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DIFFICULTIES IN INTERPRETATING DECONSTRUCTED TEXTS

В статье рассматриваются известные постмодернистские романы Джулиана Барнса и Зэди Смит. Интерпретация текстов основывается на идее деконструкции. Уделяется внимание интертекстуальности и симулякру.

Ключевые слова: постмодернистский, деконструкция, интертекстуальность, симулякр, Джулиан Барнс, Зэди Смит

The article deals with famous postmodern novels by Julian Barnes and Zadie Smith. The interpretation of the texts is based on the idea of deconstruction. Intertextuality, simulacrum are paid attention to

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One of the fundamental components of postmodern discourse is deconstruction. This term was introduced and described by the philosopher Jacques Derrida. In postmodern literature deconstruction can be viewed as the destruction and endless re-creation of a text's meaning depending on the reader's cultural thesaurus. Each reader can create his own meaning. Deconstruction can be also understood as a form of existence for a postmodern text, or more precisely, as an anti-form, akin to a simulacrum.

Julian Patrick Barnes (born 1946) won the Man Booker Prize in 2011 with *The Sense of an Ending*, was shortlisted three times previously with *«Flaubert's Parrot»* (1984), *«England, England»* (1998), and *«Arthur & George»* (2005).

Julian Barnes has created postmodern texts which are open to various interpretations because of numerous deconstructed borrowings. «In his works the truth is not something fixed. It is begetting arguments and counterarguments. Distrust means a sceptical attitude towards classical books about man and society whose ideas seemed to be disproved by the realities of the XXth century. The strategies of intertextuality are widely used in Barnes' texts. Borrowed plots, images, characters are exploited for creating new literature works with new ideas, approaches to eternal and topical problems. His postmodern texts abound in allusions and quotations. The works of predecessors are transformed via parody and irony» [1, p.113].

In the novel *«Flaubert's Parrot»* the great French writer Gustave Flaubert appears to the readers as a successful, friendly, sociable man, a recognized genius who died in the prime of his glory, and as an irritable epileptic, a misogynist who is misunderstood and unrecognized. The title "Flaubert's Parrot" can be interpreted

in several ways: firstly, the parrot, or rather its stuffed form, is an important plot element; secondly, Flaubert's parrot is the narrator, Braithwaite, whose unhappy family life is in many ways similar to the tragedy described in «Madame Bovary»; thirdly, the parrot is the text of the novel itself, replete with quotes from Gustave Flaubert. The story is primarily told from the perspective of an elderly Englishman, a widowed retired doctor and an ardent connoisseur of Flaubert, Geoffrey Braithwaite. While traveling in France, Geoffrey discovers a stuffed parrot in two museums, both of which claim that their birds were on Flaubert's desk when he was writing the story «A Simple Heart». Braithwaite decides to discover the truth, to find evidence in Flaubert's works, in his papers, and in what has been written about the writer himself, confirming the authenticity of this or that bird.

The objective meaning of this Barnes' text is complicated by excessive citation, reinterpretation of borrowings, and deconstruction of different genres. In the novel we can find such genre fragments as biography, literary criticism, psychological novel, travel essay, test, etc. All this semantic and formal chaos bewilders the reader.

Other deconstruction of great man's biography is the novel «Arthur & George». The image of Arthur Conan Doyle is being deconstructed.

Intertextual engagement with various concepts and ideas can be found in Barnes' novel «England, England». Barnes deconstructs the idea of «Englishness». One of the main characters of the novel Jack Pitman comes up with a multi-billion-dollar project called "Quality Leisure". Using financial machinations and political intrigue, Pitman purchases the Isle of Wight, where he establishes his new «England, England». The island replicates famous landmarks: Big Ben, the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace, Stonehenge, the graves of Shakespeare and Princess Diana, Sherwood Forest, Wembley Stadium, and so on. English identity is to be recreated by professional actors hired to portray representatives of different eras, famous historical figures, and literary characters in carefully rehearsed scenes. Pitman wants to create a new reality consisting of simulacra (copies of the original, irretrievably lost). This new reality, or rather hyperreality, is intended to destroy the natural laws of time, erasing the boundaries between the real and the imaginary, the authentic and the copied.

The theory of simulacrum of Jean Baudrillard can be found in this novel. «According to Baudrillard the contemporary world consists of fakes (simulacra). The creator of the Park Sir Jack Pitman reflects on reality and simulacra "What is real? This is sometimes how I put the question to myself. Are you real, for instance – you and you? ...And you will forgive me for my candour, but I could have you replaced with substitutes, with... simulacra, more quickly than I could sell my beloved Brancusi". Other personage says: "...nowadays we prefer the replica to the original. We prefer the reproduction of the work of art to the work of art itself, the perfect sound and solitude of the compact disc to the symphony concert..." [1, p. 115]. To understand these reflection the reader should know the concept of simulacrum.

To analyze «England, England» one should take into consideration borrowings from English history, literature, folklore which are ironically deconstructed.

The novel «White Teeth» (2000) by the writer Zadie Smith (born 1975) embraces the aesthetics of postmodern writing. This debut novel became a hit with the intellectual public of the early XXIst century. The text contains multiple meanings. Some lie on the surface, while others are generated by decoding intertextual references.

The characters of the novel «White Teeth» are immigrants from different countries, with diverse cultural backgrounds, living in London at the end of the XXth century. The novel explores such themes as multiculturalism, identity, multi-ethnic society, discrimination based on nationality and gender, and interethnic marriage and friendship. Intertextuality is one of the key features of the novel. The deconstructive potential of «White Teeth» encompasses the interpretation of intertextual connections from various spheres. There are references to literary works: «A Passage to India» by E.M. Foster, «David Copperfield» by Charles Dickens, «The Rime of the Ancient Mariner» by S. Coleridge. Representatives of various nationalities from film and music industries are mentioned. One can find references to actors (O. Sharif, H. Bogart, D. Niven), singers (E. Presley, M. Jackson).

The plot of the novel focuses on the interconnected lives of three main families in multicultural London: the Joneses (half-English / half-Jamaican), the Iqbals (Bangladeshi), and the Chalfens (white English / Jewish). In her dialogue with Clara Jones, Alsana Iqbal refers to the Chalfens as «chaffinch», emphasizing their resemblance to chaffinches, describing them as nasty English birds that peck at all the best seeds. By «seeds» Alsana means her son, Millat, who has begun spending most of his free time at the Chalfens' house. «Alsana blew air out of her nose. 'I'll call them Chaffinches – little scavenging English birds pecking at all the best seeds! Those birds do the same to my bay leaves as these people do to my boy» [2, p. 344]. «So what's all this about a conspiracy of Chaffinches? Sounds like Hitchcock» [2, p. 345]. Alfred Hitchcock's famous film «The Birds» is mentioned here. Throughout the film, flocks of birds attack people and peck out their eyes. Alsana sees the situation exactly the same way, since, while spending time with the Chalfens, Millat has become completely blind to what's happening in his own home. The reader can interpret this episod in this way if he knows the film «The Birds».

So, difficulties in interpreting deconstructed texts are connected with capabilities of understanding intertextual references.

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