

Literature of Exhaustion in John Barth's *Chimera*: A Narratological Study

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Abstract

This paper seeks to discern the narratological aspects of John Barth's famous essay titled "Literature of Exhaustion" in narrative qualities of his own novel, *Chimera*. Different narrative elements are discussed in the process of reading the essay; they include the death and rebirth of Barth as the author of *Chimera*, intertextual narrative qualities, hypertextual narrative qualities and the functions of parody and self-reflexivity. Each concept will be discussed in a separate section. The first section aims to discuss the author's role in the process of narrating the novel to assert his identity and authority in the novel; moreover the author tries to immortalize himself by appearing and disappearing in each part of the novel. The second section focuses on 'intertextuality' as one of the major themes of the novel. As *Chimera* includes the network of textual relations, it is not an independent text and it is a combination of different pre-texts. The third section is going to examine the influence of 'hypertextuality' on the novel as it marks the role of pre-existing texts on *Chimera*. The last section intends to examine the functions of parody and self-reflexivity because the novel undermines the artist's personal development and the process of narration. The article concludes that parody and self-reflexivity can be regarded as main key terms in John Barth's narrative techniques. In his *Chimera*, Barth tries to change the old to the new by various modes of intertextuality, self-reflexivity, and parodic relations such as parodying character's features to construct and explore a new narrative context.

Keywords: Literature of exhaustion; Intertextuality; Hypertextuality; Parody; Death of the author.



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1. Introduction

The present essay examines four important concepts: the death and rebirth of Barth as an author, the concepts of hypertextuality and intertextuality as narrative qualities of the novel, and the functions of parody and self-reflexivity in *Chimera*. The novel *Chimera* by John Barth frequently makes use of some narrative qualities in order to indicate a range of conceptions regarding the story of each novella. This essay is originally intended simply to be a discussion about some narrative qualities and their functions in the process of analyzing Barth's novel based on his essay "Literature of Exhaustion" (Barth, 1980;1984a;2002).

The goal of this essay is to help the reader better understand Barth's fiction by interpreting and examining his fiction's narrative qualities and to understand Barth's problem of writer's block and his process of writing as a postmodern writer; yet, since Barth is one of the most celebrated storytellers in American fiction, a study of postmodern fiction and some theorists such as Michel Foucault, Barthes (1975) and De Man (1971) can be profitable in its own right in this essay.

The central goal of this essay is to scrutinize each narrative quality in different sections of the essay in order to prove Barth's ability in elaborating the features of his theories on his novel. A set of principles concerning the realm of narratology, narrative qualities and postmodern literature will be examined in order to bring into light the novel's undiscovered aspects and to have a deeper understanding of the work.

Before dealing with the analysis of the novel, a brief plot summary of each novella and important parts of the novel are described. The first section of this essay, "The Birth and Rebirth of Barth as the Author of *Chimera*", deals with the fact that the presence of the author in each novella can be a postmodern technique that can change the process of narrative in order to explain and examine the influences of these narrative elements on the novel.

The second section of this essay, "Intertextual Narrative Quality", includes intertextuality as one of the important key terms in the progression of the narrative qualities of the novel to recognize different aspects of originality and to challenge its necessity in the process of analyzing different parts of the novel.

The third section of this essay, "Hypertextual Narrative Quality", also intends to provide the concept of hypertextuality to challenge the notion of originality and to analyze its relation to intertextuality and archetextuality based on mythological figures and characters of each novella to take a better look at characters and the process of narration to shed light on the fact that understanding each narrative quality has an important role in the development of each novella.

The last section of this essay, "The Functions of Parody and Self-reflexivity in Barthian Narrative Issues" examines Barth's parodic discourse in order to analyze parodic relations between present and past texts to renew the old texts and to fulfill Barth's ideas in "Literature of Exhaustion" in *Chimera*, moreover this section of the essay aims to discern different roles of parody and self-reflexivity as Barth's purposes is to problematize writing and to challenge old contexts based on his theories in "Literature of Exhaustion".

The last part of this essay aims to mention the important aspects and results of this essay in conclusion. It concludes that different aspects of “Literature of Exhaustion” can be discerned in narrative qualities of Barth’s *Chimera* based on different discussions in each section of the essay. As Barth’s main purpose in his essay, “Literature of Exhaustion” is to change the old pre-texts into new postmodern works, he attempts to apply different narrative elements to achieve his goal.

2. Discussion

2.1. The Death and Rebirth of Barth as the Author of Chimera

The first story of the novel, “Dunyazadiad”, recreates the story of Scheherazade from *One Thousand and one Nights*. According to Foucault narrative redeemed the accepted death of the author (Rabinow, 2010). Arabian narrative, such as *The Thousand and one Nights* is a pretext as a motivation in postmodern texts, as it “ [is] the eluding of death: one spoke, telling stories into the early morning, in order to forestall death, to postpone the day of reckoning that would silence the narrator. Scheherazade’s narrative is an effort, renewed each night, to keep death outside the circle of life” (Ibid). Based on Foucault’s description of *The Thousand and one Nights*, it seems that Barth’s three novellas follow *The Thousand and one Nights*’ pattern, because in each novella the protagonist or the narrator is approaching silence, or better to say *death*; therefore, the narrator in each novella struggles to resist this death or silence to narrate the story of his or her life, as Foucault states “our culture has metamorphosed this idea of narrative, or writing, as something designed to ward off death” (ibid), consequently all the characters in Barth’s novel are possessed with the matter of writing, or narrating to prevent death, and as Barth turns to different characters in each novella, he, both as a character and as an author, attempts to ward off death and to achieve immortality by writing, but “the work, which once had the duty of providing immortality, now possesses the right to kill, to become its author’s murderer”(ibid), as a result Barth as an author oscillates between his death and rebirth in his work; Barth “assumes the role of the dead man in the game of writing” (ibid: 103) but he challenges it to assure his presence in this work of literature, because “it’s not enough, to repeat the empty affirmation that the author has disappeared” (ibid, 105). Foucault believes that the disappearance of the author must be traced, because it can uncover some breaches (ibid); therefore, these gaps in Barth’s novel can reveal the function of the author and the narrator as important elements in the text. Barth refers to the purpose of his presence in different parts of the novel:

“Those familiar with my fiction will recognize in this account several pet motifs of mine: the sibling rivalry, the hero’s naivete, the accomplishment of labors by their transcension (here literal), and the final termination of all tasks by the extermination (here figurative) of the taskmaster; the Protean counselor (Polydeides means ‘many forms’); the romantic triangle; et cetera. But it was two central images _ Pegasus and the Chimera_ which appealed to me most profoundly. I envisioned a comic novella based on the myth; a companion-piece to Perseid, perhaps (1974).

The author sets under the camouflage of “transcendental anonymity” based on Foucault’s criticism (Nicole, 2009). The narrative subject has been oscillated by the protagonist and a second-hand teller to relate the protagonist to an audience (Ibid, 201). Here Barth, disguised by the name Genie, stands as a second-hand teller next to the protagonist of *One Thousand and One Nights*, Scheherazade; therefore, Barth as a disguised version behind each character is introduced to the fictional world. Genie the author, who is disintegrated and disseminated, resembles Barth himself. Barth steps into his fictional world to achieve his goal; “to go toward future and by some magic, at the same time go back to the original springs of narrative” (Barth, 1974), because the narrative complexity of the *Thousands and one Night* is “oriental” for him (Ibid, 23). For Barth the “original springs of narrative is the root of *One Thousand and One Nights*, as Genie says: “my project is to learn where to go by discovering where I am by reviewing where I have been- where we have all been.” (Barth, 1974). Although he changes his name, he is still a contemporary writer in his world of fiction, but he is not able to create stories anymore. He has lost the track of who he is and he believes that his name is just a jumble of letters.

Barth changes his identity to Genie, to assure his position as an author of a postmodern novel and to assert his unitary identity; he has to collapse into a single-self (Nicole, 2009), as Paul de Man in the opening essay “Semiology and Rhetoric” believes that some authors are concerned with the deconstruction of some metaphysical concerns such as self or history (Mcquillan, 2001). For instance Genie believes “I’ve quit reading and writing, I’ve lost track of who I am, my name is just a jumble of letters” (ibid); therefore, the concept of name is not important for him, whether Barth or Genie, he aims to assert his own identity and authority at the same time in his own writing, as Foucault believes “an author’s name is not simply an element in a discourse, it performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a classificatory function” (Rabinow, 2010). When the author is absent from the text he manages to assert his own identity (Nicole, 2009). Barth comments: “I must compose myself because this is the fact that it is only the act of writing that an author comes into being (Ibid, 79). Barth is neither fully present nor fully absent in the text; therefore, he plays hide-and-seek with the reader throughout the text, which creates an illusion of authorial presence; therefore, the author turns to another tool, or as Foucault believes another *function*, for the exploration of ontological structures.

Barthes in “Death of the Author” (1968) argues that “writing is no longer an expression emanating from a unified source or origin, but rather “a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blends and clash”. As a matter of fact Barth in *Chimera* does not attempt to create an original discourse; therefore, he mixes already created discourse such as mythologies and archetypes. The author becomes only a mediator of his novel that he just selects and organizes some discourses available in the general text rather than producing any “original” work. As “No need for originality” is the main theme of Barth in his essay “Literature of Exhaustion”, in the first part of his novel he selects various discourses such as *One Thousand and One Nights* as his hypotext and tries to write a new work based on the previous discourses. As Barth himself mentioned it in the novel, “he had gone

forward by going back , to the very roots and springs of story, using, like Scheherazade herself, for entirely present ends , material received from narrative antiquity and methods older than alphabet”(1974). Scheherazade and Dunyazadiad were “among those “ancient narrative materials” and their presence in the second part of the novel has been found useful for Barth’s or Genie’s present purposes (Ibid).

In the second story, Perseus becomes Barth by accepting the fictionality of his own character. In this novel there is a metalepsis in which the author is as fictional as the characters. He tries to decentralize himself in his text. Barth becomes himself by the camouflage of Perseus. There can be two different “I”s in the second part of the novel. The first “I” is Perseus who narrates the tale, and the real “I” which is the real author, that his experiences are reflected in the tale, but as a postmodern novel the absolute reality of the reader becomes another level of his own fiction (Nicole, 2009).

Barthian novel asserts mythical characters such as Perseus in his work and this ontological boundary-violation causes transworld identity between fictional characters and mythological characters. Barth as an author steps out of his own fictional world and leaves the responsibility for the narrative with other characters and protagonists; therefore, the absence of an authorial voice provokes the reader to construct a position for the author’s absence to create an illusionary image of the author (Ibid, 199). In the second part of the novel, Barth leaves the responsibility of the narrative to Perseus as the protagonist of the second novella.

In the third novella the truth about Bellerophonid is that he has never been an actual hero. He just tries to fulfill the demands of the heroic myth to become a story; therefore, his heroism is always delayed. This dilemma shows itself in the structure of Barth's book as Bellerophon's life-story is placed in the final part of the novel because it is doomed always to be read after the story of Perseus. Bellerophon's task which is the killing of the Chimaera is a just a fiction ordered to him by Polyeidus. Bellerophon did not have any heroic action in killing Chimera. He just thrusts a spear, which was made by Polyeidus, into the Chimaera's cave. She attacks it and dies when the lead, melted by her fiery breath, bums through her vitals and kills her. Therefore, it is through a trick that the monster dies not Bellerophonid’s heroic action; it is also a fiction that Bellerophon killed her, but the reality is that Bellerophon has a passive role in killing the monster (Barth, 1974). Although Bellerophon believes he is truly a demigod, he does not act like a hero, but rather like someone interested in the implications of being a demigod- in other words, rather more like an artist than a hero. Though with this new identity Bellerophon the unsuccessful hero becomes Bellerophon the successful author, “Loosed at last from mortal speech, he turned into written words” (Barth, 1974). As a matter of fact Barth penetrates in different layers of these two stories by the masks of two mythological characters indirectly to confirm his own existence and to achieve immortality by the help of these two deteriorating mythical characters.

2.2. Intertextual Narrative Quality

This section attempts to focus on ‘intertextuality’ as one of the major themes in John Barth’s novels. Barth describes his own work as “novels which imitate the form of the novel by an author who imitates the role of Author” (Barth, 1984b). In fact, Barth’s fiction simultaneously imitates and parody conventional forms to reject the novel’s traditional function (2002). *Chimera* can be called a novel which includes the network of textual relations to help the reader discover its different layers. The text becomes an intertext when meaning becomes something which oscillates between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, therefore; it is no longer an independent text and it turns into a network of textual relations. As a matter of fact, *Chimera*’s first novella, Dunyazadiad, includes an intertextual relationship based on the new version of *One Thousand and one Nights* in this novel and the original *One Thousand and one Nights* which is different from the one in *Chimera*. The intertextual parts of the novel have led the reader to focus on the relationship between reality and representation or fact and fiction (Allen, 2000).

Reality and fiction in different parts of this novel intermingled, for instance, there is an author in the real world which steps into the fictional world of the *One Thousand and One Nights* to find a way to write something new and as he becomes a character in the novel, he has quit reading for a long time; therefore, helping Scheherazade can be a meditation on working toward new ways of writing another story based on the old story of Scheherazade. The intertextual nature of writing this novel turns the author, whether Barth or Genie, into a reader, therefore it creates a relationship between intertextuality and Barth’s theories in “Literature of Exhaustion” by responding to the exhausted forms with new complexities.

An intertextual work collapses into different past styles and past voices (Ibid, 184); therefore, Barth mixes *Chimera* with past voices of archetypal myths and past styles such as *One Thousand and One Nights*. John Barth’s essay “Literature of Exhaustion” might seem to discuss this view of cultural production; however, Barth begins his essay thus: By ‘exhaustion’ I don’t mean anything so tired as the subject of physical, moral, or intellectual decadence, only the usedupness of certain forms or exhaustion of certain possibilities – by no means necessarily a cause for despair (2002). The reason that Barth went on to write a follow-up article, entitled ‘The Literature of Replenishment: Postmodernist Fiction’, confirms the fact that for him “the perceived saturatedness of present cultural forms and styles, the sense that culture cannot (to employ the Modernist rallying cry) constantly ‘Make It New’, is not a cause for concern and does not mean that contemporary art is a weakened, irrelevant, and parasitic phenomenon” (Allen, 2000). A postmodern text, unlike modernism’s “make it new”, uses intertextuality to combine styles of different eras to reflect historical and social contexts which influence today’s writing (Ibid, 184). As Barth believes in *Chimera* “ he aspired to go beyond them toward a future they were not attend to and, by some magic, at the same time go back to the original springs of narrative” (1974). Similarly, this foregrounds Barth’s argument that literature can relinquish itself by reviving previous works in contemporary literary texts. For instance in the first novella the author believes that:

“The longest story in the world_’ Sherry observed, ‘The Ocean of Story, seven hundred thousand distiches_ was told by the god Siva to his consort Parvati as a gift for the way she made love to him one night.it would take a minstrel five hundred evenings to recite it all, but she sat in his lap and listened constantly till he was done.’ “ To this example, which delighted him , the Genie added several unfamiliar to us: a great epic called Odyssey, for instance, whose hero returns home after twenty years of war and wandering (1974).

Intertextuality describes the fact that all the texts can be potentially plural, reversible, open to the reader’s own presuppositions, lacking in clear and defined boundaries, as much as Barth tries to blur these boundaries in his works, and always involved in the expression or repression of the dialogic ‘voices’ which exist within society. There is no defined boundary in *Chimera*, as the reader even is not sure which of the characters or the author are speaking and there is not any stable ontological boundary in different parts of the novel, as every event oscillates between reality and fiction, for instance the entrance of Genie, or the author in the first novella, the transformation of Perseus to the author and vice versa in the second novella and the turning of Bellerophon to the author and an artist can be the examples of this ontological instability which is mixed with intertextuality. The term of intertextuality mostly refers to the impossibility of singularity, unity, and thus of unquestionable authority. By this term readers cannot expect stability and order or authority over the text (Ibid: 209).

2.3. Hypertextual Narrative Quality

The concept of hypertextuality can be regarded as one of the main key terms in the discussion of John Barth’s narrative qualities. Some critics such as Barthes, Kristeva and Derrida are among those critics who attack the stable idea of the work’s individuality, isolation and authority. A hypertext is “a variable structure composed of blocks of the text”, which can be one of the main concerns of Barth’s writing (Allen, 2000).

Gennete believes that any hypertextual text is related to an earlier text or a hypotext; therefore, the major source or the hypotext of *Chimera* is based on mythical heroes’ lives and archetypes such as Scheherazade that becomes the signification for each novella. Barth in “Literature of Exhaustion” believes that all the works of great authors such as Borges and Nabakov derived from other pre-existence texts. These layers of writing indicate that literature can be non-original and it can be the rewriting of what has already been written, this notion is the main point of Barth in “Literature of Exhaustion” and he tries to confirm it by using some pre-existing hypotexts, showing their decadence and rewriting them in a new ways of writing and narrating the stories. As a matter of fact Barth chooses Bellerophoniad’s story as a pre-existing hypotext for his third novel and as the story goes on he shows the mythical hero’s deterioration as he says “everything is deteriorated, deterioration everywhere. God knows I’m not what I use to be” (1974: 157) to rewrite a new story based on a hero’s decadence to modernize pre-texts.

Hypertextuality marks the relation of a text to its previous works, and *Chimera* as a hypertextual text marks its relation to mythical characters and archetypes. As Gennete believes hypertextuality is a transgeneric architext (1980), on the other hand each hypertextual work is architextuality and this architextuality has a straight relationship with hypotexts, For Barth mythology is architextuality. To discuss this notion more clearly, Barth’s *Chimera* as a parody of mythical characters and the parody of the famous storyteller’s life, Scheherazade, is a hypertext and *Chimera* as a tragedy of the lives of some mythical characters that are deteriorating can be described as an architext.

One of the important functions of any hypertext is to destroy the notion of linearity of a text; therefore, the reader no longer reads a hypertextual work from beginning to end and the text’s significance depends upon some other texts and that notion becomes one part of the reading experience of hypertext systems (Ibid, 202); therefore, any hypertext refers to multilinearity, as Landow (2006) believes; multilinearity is the hallmark of hypertext. As in John Barth’s novel, *Chimera*, consists of three novellas the reader can be free to choose any of the novellas and there is no chronological order in reading each novella of the book; therefore, multilinearity emphasizes on reader’s freedom and any multilinear work offers various paths to its reader to persuade him for further exploration, and the hypertextual work goes beyond different interpretations, because the text in itself has another text and it gives way to another text exactly such as a labyrinthic text. As a matter of fact intertextuality becomes one important part of hypertextuality and different universes intermingled in a hypertext fiction. Characters encounter a kind of determinism or free will, for instance in the first novella characters decide not to have a happy ending for Scheherazade’s story and they disobey the author; therefore, this dichotomy can be one important notion of hypertextuality, as a matter of fact in one story Barth as the author can exist and in the other he cannot exist.

As there is no restriction for the author in hypertext fiction, it can be challenging as readers shift their attention each time they can come across a new text, because there is no single narrative structure; therefore, any hypertext fiction can disorients the reader as he gets lost and has the sense of disorientation. Disorientation can provide the element of surprise and disappointment to readers as they disorients through pictures, actions and the text itself. It can be claimed that one of the important elements of Barth’s writing is disorientation. In Barth’s style both the reader and the character can have the sense of disorienting in the process of the text. When mythical characters in each novella have the sense of disorienting, he does not know how to resist his daily boring life and he is baffled, and at the same time the reader can have this feeling by analyzing each mythical character.

As the term ‘hypertext’ describes a new form of writing that emphasizes blocks of writing found in the text and the links between different books of writing, it refers to many ways of organizing information. These blocks can be a series of traditional mini-narratives; therefore, different narrators in each novella narrate each story to highlight Barth’s blocks of writing, as a matter of fact Bellerophon declares “I’ve forgotten half what I’d in mind to write; pen can’t keep up; I make mad side-notes” (1974). This can suggest the author’s block of writing. According to Landow hypertext is a “non-sequential writing-text that branches and allows choices to the reader, this is a series of text chunks connected by links which offer a reader different pathways” (2006). Any hyperfiction includes multiple

narrative threads that lead to plot development and multiple narratives leads to the reduction of authorial power which has been described before.

2.4. The Functions of Parody and Self-Reflexivity

Parody, as a rhetorical device, functions as a commentary of a myth from the past by the author to examine his life at the moment of creation. Mythology and mythological characters such as Bellerophon's myth as a wandering hero can have different functions for the author to represent his concerns, such as "the mortal desire of immortality, for instance and its ironically qualified fulfillment." Barth believes that "myths themselves are among other things poetic distillations of our ordinary psychic experience and therefore point always to daily reality" (1974); therefore, it can be claimed that the myth of Bellerophon includes most of Barth's concerns, for instance Bellerophon's purpose is to overcome the fear of the writer's block, as much as Barth himself. In different parts of this novella the author just tried to avoid getting blocked; therefore, he examines his own career and the state of literature. Parody or 'metafictional parody' performs as a tool for the author to get to his purposes and to prevent the writer's block." Barth, though, by treating the myth parodically through his two middle-aged heroes, Perseus and Bellerophon, goes on to create his own original story and overcomes the problem of his writer's block "(Waugh, 1984).

Robert Chambers states that "all Parody contains elements of reflexivity"(2010: 42). According to him a work of literature can be reflexive in different ways, for instance when a work of fiction is about its own creation, when a work contains one or more characters and they are reading or writing the work, or even when the narrator, or 'the author' addresses the narrator directly or indirectly these works can be self-reflexive (Ibid 42). It can be claimed that mostly all of these elements can be traced in Barth's narratives as his works have parodic dialogues with other texts, or pre-texts, more especially with mythological characters.

Then why not attempt to alienate your children with anecdotes of your own childhood, your wife with the Anteia episode, the citizenry with boring accounts of your later adventures? Isn't that the way you said it's done in that mythical 'ideal' Bellerophoniad? Correlate these internal narratives (Barth, 1972:146).

Chimera and *Lost in the Funhouse* can be similar in tracing the function of parody in them. In both works the concept of *kunstlerroman*, as a narrative about the artist's growth, are parodied by the author, because mainly both novels undermine the artist's personal development and the process of narration; therefore, this 'parodic exhaustion' of the *kunstlerroman* mainly represents Barth's self-critical theory (Ziegler, 1989). "Parody has been considered mainly as a form of criticism; it has been regarded as a sign of generic exhaustion" (Waugh, 1984).

However, to parody myth is to create a paradox, to demythologize genres and narratives, for parody derives from the changing of world views, while myth depends on the repetition of the unchanging. Barth tackles this problem by turning it into his narrative dilemma. So at the beginning of the novel, he has the Author - that is, the author-within-the-text - adhere to the Tragic View and present himself as an ardent admirer of the hero. But gradually the text itself, relying on the historical consciousness of the contemporary reader, acquires an ironic character and becomes a parody of that Tragic View (Ziegler, 1989).

Barth's purpose both in *Chimera* and *Lost in the Funhouse* by using parody can be his "access to new narrative possibilities" to gain freedom in his own texts" (Ibid: 85). "The fact that Barth has chosen parody as his favored mode of writing signifies that he accepts his literary predecessors as models and yet rejects their fictions as artifacts" (Ibid:87). One of Barth's concerns that makes him nearly unique from other postmodernist writers is his "conflict between tradition and the self" as his longtime concern (Ibid: 87). According to Patricia Waugh, one of the main aims of parody is to undermine the authority of the author, 'final ending' and different interpretations of a work of fiction (1987).

3. Conclusion

At the end of this essay the reader can have a new perspective toward the examination of Barth's style in narration and his techniques of storytelling. The influence of some important key terms such as the authority of the writer in postmodern works, the domination of intertextuality, the analysis of hypertextuality, the function of Barth's essay "Literature of Exhaustion", parody and self-reflexivity have been discussed. By attempting to analyze John Barth's *Chimera* through the key terms of this essay the reader can have a better understanding of this novel and to different aspects of narrative qualities in postmodern texts. Also, the reader can have a lucid knowledge of Barth's theories which have been explained through the detailed analysis of his story. The whole essay attempts to explain and analyze the aspects of "Literature of Exhaustion" in the narrative qualities of *Chimera* and analyzing the techniques of this essay in the progression of the narratology of the novel.

The first assumption of the essay signals the importance of the role of the author, both as a character and as an author, and the authority of the author through its relationship to the narrative qualities of the novel was explained. Barth, as a postmodern writer both tries to confirm his identity as a character and at the same time he tries to dissenter himself from the process of narration of the story by hiding behind each character of the novel and he steps into the world he has already created to question the role of the author in a postmodern world.

As it was mentioned before, intertextuality is an important keyword in the process of the narration of a postmodern work and it confirms the fact that no text is far from the influence of other texts. Each postmodern work can have one or more hypotexts in a way that no work of literature is original and all the texts follow some major sources to achieve new ways of narrating stories, moreover the concept of hypertextuality has an influence on the narration of the postmodern novel. It has been suggested that each work of literature can be written through its relation to its previous texts. Mostly Barth tries to relate his novel to mythologies and archetypes to return to the origin of writing stories. Parody and self-reflexivity are two important elements of Barth's writing that helps the

author to transfer the old texts into new ones by establishing parodic relations between present and past texts. It is observed that parody and self-reflexivity can be regarded as main key terms in John Barth's narrative techniques. In his *Chimera*, Barth tries to change the old to the new by various modes of intertextuality, self-reflexivity, and parodic relations such as parodying character's features to construct and explore a new narrative context.

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