the cover of which is a portrait of Hitler:

I am an author and historian, he said. You have probably heard of me. You have almost definitely sold some of my books here already.

He told me his name which I did not recognize [...] He took one of the books out of the briefcase and put it down on the counter. It had a picture of Hitler on the front. I read its title upside down. It said something about true history”.

[...] You see, he said. Much of what reaches us, much of our everyday knowledge, from our knowledge of current affairs to our knowledge of history itself, is heavily censored.

(Smith, 2004, p. 20, emphasis mine)

The issue is clearly one of probing historical “facts”, and the moral and cultural responsibility of selecting history books for sale. The story is a challenge for the reader who, like the book seller, is aware of totally different versions of the same historical events. This character insists on his own version of events, most likely a negationist perspective on the holocaust and Hitler’s crimes, as “true history”, and he accuses other historians of “censorship”.

That fraudulent historians can infiltrate respectable historical contexts and instill doubt on the reliability of informed and trustworthy accounts of history is a frightening, and yet not a remote possibility, especially in the postmodern cultural context, fraught, as it is, with fake news and with the widespread possibility to create and peruse blogs from all kinds of sources (scientific/unscientific, truthful/fraudulent, etc.). This possibility can unfortunately also foster the uncritical acceptance of sensational and unproven “facts”. The intradiegetic narrator, the bookshop manager, does not fall into this ideological trap, but seems to have a good knowledge of sound historical narratives. In fact, the story concludes as follows: “But I tell you. I’m ready. I

stand at the counter behind the computers and I am waiting. If that man comes in here, if that man ever dare to come in here, I will have him removed. Believe me. I have the power to do it now and I won't think twice about it." (Smith, 2004, p.26).

In 1973 Umberto Eco in both his *Il costume di casa* (1973) and again later in *Sette anni di desiderio* (1983) warned against ideological ambiguities and the fabrication of truth through a manipulative use of language, while advocating careful and sophisticated interpretative strategies to examine the news and the narratives we are immersed in. Such strategies, which coincide with serious literary hermeneutics, may seem outdated today, given the pervasive attitude that praises "fast" over "in depth" modes of cognition, but they prove extremely valuable in providing a sounder, rather than naïve, approach to information consumption. Reading and studying literature remains an ethical and meta-ethical gesture in the twenty-first Century as argued by myself and by Eleonora Natalia Ravizza in her study of Margaret Atwood in relation to ethics and metafiction (Locatelli, 2014; Ravizza, 2019).

Conclusion

The study and interpretation of literary fictions, including postmodern short stories, can provide enlightening tools for the analysis of discursive ambiguity in realms which extend beyond the artistic sphere, and thus provide insightful clues to deciphering the world we inhabit.

The provocative qualities of Ali Smith's short stories discussed above seem to fulfill the task of avoiding oversimplifications, by increasing the readers' awareness of forms of fabulation. One hopes that these short stories will be examined and discussed dialogically, intersectionally, and in depth, in a reading community, like the University, of different persuasions and interests.

Notes

1. The titles of the short stories are kept with no capital letters, as they are printed in the Penguin edition of 2004 here used.

2. The mixture of science and pseudo-science (alchemy with chemistry, and astrology with astronomy, legend with quantum physics, and various versions of Victorian doctrines of evolutionism) contributes to the general parodic effect. I am alluding here to Jeanette Winterson's *Gut Symmetries*, but I must point out that a re-narrativization and hybridization of scientific theories is undoubtedly a central strategy and a recurrent theme in the works of Angela Carter, Martin Amis, David

Lodge, D.M. Thomas, Graham Swift, Kazuo Ishiguro and the already mentioned A.S. Byatt, Fay Weldon.

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ԱԼԻ ՍՄԻԹԻ «ՈՂՋ ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ ԵՎ ԱՅԼ
 ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅՈՒՆՆԵՐ» ԺՈՂՈՎԱԾՈՒՆ.
 ՊԱՏՈՒՄԱՅԻՆ ՄԱՐՏԱՀՐԱՎԵՐՆԵՐԸ ԵՎ ԵՆԹԱՊԱՏՈՒՄԸ
 ՊՈՍՏՄՈՂԵՌՆԻՄՏԱԿԱՆ ԱՐՁԱԿՈՒՄ

Անջելա Լոկատելլի

Գրական պոստմոդեռնի ամենատարածված ու իմացաբանական առումով ամենից հատկանշական առանձնահատկություններից մեկը պատումի/նարրատիվի առաջին պլան բերելն ու «փաստերը» կասկածի տակ դնելն է: Պատումի այս տարրերն իրենց վրա կրում են սուբյեկտիվության ու իրականության ազդեցությունն ու իրենց հերթին ներգործում դրանց վրա: Պոստմոդեռնիստական գրականության մեջ պատմվածքի «ճշմարտացիությունը» հարցականի տակ է դրվում տարբեր տեսանկյուններից: Սա հնարավոր է դառնում որոշ գեղագիտական ու ոճական տարրերի պատճառով, որոնց կանոնադաշտնա՞նք Ալի Սմիթի հեղինակած «Ողջ պատմությունն ու այլ պատմվածքներ» (2004) հավաքածուն քննարկելիս: Այն գրական պոստմոդեռնի օրինակ է, քանզի հանդես է գալիս որպես «ճշմարտացիությունների» տարրալուծման եզակի օրինակ, որտեղ ենթապատումը կարևոր դեր է խաղում: Այս պատմվածքներում «փաստերն անարժանահավատ են, հիմնավորված ու հստակ չեն նարատիվ ռազմավարության շնորհիվ, որը հարցականի տակ է դնում «իրադարձությունները» և/կամ բացահայտում դրանց իմացաբանական կառուցվածքը: Պատվածքներն ընթերցողներին ոչ միայն ծանոթացնում են ենթապատումի հետ որպես շարադրանքի հիմնական բաղադրիչի, այլ հաճախ նրանց թողնում է տարակուսանքի մեջ, ինչի արդյունքում ընթերցողն ընկնում է կասկածների կամ իմացաբանական մտորումների մեջ:

Բանայի բառեր՝ պոստմոդեռնիզմը գրականության մեջ, ենթապատում, անհուսալիություն, «փաստերը» գեղարվեստական արձակում, ճշմարտության կեղծում, ֆաբուլացիայի ձևեր, հոսուն/հեղհեղուկ սուբյեկտիվություն: