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Postmodern Manifestation of Romance in Updike's *Marry Me: A Romance*:

Dissociation from Conventional Romance

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Abstract

This research is a genre based examination of postmodern romance features in Updike's *Marry Me: A Romance*. It decodes the points where Updike departs *Marry Me* from conventional romance and where he faithfully utilizes and maintains the romance genre strategies of the past. It explores the nature of postmodern romances in order to realize why and how such changes in terms of form and structure go hand in hand with the context of postmodernism. The researcher first examines the elements of conventional romance in regard to form, namely mythos, historical mode, hero's superiority in degree, love, and quest to point out the parts where *Marry Me* is faithful to romance genre elements and where it is not. Moreover, it outlines the parts where the aforementioned novel is faithful or not to the conventions of romance pertaining to the "generic plot", a term coined by Northrop Frye. To do so, the theory of Regis presented in her book: *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* would be applied to the novel. The results of the research demonstrate that apparently Updike has changed the conventional of the romance to the extent that *Marry Me* identified as a realistic novel by many critics is truly a postmodern romance with a number of dissociation elements of the traditional one.

Key words: Romance, Parody, Pastiche, Society Defined, The Meeting, The Barrier, The Attraction, The Declaration, Point of Ritual Death, The Recognition, The Betrothal, Wedding, Dance, or Fete; Scapegoat Exiled, and The Bad Converted.

Dedicated to my parents who are my world

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Chapter I: Introduction

‘Any romance that does not end
in marriage fails’ (*Marry Me* 97)

1.1. Background of the Study

The fundamental idea of this research was triggered by some questions including what is the difference between *Marry Me: A Romance* and conventional romances namely *Pride and Prejudice*? And how does John Updike dissociate *Marry Me: A Romance* from the norms of conventional romance? The answers of these two questions are definitely prerequisite for this research. As a result, a brief review of Updike’s life, his its effects on this romance novel, and also a brief review of the novel can be helpful.

John Hoyer Updike born on March 18, 1932 in Shillington, Pennsylvania, is an eminent American novelist, short story writer, poet, art and literary critic. He published twenty-one novels, fifteen short story collections, seven volumes of poetry, five children’s books, one play, one memoir, and seven essay collections. From 1938, he had been suffering from psoriasis which affected his mind and his personal life. In 1950, he entered Harvard University and started studying majors in English and in 1954, he entered the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art in England. In 1953, he got married to Marry Pennington and they had 4 children, Elizabeth, David, Michael, and Miranda. Updike divorced his wife in 1971. Once more, he got married to Martha Ruggles Bernhard and they lived together more than thirty years. Updike died on January 24, 2009 from lung cancer.

His novels fall into five main categories including Rabbit novels, Bech books, Buchanan books, Eastwick books, and other novels including *The Poorhouse Fair* (1959), *The Centaur* (1963), *Of the Farm* (1965), *Couples* (1968), *Marry Me: A Romance* (1977), *The Coup* (1978) and etc. He published short story collections, poetry, and non-fictional works including essays, art and literary criticism. Among his novels *The Poorhouse Fair*, *The Centaur*, *Rabbit* tetralogy, *Of the Farm*, and *Couples* are the most successful ones and have received a large appreciations according to the number of times being published. In 1959, he published his first novel, *The Poorhouse Fair* and won the Rosenthal Foundation Award of the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1960. In the same year, his first short story collection, *The Same Door* came into publication. He was awarded two rewards for *The Centaur* including National Book Award in 1963 and Le Prix du Meilleur Livre Étranger in 1965. In 1968, when he published *Couples*, the cover of the book came to the front page of *Times* and the novel remained one of the bestseller for one year. In 1960, he published *Rabbit Run*, the first Rabbit tetralogy and its film version was released in 1970. *Rabbit Redux* was published in 1971 and he was awarded the Signet society Medal for Achievement in the Arts. In 1981, he published *Rabbit Is Rich* and won the National Book Critics Circle Award and a year after it won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the American National Book Award. The last Rabbit tetralogy, *Rabbit at Rest* was published in 1990 and he won the National Book Critics Circle Award and a year after, he won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Finally, *Rabbit Angstrom: A Tetralogy* was published in 1995.

Updike mostly uses a number of solid and at the same time common themes in his works. Allegedly, *Marry Me* is not an exception. Its main themes are love, marriage, divorce, adultery, family crisis, religion, death, and America. Updike pictures love in an astonishing way in *Marry Me* as he demonstrates it in a wide range of his works.

In his fictions, the main concerns are Sex, God, and America. He portrays an adulterous society in some of his works such as *The Couples*, *Marry Me: A Romance* and *The Maples Stories* in details and based on this concern “he is called the poet laureate of modern adultery” (McDermott). In addition, his religious beliefs are under the influence of Søren Kierkegaard and Karl Barth although as a practicing Christian he does not follow the established rules.

John Updike believed in a strange sort of Christianity that rejected the strictures of traditional faith, choosing divine comfort while rejecting divine commands. In other words, it was gospel without law, grace without repentance, the love of God without the holiness of God (McDermott).

Furthermore, his main interest is America. To put it another way, he is the American Adam and his point of the view on America are “When we say ‘America’ it is not a fact, it is an act, of faith, a matter of lines on a map and words on paper, an outline it will take generations and centuries more to fill in” (*Problems and other stories* 45). Richard Chase believes that romance is an American genre while novel is a European one and the only way to divide them is how to represent reality. In *The American Novel and Its Tradition*, as opposed to novel, he argues that romance, “Feels free to render reality in less volume and detail” (13). For Instance, when Sally asks Jerry not to spoil her as a mistress “If you can’t take me as your wife, don’t spoil me as a mistress” Jerry says answers that “but I don’t want you as a mistress; our lives just aren’t built for it. Mistresses are for European novels. Here, there’s no institution except marriage” (*Marry Me* 52).

Being a realist novelist, a social thinker and a fiction writer of late postmodern period, Updike endeavors to picture the social realities and matters of his own time. His main concern in many of his long novels is American family problems and its social conditions,

how the mores and manners of the members of the society have been changed. In *Modern Critical Views*, Harold Bloom comments about *John Updike* in this way: “Updike is certainly a representative novelist of his time, his place, his society” (1). Alfred Kazin in *Alfred Kazin on Fiction, a Review of Marry Me*, claims:

Updike is always at his best in handling the social matters: cars, children, parties, the drinks, and the kitchen talk late at night, the bitter sympathy between women rivals for the same man who equally mistrust him. There is all that American role playing, very real indeed when we are all in suburbia and find our only models in each other (80).

John Updike published his romance novel: *Marry Me: A Romance* (from now on shortened as *Marry Me*) in 1976, the same year he divorced his first wife Marry Pennington. While the first section, “The Wait”, was published before *Couples* in 1968, he did not finish the book until 1976. The early and the mid-1970s is known as a time when divorce rate was high in the United States because of the first “no-fault” divorce law in California, passed in 1969. The law made Updike in his novels to choose this subject as one of his thematic issues in his late novels. Updike depicts the main themes of love, marriage, divorce, remarriage, disability of making decisions and uncertainty of the hero and heroine, family problems, children matters, as well as adultery in *Marry Me* and elaborates on them as a pathologist in order to give the reader a photographic picture of contemporary America and American society within the frame of Postmodern Romance. He re-contextualizes the conventional romances and its attributes and situates them in a new social atmosphere in order to criticize the disintegration of family, the smallest unit of social structure at present. And in this aesthetic manner, the postmodern ethic of love is once more revalued. The ethical values of Love and marriage blended with a sense of mock make the novel of *Marry Me* a true representation of social aura of the last three decades in America. In *The Cambridge*

companion to *John Updike*, John N. Duvall writes: “much of Updike’s fictions since *A Month of Sundays* (1975) reveal a novelist who, if not exactly a postmodernist, has read a number of key poststructuralist texts that inform postmodern poetics and has experimented with postmodern narrative strategies as he chronicles contemporary America” (162).

Duvall also points that “Updike’s deployment of postmodern narrative strategies poses a challenge to certain definitions of postmodernism” (ibid 162). Another critic of Updike’s novels, Kimberly A. Freeman in *Love American Style* states that “In *Marry Me*, divorce, at once realistic and romantic, complicates this debate, collapsing polarities, suggesting postmodern antinomies not only in Updike’s work but in the critical history of American literature” (100).

On the other hand, Judie Newman discusses the aesthetic sphere of *Marry Me* in *Modern Novelists: John Updike*. Newman emphasizes on Søren Aabye Kierkegaard theories of “dread” and renders a study of the romantic sphere of the novel by adducing Jerry’s fear of death. He writes: “Jerry Conant escapes from the fear of death into an illusory idyll with Sally” (94). In addition, Victor Strandberg in *John Updike and the Changing of the Gods* advances the role of reality by discussing two essential elements of *Agape* and *Eros*. He states that “we may observe how the author designate *Agape* and *Eros* as the two alternatives pathways that connect the dualistic realms of reality” (188).

‘Agape’, as defined by Roman Krznaric, means a kind of love that you have for “all people, whether family members or distant strangers”. He also defines ‘Eros’ as a kind of love which represents “sexual passion and desire”. He believes that ‘Eros’ is a “dangerous, fiery, and irrational form of love that could take hold of you and possess you”. (48)

Therefore, Updike puts together two different kinds of love namely ‘Agape’ and ‘Eros’ so as to demonstrate the sexual love between Sally and Jerry and also their love for

their spouses and children. Thus, when Sally and Jerry decide not to spoil anyone in sake of their passionate love, they enter the realistic sphere of the romance novel, *Marry Me*.

In *Love American Style*, once more; Kimberly A. Freeman discusses the romance of the novel in the realm of divorce. He declares that “Jerry’s idealization of American marriage makes divorce an element of magic and catalyst of the fabulous, a key to romance, because the very real possibility of divorce allows him to imagine other marriages, other lives” (107).

In order to study postmodern characteristics of *Marry Me*, it is essential to take a look at postmodernism and its traditions in general. Postmodernism as many critics and scholars have claimed is a literary movement of the late twentieth century which not only did it occur in literature, but also it happened in other such fields as architecture, music, etc. one of the postmodern characteristics is mimesis. There are three types of mimesis in literature illustrated by imitation of another literary works such as Vladimir Nabokov’s *Pale Fire* (1962) which is an imitation of Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* (1869) in terms of themes and motifs. Next, the external reality of the write’s time is imitated which is called life literature novels in some works namely Gustave Flaubert’s *Madam Bovary* (1856). The novel depicts the nineteenth century’s woman conditions in society. Moreover, genres are mimicked like John Updike’s *Marry Me: A Romance* (1976) in which Updike deconstructs the romance genre according to the postmodern concept and departs from conventional romance although the traces of the first and the second types of imitations should not be overlooked in this particular work and his other ones. Thus, Postmodernism includes all these three kinds of imitation.

Similarly, postmodern romance descends from high mimesis mode to low mimesis as its elements are divorced from what they used to be with regard to character, setting, theme, generic plot, and form. Characters are not those high elevated people and their actions are not

elaborated as what used to be. Postmodern romances do not necessarily occur in far-fetched places, the concept of love is not that holy and platonic. The initial theme of postmodern romance, similar to the conventional one, is love while being deconstructed too. The generic plot is not essentially concerned with quest and adventure as the intact traditional and conventional ones, and the form of postmodern romance like other postmodern genres is dissociated from its origin.

Moreover, Postmodernism sticks to conventional forms and structures while the elements are deconstructed. Pastiche, parody, irony, intertextuality, and imitation are the essential means of postmodernism and postmodern romance. Postmodernism does not follow any structure, form, convention, and rule so far as to it breaks down all boundaries and reshapes them. Supposedly, such phenomena includes romance genre as well. Postmodern romance writers by means of pastiche, parody, irony, intertextuality, and imitation revive history and conventional romances in a postmodern concept as what John Updike does in *Marry Me*.

Postmodernism deconstructs everything as it was mentioned and poses lots of questions; however, it never answers any question. Similar to postmodernism, postmodern romance does not provide its readers with any answer. Postmodern romances' endings are open ended and it requires the reader to experience the diverse possibilities. In the same vein, Updike does provide his readers with no clear ending in *Marry Me* as there are three different endings because of leaving it alone to readers to decide which ending is more appropriated to their taste and possible to happen.

1.2. Statement of the problem

The traces of conventional romance are quite discernible in *Marry Me*, however; Updike demystify them in order to fit the postmodern condition: romance illustrated by

“ambiguity, parody, paradox, contradiction, self-reflexivity, and reluctance to provide any coherent vision of the world” (Hansson 3). The consequence of which is to figure out the alterations of conventional romances realized and materialized in *Marry Me* by Updike.

Updike writes the novel in order to stay within the main stream of postmodern writers of his own time, but takes one step further and simulates family structures and its disintegration to criticize America too. By large, the act of reading the novel is never completed unless one makes a complete study of postmodern fiction, its characteristics and above all postmodern romance. The features of postmodern romance make *Marry Me* a novel of hybrid condition: being a romance and at the same time not being. In this way, the novel becomes a perfect example of uncertainty, a very postmodern condition, introduced by Jean Francois Lyotard. The novel a mélange and collage of different generic types, creates a mirage of never ending and escapes from absolutism - contrary to the previous fad and fashion of novel writing of realism. The researcher by decoding these problems and considering them within postmodern situations would try to show how in spite of the co-habitation of the ironical issues in the text, the text still remains a romance.

To put the statement of the problem in a nutshell, the research is mainly an investigation of the genre of romance at present and how it overlaps with the novel of realism and its social function. How much it manipulates the expectation of the reader from reading a romance and to what extent it preserves the genes of its traditional roots. Updike deliberately reformulates the genre to serve his own purpose: to present a realistic account of the social condition in America and particularly family values.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

According to literary histories, there are many texts and poems which are written within the frame of romance before their being recognized as a specific genre in the 12th

century. Although the basis of all romances since its unknown date of birth up to now have been love, travel, and adventure, the presentations of them have changed a lot throughout the history especially during the last decades of the twentieth century when postmodern romances appear to be the popular ones.

John Updike as a postmodern writer departs from the conventional elements of romance and changes the dominate sprite of them in *Marry Me* especially in showing Sally and Jerry are being married while they tend to get divorced and remarry. The present writer puts these issues under debate and discussion in her case study: *Marry Me* and shows how the subversion of features peculiar to conventional romance provides a possibility for the author of the novel to criticize the social condition – family condition – of his own time.

During the history, romance has been changed a lot, it has been ignored and survived lots of time though, according to Hansson “the closing decades of twenties century was witnessing a revival of romance in fiction” (1). Although at present postmodern romances deviate from traditional ones in many respects, they remain loyal to the frame of the genre. *Marry Me* is a manifest example of postmodern romance and Updike utilizes the double-natured feature of postmodern romances in *Marry Me*. The concern of this research is finding the points where Updike sticks to conventional romance characteristics and where he alters and departs from usual romances to make it a postmodern one. To put it another way, Updike like many novelists shatters the attributes of romance genre and allocates characteristics to it.

1.4. Significance of the Study

As it was mentioned earlier, apart from other important characteristics, a conventional romance has three main features of romance namely love, quest, and adventure which are pictured in a highly elevated way for noble purposes like reaching the heroine and hero’s self-realization.

Oppositely, not only Updike dissociates *Marry Me* from those main elements, but also he dissociates it from the other conventions related to form and generic plot. Therefore, to ascertain that *Marry Me* is a postmodern romance, it should be studied from a different vantage point. This study can act as a springboard for further investigations related to the reasons of popularity of romance in postmodern era.

1.5. Research Questions:

1. In what ways does Updike deviate from the essential elements of romance?
2. How does John Updike recover and alter romance strategies in *Marry Me*?
3. What is Updike's contribution to postmodern romance in *Marry Me*?

1.6. Limitations and Delimitations

The number of books and articles on *Marry Me* were limited; as a result, conducting this research was not easy

The researcher limited herself to one novel of Updike, *Marry Me*. Updike is a prolific writer and his novels and many of his short stories are about love, marriage, divorce, remarriage, adultery, and social issues. The best among them which contains the romance elements is *Marry Me*. To fulfil the aim of the study, the present writer decided to choose one novel.

1.7. Definition of the Key Terms

Romance:

Romance as defined by *Merriam-Webster*, is

a medieval tale based on legend, chivalric love and adventure, or the supernatural; a prose narrative treating imaginary characters involved in events remote in time or place and usually heroic, adventurous, or mysterious; a love story especially in the form of a novel.

Furthermore, M. H. Abrams in *A Glossary of Literary Terms* defines romance as

a courtly and chivalric age, often one of highly developed manners and activity. Its standard plot is that of a quest undertaken by a single knight in order to gain a lady's favor; frequently its central interest is *courtly love*, together with tournaments fought and dragons and monsters slain for the damsel's sake; it stresses the chivalric ideas of courage, loyalty, honor, mercifulness to an opponent, and elaborate manners; and it delights in wonders and marvels (44-45).

Moreover, J. a. Cudden in *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* defines romance. He asserts that romance

in Of *romaunt* and *roman* means, approximately, 'courtly romance in verse' or a 'popular book'. Thus romance in verse (and to start with most of them were in verse) were works of fiction, or non-historical. In the 13th c. a romance was almost any sort of adventure story, be it of chivalry or of love. Gradually more and more romances were written in prose (758).

Parody:

M. H. Abrams gives a definition of parody by declaring that

Parody imitates the serious manner and characteristic features of a particular literary work, or the distinctive style of a particular author, or the typical

stylistic and other features of a serious literary genre, and deflates the original by applying the imitation to a lowly or comically inappropriate subject. (Abrams 36).

Pastiche:

Pastiche, as defined by J. A. Cudden, is “a patchwork of works, sentences or complete passages from various authors or one author. It is, therefore, a kind of imitation, and, when intentional, may be a form of parody”. (644).

In order to consider *Marry Me* a postmodern romance in terms of generic plot which will be discussed in chapter four, defining the eight essential elements and three optional elements of a romance novel according to Pamela Regis is crucial.

Society Defined:

Pamela Regis in *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* defines society Defined as “near the beginning of the novel, the society that the heroine and hero will confront in their courtship id defined for the reader. This society is in some way flawed, it may be incomplete, superannuated, or corrupt. It always oppresses the heroine and hero” (31).

The Meeting:

Regis’ definition of The Meeting is “usually near the beginning of the novel, but also sometimes presented in flashback, the heroine and hero meet for the first time. Some hint of the conflict to come is often introduced” (31).

The Barrier:

Regis defines The Barrier as

s series of scenes often scattered throughout the novel establishes for the reader the reasons that this heroine and hero cannot marry. The romance novel's conflict often consists entirely of this barrier between the heroine and hero. The elements of the barrier can be external, a circumstance that exists outside of a heroine or hero's mind, or internal, a circumstance that comes from within either or both (32).

The Attraction:

The attraction is defined by Regis as

a scene or series of scenes scattered throughout the novel establishes for the reader the reason that this couple must marry. The attraction keeps the heroine and hero involved long enough to surmount the barrier. Attraction can be based on a combination of sexual chemistry, friendship, shared goals or feelings, society's expectations, and economic issues (33).

The Declaration:

Regis gives a definition of The Declaration as "the scene or scenes in which the hero declares his love for the heroine, and the heroine her love for the hero, can occur anywhere in the narrative" (34).

Point of Ritual Death:

Regis' definition of Point of Ritual Death is "the moment in the narrative when the union between heroine and hero, the hoped-for resolution, seems absolutely impossible, when it seems that the barrier will remain, more substantial than ever" (35).

The Recognition:

Regis defines The Recognition as "in a scene or scenes the author represents the new information that will overcome the barrier" (36).

The Betrothal:

The betrothal, as defined by Regis, is "a scene or scenes the hero asks the heroine to marry him and she accepts; or the heroine asks the hero, and he accepts (37).

Wedding, Dance, or Fete:

Regis defines Wedding, Dance, or Fete as "a scene or scenes the promised wedding is depicted, or some other celebration of the new community is staged, such as a dance or a fete" (38).

Scapegoat Exiled:

Scapegoat Exiled is defined by Regis as "a scene or scenes a representative of wrongheadedness in the romance novel, a character who, wittingly or not, prevents the heroine and hero from marrying, is ejected from the new society formed by their union" (9).

The Bad Converted:

According to Regis, The Bad Converted is “a scene or scenes, we see one or more opponents of the marriage converted to an acceptance of it and incorporated into the society formed by the union at the end of the novel” (39).

1.8. Methodology

This research is a qualitative one and the researcher by depicting one novel of John Updike: *Marry Me*, published for the first time in 1976, attests that romances at present are not written to cultivate imagination but they are created in order to embellish reality with fantasy, to reconcile imagination with objective presentation of reality. This is done by the artist to attain the reality effect, an effect that ends and culminates in a moral lesson. Virginia Woolf with her prophetic words advises authors to live in the presence of reality. When it touches, it stays permanent. Updike in day by day record of the life of the Americans in his novel tries to create an effect that is permanent. The objective of romance and realism differ. This is what makes *Marry Me*, a problematic case. The organizing principle of romance is not objective social reality but the use of literary devices. The presence of these opposing factors in one novel makes it an excellent example of postmodern novel.

It is said that romance and realism often are juxtaposed and yet they are not separable. In other words, they overlap. So, it is hard to consider any border for them. Although Updike uses many realistic details, there are some scenes of fantasy and idealism where the elements of romance are eminent. Freeman in *Divorce Me Romance and Realism in John Updike's Marry Me: A Romance* discusses the factors of romance and realism in this novel by means of marriage and divorce. He argues that “divorce, as both subject and symbol, enables Updike to make this shift from realism to romance” (104). According to him, Updike added the subtitle of romance for “more room for imagination” (105). As a result, *Marry Me* is a

combination of both romance and realism. In addition, Judie Newman in *Modern Novelists: John Updike* claims that the reason why Updike added this subtitle is 'to underline the less realistic nature of work' (95). On the other hand, Updike in one of his interviews with Charlie Reilly said that "my unease about the book's lack of, let's say, 'sociology' let me give it the subtitle as a way of cutting it off from the other novels" (Lusher 172). Perchance, the novel has the three main elements of romance including love, adventure, and quest while Updike does not use them in a normal and habitual way.

Although there are many admiring romance critics and thinkers, the present writer mostly employs the theories of Northrop Frye, Richard Chase, Pamela Regis, Diane Elam, Kimberly A. Freeman, Heidi Hansson, and Judie Newman whose approaches to romance and postmodern romance are apparently applicable to prove that *Marry Me* is a postmodern romance.

This textual research focuses on discussing different theories on postmodernism and romance separately and casting a debate on postmodern romance elements illustrated by parody, pastiche, intertextuality, self-reflexivity, irony, and imitation; and applying them to *Marry Me* in order to claim that *Marry Me* is a postmodern romance.

1.9. Theoretical Framework:

By many scholars and critics, Postmodernism is considered to be a literary movement starting in the late 20th century although there is no clear date of its birth. It has been claimed that, it is very hard to define postmodernism as it breaks down all boundaries and conventions. An acceptable definition can only be provided by pointing to its characteristics. The fundamental elements of postmodernism are travelling into the past and deconstructing the genres' characteristics by means of parody, pastiche, radical irony, and intertextuality. It breaks the boundaries between genres, forms and styles of writing, and high and low modes

of literature. Postmodern parody is self-reflexive and attracts our attention not only to the parodied work, but also to the process of showing reality and linguistic representation through literary works. In order to show the divergence between traditional works and new ones, postmodernism uses irony which is an inseparable part of postmodern parody, “postmodernism revisits at any historical moment with irony” (Selden 199). In addition, it alters horizons of reality, history, and minor walks of life namely sexuality, gender, and race by utilizing traditional techniques. In addition, postmodern writers use pastiche to create new literary works by taking different ideas from different works, also; pre-texts illustrated by histories, religious books, myths, etc. Postmodernists do not believe in novelty, because they create new literary works by employing different inter-texts. Consequently, the lack of meaning or the possibility of multiple meanings are its novelistic consequences.

Postmodernism rejects any absolute reality, truth, totality, and uniqueness. On the contrary, it evaluates personal reality, subjectivity, individuality, and fragmentation. As a result, it is highly skeptical. A postmodern writer or poet also pays attention to the reality of their own time and human values. There are constant voyages to the past and the present as postmodernism feels nostalgia for the golden past in order to find the meaning in the present time. The above tendencies: past and present, creating a new literary work, parody, intertextuality, self-reflexivity, and irony all become the omni-present characteristics of postmodern romance. The genre becomes multiple in its nature and a multi-generic form is consequenced. Detective story, science fiction, and romance are the dominant and highly attended genres in postmodern era.

Postmodern romance contains both the characteristics of romance genre and postmodernism. It both remains inside the conventional romance genre and also breaks the boundaries and alters its features and dominant sprite of that. Hansson believes that “postmodern romance combines experimental narrative techniques with the relative stability

of traditional romance” (2). She also says that, postmodern romance “like medieval and Renaissance romances brings a miraculous dimension, like the historical ones they are acutely aware of the importance of the past, and like women’s popular romances they tell love story” (ibid 3).

A romance has many different definitions and characteristics although most of them contain the three major elements of the romance illustrated by love, adventure, and quest. Frye in *The Anatomy of Criticism* points out: “the romance is nearest of all forms to the wish-fulfilment dream...the essential element of plot in romance is adventure, which means that romance is naturally a sequential and processional form”(186). He also believes that there are many minor adventures in romance which create the major one as he calls it ‘the quest’.

In addition, Cawelti in “Romance: The Once and Future Queen” defines romance as a special kind of love story presented in a characteristic style and form a particular point of view...it is the feminine form of the epic, for where the epic uses what Mathew Arnold called the “grand style” to sing of war and adventure, the romance applies that style to love, courtship, and marriage...the romance is above all a woman’s story, the one literary forms which the protagonist and point of view are always feminine (102-103).

Pamela Regis believes that any romance novel follows eight essential parts among which some of them are high or less highlighted. These eight elements are society defined, the meeting, the barrier, and the attraction, and declaration, the point of a ritual death, the recognition, and the betrothal. The barriers could be external and internal which will be solved at some points in the story. Obviously, these two kinds of barriers are not solved in *Marry Me*. Both Jerry and Sally, specifically the hero, are not able to decide whether to get divorced and remarry or to continue their own marital lives. For instance, when Jerry says “I don’t know what to do”. “I can give either of you up”. (123) or when Ruth ask Jerry to

decide to choose between Sally and her “Decide, please”, Ruth pleaded. “We all survive, just do what you want and stop caring about us” (ibid 175). This uncertainty is one of the most brilliant motifs of this romance. So far so good, this doubt makes a complexity for this novel where we as the hero and the heroine are uncertain about what the ending of the novel is. As a result, this suspicious situation not only does contain the characters, but also involves readers while placing three different endings. In addition, both of them are married and they have lots of responsibilities towards their families and their spouses although agree to get divorced, they make some obstacles. As it was mentioned, these deterrents persist with the whole story while there are signs of disappearing. For instance, there are some moments when they change their mind about marriage.

“We aren't going to get married, Jerry”. ‘Don't say that. I live by thinking that somehow we will. Are you sure we won't?’ He wanted to know, he wanted to be told she was sure. “Not always”, she said”. (ibid 73), or when Jerry decided not to marry Sally for his children’s sake, “I told her I can't come to her. I described the incident with Charlie and said I just shouldn't do it.” (ibid 180), etc. Furthermore, there are some other hindrances which stop the two lovers from remarriages like some bets placed by Ruth and Richard. It can be illustrated by the postulate of Ruth to postpone Jerry's decision of leaving home to the end of the summer “promise not to do anything until the end of summer” (ibid 123). Also Richard's request from Jerry to marry Sally as soon as possible, he says: “I assume you and she will locate a new place for her as soon as possible”, “I will divorce Sally if you agree to marry her” and “if you do not marry Sally, I intend to sue you for alienation of affections” (ibid 246-247).

Divorce and marriage are two concepts that Updike elaborates on in *Marry Me*. Updike portrays an adulterous microcosm where premise on the uncertainty about divorce and remarriage infidelity is the result. Ruth and Richard have affairs and eagerness to spend

time together. Once the novel is read, certain questions spring to our mind such as whether Richard and Ruth are another hero and heroine in *Marry Me*, whether they are different from the concept of character in traditional romances, if *Marry Me* is a romance of divorce, if John Updike prioritizes divorce, marriage, and adultery by revising romance. In addition, some other questions cross out our mind illustrated by what the features of the hero and the heroine are in *Marry Me*, which ending is the most probable one, how Updike departs *Marry Me* from conventional romances and stays inside the genre, what the border between realism and romance is in *Marry Me*. The answers of these questions would be discussed in detail in chapter three and four. Moreover, fantasy and reality are two inseparable ingredients of romance which are juxtaposed in *Marry Me*. The marriage between Ruth and Jerry could be considered the realistic sphere of *Marry Me* while the love between Sally and Jerry could be considered the romantic sphere of *Marry Me*. The former includes responsibility and reality though the later one contains fantasy and idealism. Characters are swinging between romance and realism.

Marry Me, the eighth novel of John Updike, a romance written in 1976 describes the lives of two married couples, Ruth and Jerry Conant and Sally and Richard Mathias, who live in the idealized 1996, Kennedy 'Camelot' period, in a fictional suburban Connecticut; Greenwood.

Romance has been one of the means whereby writers or poets have expressed their thought, ideas, and criticism about their own time society. Therefore, romance can be considered historical. "Romance is thus both escapist and socially pertinent" (Saunders 3), and as Frye argues in *Anatomy of Criticism* debates that "in every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance" (186). As pointed earlier, *Marry Me* like most romances contains this social and historical rule where Updike under the influence of 'no-fault' divorce laws in California 1969 divorced his first wife Marry

E. Pennington in 1974 as “there almost certainly is autobiographical interest” (Freeman 100) in writing *Marry Me*. The Novelist he this romance two years after giving divorce to his first wife.

Romance from its unknown birth time up to now has been changed a lot. During some periods of time, it was diminished or highlighted while there is a rebirth of romance in the late 20th century. As Hansson in *Romance Revived* points: “the closing decades of the 20th c are witnessing a revival of romance in fiction...a new subcategory of postmodern romance is appearing” (Hansson 1). In addition, Elam in *Romancing the Postmodern* indicates that “romance should be considered as a postmodern genre and postmodernism is romance “(12). As it was said, postmodernism breaks the boundaries and conventions and creates new alternatives. This characteristic of being subject to change is one of the features of romance which does not accept any frame and fixity. “The pervasive nature of romance... it is inherently slippery... the genre of romance is impossible adequately to define” (Saunders 1-2). Elam claims that “the relationship between romance and postmodernism comes about as the result of common excess- the inability to stay within historical and aesthetic boundaries” (12). Furthermore, Regis demonstrates that there are eight essential narrative characteristics including “a definition of society, the meeting, the barrier, the point of ritual death, the recognition, the declaration, and the betrothal” and also three minor elements including “wedding, dance, or fate, and scapegoat exiled, and the bad converted” (30).

1.10. Design of the Study

In chapter I, a general overview on John Updike, *Marry Me*, conventional romance and its traditions; and postmodern romance characteristics are provided. Second, chapter II will begin with a dissociation of romance and its position within the history of novel; subsequently, in, an argument about the dissociation of postmodern romance from

conventional romance is initiated. To do so, the theories of Northrop Frye, Richard Chase, Pamela Regis, Diane Elam, Kimberly A. Freeman, Heidi Hansson, and Judie Newman will be introduced. To prove that *Marry Me* is a postmodern romance, the approaches of the aforementioned critics and scholars in chapter III and IV will be discussed. Chapter III will be based on the deviation of *Marry Me* from the form of conventional romance while chapter IV will be based on the dissociation of *Marry Me* from the standpoint of the generic plot of conventional romance. Finally, chapter V will draw a conclusion on the reasons why *Marry Me* is a postmodern romance.

Chapter II

Romance: A Theoretical Review of the Related Literature

2.1. Introduction

Romance has always been open to debate over whether it is a genre or a mode, coming across an absolute definition, stating its precise origins and history, and also determining its inclusions. Romance originated in French word 'romanze', meaning any literature written in the vernacular language. Although it became a genre in the 12th century, it does not mean that romance had not been written before that period while it has situated from the advent of human beings as it is a fundamental element of human beings' nature.

Romance expresses idealism and extraordinary matters. It contains fantasy and realism, past and present, history and legend, prose and verse, and both mimetic and non-mimetic literature while it does not accept any specific structure, classification, and an ultimate ending. As a result, it is reasonable to claim that there is no literary work without traces of romance. The aim of the case study of this research is to study romance novel defined by Regis "a work of prose fiction that tells the story of the courtship and betrothal of one or more heroines- requires certain narrative events" (27).

2.2. The History of Romance

The fundamental elements of romance illustrated by love, travel, and adventure have been used in romance works from Ancient time to the present day in such works as Homer's *Odyssey* (8th c BC), Jeffery Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (14th c), Edmond Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (16th c), Clara Reeve's *Castle of Otranto* (18th c), Marie Corelli's *The Romance of Two Worlds* (19th c), Edgar Rice's *Tarzan of the Apes* (20th c), etc. Ancient romance narrators used such basic ingredients in such works as Homer's *Odyssey* written in the 8th century BC, although many critics do not consider it as romance, Apuleius' *Golden Ass* written in the second century AD, Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* written in the

third century AD. According to Saunders “The motifs of separated family, discovery of identity, tests and ordeals, travels and adventures are common in classical stories of mythological and legendary heroes” (11). *Odyssey*, a chivalric epic romance, just similar to the most of the romances of Classical period has the characteristics of love, adventure, war, exile and return, quest, chivalry, hero and heroine, negative characters, obstacles, supernatural creatures like monsters, mythological characters, wish-fulfillment, and marriage.

Bryan P. Reardon in *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* writes

A Handsome Youth and a beautiful girl meet by chance and fall in love, but unexpected obstacles obstruct their union; they are separated, and each is launched on a series of journeys and dangerous adventures; though all their tribulations, however, they remain faithful to each other and to the benevolent deities who at critical junctures guide their steps, and eventually they are reunited and live happily ever after (5).

Medieval Romance which is an Arthurian chivalric romance, aristocrat, and courtly, is divided into three subjects illustrated by the matter of Rome, the matter of Britain, and the matter of France. The story of Troy is concerned with the matters of Rome, the stories of King Arthur and his Nights of the Round Table are concerned with the matters of Britain, and the stories of the French Knights are concerned with the matters of France. Romance became a genre during the medieval period and it was an elite court genre. The setting of the medieval romance is the secular court and the characters are the same court members such as kings and queens, knights and ladies, princes and princesses. Love, adventure, quest, nobility, chivalry, self-discovery, women, and fidelity are the main themes of medieval romance. Such works as Chrétien de Troyes’s *Erec and Enide* published in the late 12th century, Marie de Champagne’s *The Art of Love* published in the late 12th century, Jeffery Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* written in the late 14th c, anonymous writer’s *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* written in the

late 14th century, and Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* written in 15th century are famous romances of the period.

Romance revived a revival in Renaissance. A large number of romances were translated into English and also many romances were written under the influence of classic and Greek ones. Passion, adultery, and erudition were added to Renaissance romance. Although both men and women were the audiences of Renaissance romances, prose was mostly written by men and addressed to women. The characteristics of these prose were elaborating social issues, using irony, idealized characters, and magic. Renaissance romances have formal structures. Lori Humphrey Newcomb in *Gendering Prose Romance in Renaissance England* points to one feature of romance in terms of female characters of romance

During Elizabeth's reign, prose romances increasingly featured or addressed women in titles, prefaces, narrative frames, asides to readers, and characterizations. The sheer number of such appeals seems to portray women as the majority of romance readers, as do dramatic and poetic texts satirizing women as addicted to the genre (123).

Therefore, during Renaissance women found a role in romances.

Edmond Spenser's *Faerie Queene* and Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia* both written in the late 16th century, are combination of epic and romance. In addition, romance was widely used in Renaissance plays such as Shakespeare's plays namely *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1589-1592), *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), *The Midsummer Night's Dream* (1600), *Troilus and Cressida* (1609), *Othello* (1622), *The Tempest* (1623), *The Winter's Tale* (1623), *Cymbeline* (1623), *As You Like It* (1623).

The Eighteenth century romance revived the medieval gothic romance while it was the combination of new and old gothic romances. Romance "proves a mixed mode, employing old

structures to new purposes, often at war within itself, and offering society a mirror in which its ‘ghostly’ or ‘monstrous’ aspect is reflected through a process of ‘abjection’” (Saunders 5). Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is a great example of gothic romance. Although the Eighteenth century romance has the elements of medieval one, Walpole calls it modern and ancient simultaneously. In addition, chapbooks are the second kind of the eighteenth century romance which were popular up to the middle of the nineteenth century. These cheap and small books include the Middle Ages, Elizabethan, and Jacobean period’s chivalric romances. Chapbooks are descents of medieval texts in three ways:

They were reduced from the early modern prints of the Middle English originals, they derived from versions of these texts that had already been modified into another form during the early modern period, or they appeared in chapbooks via much reduced ballad or folktale versions which may or may not have had exploit references to the original medieval text (Simon 179-180).

William Copland’s *Guy of Warwick* (1569) is one of the most famous works of romance that has been written and revised several times in chapbooks.

Guy of Warwick is, in fact, one of the few chapbooks for which we can trace an unbroken line from the Middle English versions. This romance was first published by William Copland in 1569 and was, in various subsequent versions subsequent versions, popular throughout the remainder of the reign of Elizabeth I and into that of her successor. In 1614, Samuel Rowland... produced a modernized and shortened version in stanza form and this became the basis for other versions over the next half-century or so. Rowland’ version was, in turn, reduced and converted into prose by Samuel Smithson whose much-reduced narrative first appeared in 1688... with minor variations, Smithson’s version

became the basis for the many *Guy of Warwick* chapbooks of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (ibid 182).

Women's Gothic romance appeared in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. They reflect panics of women like sexual fears, being considered to be men's commodities, and being victimized by men. Lisa Vargo in *Women's Gothic Romance: Writers, Readers, and the Pleasure of the Form* asserts

When female Gothic romance is taken as a subject on its own, the form is commonly read through notions of fears of sexuality, of woman as a commodity in a consumer culture, of a struggle against a developing idea of a domestic sphere for bourgeois women that simultaneously values institutions like marriage and the family, of balancing seeming conformity and victimization with subversion during a period undergoing political, economic, religious, and social transformation (234).

Kay J Mussell in *But Why Do They Read Those Things? : The Female Audience and the Gothic Novel* suggests that female readers enjoy reading gothics because of its plot which always has a dual character, through identification with the heroine, the reader finds in escape fiction a world in which excitement, mystery, danger, and action occur side by side with the domestic activities and social roles that women have traditionally performed (58).

Clara Reeve has contributed to female Gothic romance. She not only did write the first female Gothic romance, but also she has made theoretical statements about the genre. One of the major aspects of writing ancient romance was pleasure and Reeve was aware of that. She "understands the principle of Horatian pleasure in instruction, the need to 'excite the attention' of the reader and 'to direct it to some useful, or at least innocent, end'" (Vargo 238). The main

elements of her novels are “supernatural elements within dreams, stories, buried evidence, and displays of sensibility” (ibid 238). *Castle of Otranto* (1766) and *The Champion of Virtue* (1777) are among her famous works.

Romance revived in the nineteenth century and was divided into different kinds of romance namely autobiographical romance, Romanticism, Victorian romance, Fantasy and Adventure, and Detective novels. By the advent of romanticism the spirit of romance which was once associated with politics and history was altered although the fundamental elements of romance that is to say love and travel were used. Romance at that time was mostly associated with aesthetics and symbolism. The prominent figure of prose writing, Sir Walter Scott, used such elements through his novels including *Guy Mannering: or The Astrologer* (1815), *The Heart of Mid- Lothian* (1818), *Ivanhoe* (1820), etc. He also contributed to the historical mode of romance as a voyage to both past and future. Brontës, Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen are other Romantic female writers.

On the other hand, in the Romantic period poetry was mostly written by men and it was the eminent genre of Romanticism. Poets including William Wordsworth, William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Mary Shelley, Lord Byron, and Michael O’Neill contributed to the poetry of the period. Romanticists’ attitudes towards romance are totally different in terms of politics, literary, religion, psychology, symbolism, and philosophy. Sublime, beauty, spontaneity, privacy, individuality, humanity, nature, isolation, ambiguity, chaos, solidity, mythology, Medievalism, colloquy, freedom, imagination, visionary, spirituality, realism, idealism, Gothicism, and irregularity are the elements of Romanticism.

Coleridge’s *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798) was the beginning of British Romanticism and it was published in *Lyrical Ballads*. Power of imagination, nature, self-discovery are the main themes of the poem. Coleridge utilizes the main ingredients of

Romanticism namely nature, ambiguity, chaos, mythology, symbolism, Gothicism, etc. in this poem. Although the concept of love in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* differs from the nature of love written before Romanticism, the traces of love is obvious when the mariner sees the real beauty of the swimming creatures and admires them.

Later on, during the Victorian period romance gained some new changes within the genre. By the appearance of realism during the mid-nineteenth century and the emergence of novel during the eighteenth century, novels parodied the elements of romance. In Northrop Frye's term 'parody romance', 'sentimental romance', or 'naïve romance', romance found new characteristics which were pictured in such work as Sir James Justinian Morier's *The Adventure of Haji Baba of Ispahan* (1824). Naïve romance is a kind of folk tale in narrative like Grimm brothers' *Children's and Household Tales* or *Grimm's Fairy Tale* (1812). Nonetheless, Counter-romance as a counterfeit of romance was depicted in works such as George Meredith's *Diana of the Crossways* (1885). Furthermore, Lewis Carroll wrote romances for children such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). Alice falls asleep and journeys into a fantasy world. The main themes of the story are losing childhood innocent through a variety of physical changes, the absurdity of life in through solving a series of puzzles, underlying death, dream, and language.

Imperial romance, Arthurian romance, Science Fiction, and Fantasy are the ingredients of twentieth century's romance. Imperial romance was broadly written in both England and America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Marie Corelli's *The Romance of two Worlds* (1886), H. R. Haggard's *She: A Story of Adventure* (1887), H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896), and Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo* (1905) are among such works. Since the emergence of Arthurian romance in Dark Ages, this outstanding legend has been popular and has been repeatedly retold in diverse forms. The most important elements of the twentieth Arthurian romance are picturing a character who is superior in degree to other characters and

the narrow border between romance and realism. Parke Godwin's *Firelord* (1980), Marion Zimmer Bradley's *The Mists of Avalon* (1982), Welwyn Wilton Katz' *The Third Magic* (1988), and Anne Mazer's *A King Arthur's Court* (1995) are among the popular list of the twentieth Arthurian romance.

Haggard's *She: A Story of Adventure* is a popular romance which is about a fantasy of travel. It is a story about Cambridge professor Horace Holly and his ward Leo Vincey who take a trip to a lost kingdom in Africa. Leo has inherited an ancient shard of pottery and a number of documents which indicate an ancient mystery about their family. Ayesha, eastern African queen, is a mysterious powerful woman whose connection with Leo is mysterious. Haggard expresses the female authority and behavior in the figure of 'She' which reflects the late Victorian degeneration and racial decline. *She* is an Imperial romance which demonstrates the narrow boarder between fantasy and realism.

In addition, although fantasy is one of the brilliant characteristics of romance, at present fantasy happens in realism, social realism, and surrealism. Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Fairy tales are the most vibrant subsets of romance in the twentieth century and are written by many artists to be illustrated by J. M. Barrie's *The Little White Bird* (1902), *Peter Pan in Kensington Garden* (1906), and *Peter and Wendy* (1911), Edgar Rice's *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912). Barrie by introducing a flying boy addressed "issues of ageing and morality through the idea of choosing whether or not to enter a land of eternal youth – and through his unspoken recognition that children's stories broke barriers of age and morality every day" (Mathews 478).

One of the achievements of postmodernism is the manifestation of popular romance which is "classified as 'literary', 'postmodern', and – rather more controversially- 'gay' or 'queer'" (Pearce 523) and whose elements are 'deep structures' which has made its existence able to be eternal, 'Romantic Location' which puts the setting of these romances in strange

locations, romantic and sexual adventures, the concentration on physical appearance, happy ending, and women. Andrew Greig's *That Summer* (2000) is an example of popular romance "in which the 'condition' of being in love is compared with the trauma of combat and bombardment both directly and indirectly" (ibid 527). On the other hand, romance in postmodern era has been deconstructed as other genres. Romance is dissociated from conventional romance in terms of setting, characterization, conventional love, theme, etc. as John Updike's *Marry Me* (1976).

2.3. A Theoretical Study of Romance

Many critics and scholars have discussed romance, the first one being Northrop Frye who develops a grammar of romance. He defines romance in *Anatomy of Criticism* as the "nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream". And for that reason he writes: "it has socially a curiously paradoxical role" (186). He asserts that "romance is a historical mode and a mythos rather than a genre and the reason of being a mode comes from Aristotle's theory on characters in *Poetics* which classifies heroes by advancing that a romance hero is 'superior in degree to other men and his environmentwhose actions are marvelous but who is himself identified as a human being' (ibid 33). Therefore, according to him, romance is a 'generic plot'.

As it has been mentioned before it is impossible to deny the traces of romance in all other literary genres. Barbara Fuchs in *Romance: the New Critical Idiom*, by studying romance in Post-structuralism based on Patricia Parker's theories, assumes that romance is "a form that simultaneously quests for and postpones a particular end, objective, or object" (Parker 4). Fuchs suggest that "romance can appear within texts that are not necessarily in a romance genre or mode" (8). Both Frye and Parker look at romance as a literary and textual strategy. Fuchs declares that this feature let us point at romance in other texts that are not included under romance category. This notion is allows us "to address the occurrence of romance within texts

that are clearly classified as some other genre and incorporating the hybridization and malleability that, as we shall see, are such key elements of romance” (ibid 9).

Nonetheless, Fredric Jameson in *Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre* verifies romance to be a genre both regarding to its semantic which is called the mode and syntactic which contains the model that are discussed in the constitution of language itself. He maintains that to verify a genre of romance one has to follow these steps

the individual work itself, the intertextual sequence into which it is it is inserted through the ideal construction of a progression of forms, and finally that series of concrete historical situations within which the individual works were realized, and which thus stands are something like a parallel sequence to the purely formal one (157).

Consequently, by debating these steps about the romance genre, he arrives at the following results

This genre is dependent for its emergence on the availability of a code of good and evil which is formulated in a magical, rather than a purely ethical, sense. This code find its expression in the vision of higher and lower realms in conflict, yet it does not seem inconsistent to suggest that it is itself dependent on a kind of historical coexistence within the social order itself between two distinct moments of socioeconomic development. Romance as a form thus expresses a transitional moment, yet one of a very special type: its contemporaries must feel their society torn between past and future in such a way that the alternatives are grasped as hostile but somehow unrelated worlds. The social antagonism involved is therefore quite distinct from the conflict of two groups or classes between a given social order, as in the case in recent times, say, between labor

and capital, and the archaic character of the categories of romance (magic, good and evil, otherness) suggests that this genre expresses a nostalgia for a social order in the process of being undermined and destroyed by nascent capitalism, yet still for the moment coexisting side by side with the latter (ibid 158).

Moreover, the reason it is a mythos is its plot which is mostly based on the mythology and the only way to separate romance from myth is “the hero’s power of action” (Frye 188). He considers romance in the category of mythopoeic literature. He also considers romance since a historical mode as romance is always premised on social realities in terms of making that reality idealistic. He says: “in every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendancy” (ibid 186).

Romance is the mythos of summer which means that it deviates from order to chaos and darkness which are winter and death to the new state of order, rebirth, and the character’s maturity which can be considered self- realization. It deviates from autumn to winter, from winter to spring, and again to summer.

The romance hero is analogous to the mythical Messiah or deliverer who comes from an upper world, and his enemy is analogous to the demonic powers of a lower world. The conflict however takes place in, or at any rate primarily concerns, our world, which is in the middle, and which is characterized by the cyclical movement of nature. Hence the opposite poles of the cycles of nature are assimilated to the opposition of the hero and his enemy. The enemy is associated with winter, darkness, confusion, sterility, moribund life, and old age, and the hero with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigor, and youth (ibid 187).

Jerry and Sally in *Marry Me* never mature and do not arrive at such realization. The ending of the novel is an obvious example of such deviations from the norms of traditional romance.

The theory of generic plot is perfectly developed in Frye's *The Secular Scripture* where he claims that: "Romance is essentially a verbal imitation of ritual or symbolic human action" (55). The hero of romance travels in the way of self-realization. He goes through the obstacles and overcomes them by passing through the disorder and chaos and finally wins the struggle and reaches the heroine and self-realization simultaneously. Frye calls this significant and inclusive adventure the 'quest'. Love and adventure are two ingredients of romance. *Marry Me* lacks hero's self-discovery through different quests. Jerry goes on different trips for business purposes and Sally accompanies him. The result of their travels is love affairs.

Richard Chase in *The American Novel and Its Tradition* studies romance by insisting that romance is an American genre and Americans tend to write the greatest romances than Europeans by "adaptations of traditional novelistic procedures to new cultural conditions and new aesthetic aspirations" (14). That very complexity of feelings and contradiction are the elements of American romance as they exist in social realities. In contrast to Frye, he does not establish a grammar for romance, but makes a comparison between romance and novel by declaring that the only way to distinguish them is considering the way they represent reality. Frye points to the slender boarder between reality, fantasy and romance. Chase asserts that romance "feels free to render reality in less volume and detail. It tends to prefer action to character, and action will be freer in a romance than in a novel, encountering, as it were, less resistance from reality" (ibid 13). Chase believes that the hero and the heroine do not belong to similar social classes and in romance characters become ideal and abstract and

human beings will on the whole be shown in ideal relation- that is, they will share emotions only after these have become abstract or symbolic... characters may become profoundly involved in some way....but it will be a deep and narrow, an obsessive, involvement' and on the way to their union they are threatened by a large number of obstacles including antagonists and society (ibid 13).

Jerry and Sally, the hero and the heroine of the same social class live in a society where adultery is common while Updike insists on attributing adultery to European countries not to America. Sally before getting married to Richard had had plenty of affairs with other men. She has lots of affairs with Jerry while she is married to Richard. Richard has a large number of affairs with other women even with Ruth although he is married to Sally. Ruth had had affairs with other men before getting married to Jerry and she has a handful of affairs with Richard while she is married to Jerry. On the other hand, Updike through the mouth of Jerry asserts: "mistresses are for European novels. Here, there's no institution except marriage" (*Marry Me* 52).

Similarly, Dennis Berthold in *Romanticizing History, Historicizing Romance* supports Chase's claim about attributing romance to America and asserting that romance defines America. According to Berthold studying American romance requires considering three issues including nationalism, history, and genre. In terms of history and nationalism writers have to duplicate a past, because America lacks an absolute past except for the existence of Indians and British people. As a result writers have to replace "fact with myth, experience with innocence, and reality with illusion" (52). In addition, about the genre the determinant factor is mostly aesthetics rather than history and politics.

Nevertheless, Robert Merrill in *Another Look at the American Romance* disapproves Chase's theory to attribute romance just to America by discussing that the elements which Chase designates to prove the issue are not sufficient and by studying Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Hawthorne in his preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* defines romance as

When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former- while, as a work of art, it might rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably, so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart- has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of writer's own choosing or creation (1).

On the other hand, Merrill believes that Hawthorne's "literary definitions are never very rigorous" (380). Opposite to Hawthorne's claim about the difference between novel and romance in *The Custom House* as "a neutral territory, somewhere in between the real world and fairy- land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other" (36), Merrill claims that Hawthorne has a weak approach to novel and by titling the work a romance and Hawthorne repeatedly does it in his works. Hence, the novelistic elements of Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* have been overlooked.

According to Merrill, by the emergence of Romanticism it was wildly believed that romance was against realism although such work as Charles Dickens's *Household Words* (1849) repels such a theory. Throughout the twentieth century this conflict decreases because

as Gillian Beer asserts in *The Romance: The Critical Idiom*: “Writers have emphasized the extent to which each man carries within him an obscure and separate universes” (76).

Concerning a romance novel, Pamela Regis in *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* contributes to the genre. She defines a romance novel “a work of prose fiction that tells the story of the courtship and betrothal of one or more heroines” (27). According to Regis, the romance novel has been contaminated mostly by its critics especially with regards to a common belief showing the happy ending of romance novel. She explains that “both of these critics find that what DuPlessis calls ‘quest’ and what Radway calls the heroines ‘idiosyncratic histories’ are destroyed by the ending” (10). Regis elaborates this idea by asserting that “in this view, the ending in effect cancels out the narrative that has gone before, at least the elements of the narrative that depict a heroine as quester, as the participant in and creator of her unique history. Both the heroine and readers of such books are bound by then into marriage” (ibid 10).

Rachael Blau DuPlessis, an American poet and feminist critic; and Janice Radway, an American literary and cultural studies scholar, study romance novel’s ending in marriage in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They are approval of the trouble making happy endings of romance novels. Radway in *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* says that “endings of romance undercuts the realism of its novelistic rendering of an individual woman’s story” and hence “reaffirms its founding culture’s belief that women are valuable not for their unique personal qualities but for their biological sameness and their ability to perform that essential role of maintaining and reconstituting others” (208). Updike pictures a happy ending for *Marry Me* in the first ending of the novel when the couples get union. As a result, according to aforementioned critics, Updike spoils the heroine, her value, and her power by depicting their union.

Regis's view on romance novel is highly feministic and she pays all her attention to the heroine as she considers the heroine the fundamental character of a romance novel. She concludes that "whatever the nature of the ending- defeats or victory for the heroine- the romance novel ignores the full range of the Heroine's concerns and ability" (12).

In addition, like Frye, Regis connects romance plot to comedy. Frye in *The Secular Scripture* declares that "a romance is normally comic, in the sense that usually the heroine's wiles are successful and the story ends with marriage or some kind of deliverance" (92). Similarly, Regis believes that a romance novel as a subcategory of romance is "a subset of both comedy and of romance in its larger sense" (Regis 28). Different from romance in which the central character is the heroine, the initial character of comedy is the hero. The dissociation of the form of *Marry Me* from conventional romance will be discussed in chapter three.

Furthermore, Pamela Regis considers a literary work as a romance novel only if it has the eight essential elements including Society defined, The Meeting, The Barrier, The Attraction, The Declaration, Point of Ritual Death, The Recognition, and The Betrothal, meanwhile, three accidental elements including Wedding, Dance, or fete, Scapegoat Exiled, and The Bad Converted. Updike puts together all of these elements although he converts some of them which will be discussed in chapter four.

At the very beginning of any romance novel, the society where the story of the hero and the heroine is revolved around is defined and such society is a bit corrupted and uncompleted. This society is "in some ways flawed...and it oppresses the heroine and hero" (Regis 31). This corruption makes their betrothal impossible. Their meeting is depicted at the beginning of the story or "sometimes presented in flashback" (ibid 31) and some obstacles are introduced simultaneously. These barriers are both internal and external and they happen to both the hero

and heroine, and also by others including other characters and the society. These barriers are gradually puzzled out throughout the story.

Removal of the barrier usually involves the heroine's freedom from societal, civic, or even religious strictures that prevented the union between her and the hero. This release is an important source of the happiness in the romance novel's happy ending. The barrier's fall is liberation for the heroine. It is a moment of rejoicing for the reader, whose response to the heroine's freedom is joy (ibid 33).

The attraction includes some scenes where ensure the reader the reason why the couple is going to get married. This attraction could be premised on "a combination of sexual chemistry, friendship, shared goals or feelings, society's expectations, and economic issues" as Regis points out (33). The love declaration of the hero and heroine may happen anywhere throughout the story. This declaration might occur simultaneously at the first meeting which is called love at first sight. In some parts of the story it may seem that the mentioned obstacles haven't been solved and there is no hope for their removal, hence, their marriage seems far-fetched which the point of ritual death is. Regis believes that the heroine who is the object of the ritual death "must escape her 'death' to live to see her betrothal and the promise of children that is bring" (35). This death is ironic and ritual and "the heroine does not die. She is freed from its presence, and this freedom is the mythic counterpart of the freedom that results from the lifting of the barrier" (ibid 35). To elucidate the barriers some new information are announced by the writer. The external barriers are cleared up and the internal ones are recognized and are solved by the heroine who is "the center of the recognition scene" as Regis argues (36). Finally, the heroine gets free. The betrothal occurs while the hero asks the heroine to marry him. Although in recent romance novels being together has been replaced instead of marriage. Regis states that he heroine's freewill to accept the hero's proposal "has been granted

her both by her escape from ritual death (a mythical escape) and by her defeat of the barrier (a realistic escape)” (38). Updike, depicts the union of Sally and Jerry in the first ending of the novel without giving any information about their marriage.

Regis believes that some celebrations or the promised wedding are pictured in the story illustrated by a dance or a fete where the heroine is able to “exercise her newly acquired freedom from ritual death and from the barriers, however compromised that freedom might be by the very society she joins with in celebration” (38). In addition, scapegoat exile represents the ejection of the antagonist who has made many efforts to separate the couple and prevent them from getting married. Sometimes in some romance novels the bad is converted which means that although some scenes seem disappointing, they will alter to some beneficial occurrence for the couple.

In chapter three, a comparison between *Pride and Prejudice* and *Marry Me* would be made to distinguish the differences between a traditional romance and a postmodern one in terms of form. On the other hand, in chapter four, a comparison would be made to clarify the transformation that romance as a novelistic genre has gone through. *Pride and Prejudice* is based on eight major elements and three minor features of romance novel defined by Regis.

Romance in the late twentieth century found new aspects and revival in fiction which is called postmodern romance. Although it dissociates from the conventional romance, it is already within the genre and depends on it. One of the obvious characteristics of postmodern romance is the variety of intertexts that are hired by the writers to produce a new work of art. Updike employs a number of external and internal intertexts in *Marry Me* which will be argued later on in this chapter. Dian Elam in *Romancing the Postmodern* announces that “romance should be considered as a postmodern genre, and postmodernism is romance’ as she believes that the relationship between postmodernism and romance comes from ‘the inability to stay

within historical and aesthetic boundaries” (12). Nevertheless, Heidi Hansson in *Romance Revived: Postmodern romance and the Tradition* tries to prove that postmodern romance is a “phenomena of the late twentieth century” as it is believable that the romance genre ‘possesses an inherent duality which is brought to the surface when postmodern works return to its strategies” (2).

Postmodern romance embeds the traditional romances within their textual body, meaning that while they are separated from the conventions and stereotypes of the genre, they liberate themselves from the clichés. There are three types of intertextuality as were introduced. Postmodern romances are based on namely cultural intertextuality, generic intertextuality, and specific intertextuality. They will be discussed later on in this chapter. Also, it is argued that postmodern romance easily interacts with the audience to the reason that it is aware of the common ground between itself and the audience. Obviously, each time a borrowing happens, a new birth occurs. This connection is owed to intertextuality.

In addition, one reason of this instability is related to the nature of language which is slippery. Patricia Parker in *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* debates Jacques Derrida’s theory on ‘difference’ as it is “visually the reappearance, in the language of contemporary philosophy, of a romance formulation, the combination of spatial difference and temporal deferral” (220). Language is insufficient and incapable of transferring the meaning. It postpones the meaning as the nature of language is slippery and inadequate. Postmodern romance, similarly, is inadequate as both romance and postmodernity refuse to maintain in a fix form and structure. Similar to other postmodern writers, Updike avoids putting *Marry Me* in a fixed conventional romance genre. Therefore, he dissociates *Marry Me* from conventional romance in different respects illustrated by the conventions of form and generic plot.

The key features of postmodernism and postmodern romance are mutual containing ambiguity, parody, paradox, pastiche, contradiction, irony, lack of any coherent vision, double-natured, and self-reflexivity. Postmodern romance is double-natured because it keeps its fidelity to both postmodernism and romance genre at the same time. Michael Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* argues a hybrid construction in postmodern fictions and

An utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two styles, two ‘languages’, two semantic and axiological belief system. We repeat, there is no formal - compositional and syntactic- boundary between these utterances, styles, languages, belief systems: the division of voices and languages takes place within the limits of a single syntactic whole, often within the limits of a simple sentence. two languages, two belief systems that intersect in a hybrid construction – and, consequently, the word has two contradictory meanings, two accents (304-305).

As stated earlier in chapter one, the elements of postmodern romance make *Marry Me* a novel which revolves around uncertainty as to being a romance and not being simultaneously.

A mutual common ground between postmodernism and romance is the opportunity of reconsidering both culture and history. Since the arrival of postmodern romance, women have become the center of the attention. Postmodern romance “attempts to revalue romance in the name of female desire and discourse” (Elam 2). Before the presence of postmodern romance, females had been considered poor and invaluable. To such a degree, Elam affirms that in postmodern romance “the figure of woman is what allows the past to be represented (via the en-gendering of romance), but she is also the figure whose very inscription reveals, through the play of gender, the impossibility of accurate and complete representation” (16). Romance’

self-excess is risen by the figure of woman. Elam implies that “feminism and postmodernism are implicated in one another: that the figure of a woman offers up a feminism within postmodernity, and that likewise romance offers a postmodernity within feminism” (18).

In *Marry Me*, the heroine, Sally has the power of decision while the hero, Jerry, lacks such a power and he is always full of doubt as to giving up one of the women in sake of the other one. He cannot decide about divorcing Ruth and marrying Sally.

Elam gives her definition of romance by deliberating what romance is not. Many critics have regarded romance being a fixed and unchangeable genre while she assumes that romance “always (re)marks itself, is always different from itself” (6). According to Jacques Derrida’s *The Law of Genre*, this phenomenon that postmodern romance is disassociated while at the same time remains loyal to the genre is defined as “the law of the law of genre: a principle of contamination, a law of impurity, a parasitical economy” (206) and “a law of abounding, of excess, the law of participation without membership” (210). Therefore, romance exceeds from form and generic plot and postmodernism exceeds from those, too. This excess takes place in the nature of the genre which means that “romance returns even at the point where it is most violently excluded in the name of realism, making even a clear distinction between realism and romance impossible” (Elam 7). To put it another way, romance goes beyond realism. Hence, Romance and postmodernity are not limited to any limitations and boundaries. As a result, she postulates that “if postmodernity is neither historical nor ahistorical, romance is neither realistic nor fantastic” (23).

Freeman in studying *Marry Me* makes a conclusion about the romance of *Marry Me*. He asserts: “through divorce in *Marry Me* Updike breaks forms, or divorce himself from them, suggesting that the American ‘tradition’ is a dynamic marriage of realism and romance, more postmodern antimony than codified tradition” (101).

Correspondingly, Hansson agrees with the idea of Elam about the relationship between romance and realism. She approves that “romances are to a large degree also realistic, otherwise readers would be unable to relate to them at all, and realistic works frequently contain fantastic elements” (Hansson 12). As Elam alleges that romance “by virtue of its complex relation to both history and novelistic realism, will have been the genre to address the problematic of postmodernity in narrative fiction (1).

Marry Me can be considered an autobiography, because Updike depicts his first divorce and his attempt to marry his second wife in disguise. Apart from being an autobiographical romance, *Marry Me* was written based on the high rate of divorce in America when Updike was writing the novel. Therefore, it contains historical backgrounds. Besides, *Marry Me* includes both realistic and fantastic spheres of romance. Freeman claims that

as divorce dissolves a marriage, so too it dissolves a way of life once through stable; however, this dissolution of one reality opens up other possibilities. Thus, perhaps the experience of divorce widened the imaginative possibilities for Updike, and his adaptation of sociological themes into the romance of *Marry Me* is one result (103).

Jean Francois Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* defines postmodernism as “incredulity towards metanarratives” (4). Postmodernism has a close relationship with history; however, it challenges the construction of history. It is acceptable that postmodernism accepts the present of the past; meantime, it questions the way master narratives and grand narratives have been written. Elam says that “within postmodernism grand and master narratives lose their explanatory power, and we are forced to reconsider, re-remember the historical event – no longer in the form of realism but through the genre of generic uncertainty, through romance” (12).

In addition, Elam believes that postmodern romance disputes realism in terms of history and aesthetic assumptions by displacing “realism, shifting the site of the representation of historical events to romance. Realism, as far as postmodern romance is concerned, ceases to be the privileged form of representation for the ‘real’, for historical reality” (14). There is a direct relationship between contaminating history and romance as romance is contaminated by history while history is contaminated by romance. In postmodern era, it seems far-fetched to state the specific history that postmodern romance has been written based on because “postmodern romance calls out attention to the problematic nature of the historical event itself” (Lyotard 14). Overall, Lyotard solves this problem when he divides the role of realism “to preserve various consciousness from doubt” (74) while the role of postmodern romance is to “create doubt about what it is we know and how it is we know it” (Elam 14).

The concept of love in *Marry Me* differs from what we expect from romance. The love between Sally and Jerry is highly sexual and in comparison with traditional romances, their love is not high elevated. Jerry is full of doubt about divorcing Ruth and marrying Sally. On the other hand, Sally is more enthusiastic about marrying Jerry and does lots of efforts to get union with him.

Linda Hutcheon in *A Poetic of Postmodernism: History, Theory and Fiction* intends history and fiction as discourses when she says: “both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past, but the meaning and the shape are not in the events, but in the systems which make those past ‘events’ into present historical ‘facts’” (89). This historical knowledge of the past is constructed by challenging these signifying systems in postmodern fiction “both through critical re-workings of the past and through new emphases placed on periphery and multiplicity, in order to question our conceptions” (Hansson 18). In addition, Elam specifies the role of realism and postmodern romance as “while realism remembers the

past so as to forget it, the postmodern romance re-members the past, re-situates its temporality, in order to make the past impossible to forget” (15).

Marry Me happens during the ‘Camelot’ of Kennedy which demonstrates a golden time. Updike also feels nostalgia for that specific period of time. Updike states his opinion about the time of *Marry Me* as “it’s the story that could only happen in John Kennedy’s region. He infused all of us with a romantic sense of ourselves that’s gone. Anything that happened before 1965 seems kind of innocence to me” (Hunt 140). Therefore, Updike refers to John Kennedy’s time in order to make the time be remembered.

Intertextuality is one of the means of creating a postmodern romance. As it was mentioned earlier, Hansson classifies three different intertextualities namely cultural intertextuality, generic intertextuality, and specific intertextuality. She considers intertextuality “a dialogue between texts” (22) which occurs between the specific work and the culture it belongs to and it may operate “both as rather imprecise references to currents in society and as explicit allusion to particular ideologies” (29). Significantly, it may happen between the work and the genre it belongs to. In other words, it is claimed that the nature of genres are not fixed and stable. They share some significant elements they have, though. From Hansson’s point of view:

In the case of postmodern romance, the genre is obviously the romance, but since this is a genre which breaks down into a number of quite distinguishable subgenres, it is more profitable to map the intertextual connections between postmodern and chivalric romances, postmodern and historical romances or postmodern and popular romances separately (29).

Marry Me can be considered a historical romance as Updike demonstrates the time when he was writing the novel. As mentioned earlier, Updike published *Marry Me* the same

year he divorced his first wife, Marry Pennington. Besides, the law of the first 'no-fault' divorce was set in 1969 and divorce was at a high rate.

Furthermore, intertextuality may happen between the specific literary work and other works. Hansson adds specific intertextuality means that "the primary text and the intertext also challenge each other's individuality by changing the contexts in which the text belongs" (31). This specific intertextuality may occur between the text and its cover picture as John Updike's *Marry Me* as the picture on the cover of the book depicts a medieval picture which has led critics to consider it as a medieval romance. In some parts the narrator refers to medievalism. For instance, the narrator narrates that "she [Ruth] saw him [Jerry], in this rare moment, as beautiful, a statue out of reach, not a furiously beautiful Renaissance David but a medieval Adam, naked on a tympanum, his head bent to fit the triangular space, the bones of his body expressing innocence and alarm. Awkward and transparent – a Christian body, she supposed" (My edition, 114). In the last chapter, the narrator describes the road where Conants are traveling in France as

on the side of the road away from the sea, a young terrain supported an ancient agriculture; miserly care had partitioned into fields and terraces steep green mountains that, compared to the worn knolls of Connecticut, had just sprung into shape; towns climbed these hills in medieval perspective (294).

In *Marry Me* we may not be able to find a great number of explicit intertextualities, but a few. Yet; it is quite clear that the romance of Sally and Jerry is modeled after the past romances differently with differences which shatter the traditional structure of romance.

Sally reads a handful of books by Albert Camus and Alberto Moravia although Updike does not point out the name of the books. Both Camus and Moravia were eminent existentialist novelists. Apart from contributing to existentialism, Moravia contributed to modern sexuality

and social alienation. *Marry Me* significantly contains sexual themes and sceneries. For example, in chapter one, the narrator pictures Sally and Jerry's love affairs on the beach. Additionally, through Jerry's dread of death and his long wait for a sign from God to decide on abandon his wife and marry Sally, Updike depicts the existential element of the novel. As a result, *Marry Me* has explicit intertextualities with the aforesaid reasons.

Likewise, implicit intertextuality plays a significant role in *Marry Me*. In the third chapter, the narrator of the novel stats: "any romance that does not end in marriage fails" (97). Therefore, Updike indirectly gives the reader a warning about not considering *Marry Me* a conventional romance. Furthermore, Updike tries to portray America in different parts of the novel. For example, in chapter two, Sally asks Jerry "If you can't take me as your wife, don't spoil me as a mistress", Jerry answers that "but I don't want you as a mistress; our lives just aren't built for it. Mistresses are for European novels. Here, there's no institution except marriage" (52).

Besides, in chapter one, while explaining Jerry's preparation for going out on a date with Sally, the narrator demonstrates that "He slithered his own car, an old Mercury convertible, close to it, hoping to see her sitting waiting at the wheel, for 'Born to Lose' as sung by Ray Charles, has come onto his car radio" (3). Accordingly, from the very beginning of the novel, Updike gives the reader the feeling of Americaness and makes the readers ready for an American romance.

Elam adduces that "postmodern romance offers no perspectival view; it is an ironic coexistence of temporalities" (13). Phrased another way, postmodern narrative is not a new and independent one; however, by the means of pastiche and parody new narratives are written. Roman Selden in *A Reader Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory* asserts that "a postmodern writer breaks down the conventional boundaries of discourse, between fiction and history, or

autobiography, realism and fantasy, in a bricolage of forms and genres” (199-200). *Marry Me* is an autobiographical romance, a social comedy, and an amalgam of realism and fantasy.

Considering John Fowles’ *The French Lieutenant* (1969) as a postmodern romance, the theories of postmodern romance are applicable to this romance. *The French Lieutenant* pictures a quest to self-discovery, the history and the society it belongs to, feministic issues, and the element of self-reflexivity.

Although many scholars and critics have contributed to both romance and postmodernity namely Frye, Chase, Beer, Fuchs, and Hansson, Pamela Regis’s ideologies are more appropriate for studying John Updike’s *Marry Me: A Romance* as a genre popular in novel writing and Pamela Regis’ ideologies on postmodernism romance.

In this chapter different approaches to traditional and postmodern romance by many critics namely Northrop Frye, Richard Chase, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Dian Elam, Kimberly A. Freeman, Judie Newman, and Pamela Regis have been discussed. Although postmodern romance is faithful to some of the essential elements of romance genre, it breaks all boundaries of the genre and exceeds the conventions and rules. *Marry Me* as a postmodern romance goes beyond the boundaries of the romance genre. It is an amalgam of autobiographical romance, historical romance, a social comedy, and a combination of realism and fantasy at the same time.

In the next chapter, the dissociation of *Marry Me* from conventional romance in terms of form will be discussed. The points where Updike is loyal to the romance genre and where he transcends the borders of the romance genre will be determined.

Chapter III:

Postmodern Romance and Dissociation of form from Conventional Romance

3.1. Introduction

This chapter revolves around discussing the ways that John Updike dissociates *Marry Me* from conventional romances, recovers and alters romance strategies in terms of grammar. Deconstruction of the form of conventional romances is studied in this chapter. This alternation and subversion provide the opportunity for the text to be known a postmodern romance.

John Updike in *Marry Me* depicts romance in an unexpected and atypical way by utilizing romance conventions in a postmodern context. To put it another way, while Updike like other postmodern writers adheres to romance genre's practices and traditions, by adopting postmodern features namely parody, irony, pastiche, mimesis, intertextuality, ambiguity, contradiction, duality, uncertainty, and self-reflexivity, he changes the nature of this romance to a postmodern one which will be discussed at the end of this chapter. As a result, such features make *Marry Me* be a romance and not to be a romance simultaneously.

Childe Hassam, a twentieth century American impressionist, in 'Breakfast room, Winter Morning' (1911) pictures a double-nature painting of both rural and urban life by using some objects and elements of rural life including the vase of flower and the bowl of fruit with the picture of urban life including houses, apartments, and towers in order to maintain modernity in his painting and the nostalgia for the lost rural life. Similarly, Updike creates such double-edged phenomenon in *Marry Me* by staying loyal to romance genre and at the same time dissociating from that frame and fixity to represent the conditions of postmodern romance.

Many critics and scholars believe that Updike is a social realist and as he imitates realistic details and matters through his works, they lose their validity and significance. In *Modern Critical Views*, Harold Bloom comments about John Updike in this way: “Updike is certainly a representative novelist of his time, his place, his society” (1). Moreover, Alfred Kazin in *Alfred Kazin on Fiction, a Review of Marry Me*, asserts:

Updike is always at his best in handling the social matters: cars, children, parties, the drinks, and the kitchen talk late at night, the bitter sympathy between women rivals for the same man who equally mistrusts him. There is all that American role playing, very real indeed when we are all in suburbia and find our only models in each other (80). Adding the subtitle of *A Romance* gives Updike this opportunity to put this realistic novel in romance frame and make it a postmodern romance.

Adding a subtitle of *A Romance* gives Updike this opportunity to put this realistic novel in romance frame and make it a postmodern romance. This realistic novel differs from those of Charles Dickens which pictures the Victorian social realistic matters and conditions of people in London in terms of class, poverty, orphan hood, and richness in such novels as *Great Expectations* (1860), *A Tale of two cities* (1859), *David Copperfield* (1849), and *The Adventures of Oliver Twist* (1837).

Being a romance novel of two couples in a fictional Connecticut suburb called Greenwood, Sally and Jerry, though married and have their own families, experience passionate affairs and because of being in love they decide to get married. The novel is a social comedy as it shows the irony of being married and being enthusiast to get married again. The situational irony of the novel which makes *Marry Me* a social comedy is the married couples who tend to get divorced and remarry together. Their spouses named Richard

and Ruth have their own affairs too; however, there is no love between them. On the other hand, the love between Sally and Jerry is not as strong and severe as what is expected to be the love between romance characters. There is a significant uncertainty which surrounds the whole story. Jerry is doubtful about giving up one of the women and choose one of them as his permanent wife. Although there are two voyages to Washington in *Marry Me*, these voyages are not marvelous and they lack significant goals and results.

3.2. The Postmodern Analysis of *Marry Me* in Terms of Form

To study postmodern features of *Marry Me* it is essential to consider the form and the structure of conventional romance that are deconstructed and dissociated by Updike in this romance novel and also consider some other parts of the form and the structure of romance that have remained loyal to the conventions of the romance genre.

3.3.1. Romance Seasonal Feature and Ending

Romance is seasonal and according to Northrop Frye romance is the mythos of summer and contains a quest from the mode of order to chaos including winter, darkness, and death to a new mode of order and rebirth. At the end of this journey not only does the hero win the heroine, but also he comes to self- realization. *Marry Me* opens with a shift back to the midday in March when Sally and Jerry arranged to meet for the first time in the beach of the coast of Connecticut “the first time, an idyllic, unseasonably midday in March- that the couple agreed to meet here” (*Marry Me* 3).

But the first chapter, *Warm Wine* depicts their meeting in the same place at another time in the winter when the beach is not crowded as other months.

In another month, this lot would be crammed, the boarded-up snack-bar-and-bathhouse building would be alive with brazen bodies and canned music, and

the dunes would be too hot to inhabit. Today the dunes still wore the look, inherited from winter, off clean-swept Nature, never tasted (ibid 5).

The ending of the novel occurs in three different ways and times. The first ending which shows the happy ending of the romance, the union of Jerry and Sally, the rebirth, and order is undated while the second ending, illustrating the reunion of Jerry and Ruth, occurs in November and the third one, associating with Jerry's trip to the West Indies, occurs in March. As a result, the cycle of this romance is not as steady as what Frye determines. *Marry Me* opens in spring which is the state of birth and order; on the other hand, there are three different times and results in *Marry Me* namely marriage, separation, and loneliness which make the ending of the romance open. Apparently, the cycle of time in this romance remains mysterious. Therefore, the dissociation of *Marry Me* in terms of form related to the seasonal cycle is obvious.

Freeman in *Divorce Me Romance and Realism in John Updike's Marry Me: A Romance* asserts that Updike considers three endings for *Marry Me* in order to "break from traditional novelistic form, demonstrating Updike's shift from realism to romance" (114). On the other hand, Newman in *The Aesthetic Sphere* under the hypothesis which demonstrates Updike being under the influence of Kierkegaard theory of aesthetes declares that the first ending is an aesthetic rebirth while the second ending is "returning to Ruth's aesthetic sphere" (107), and the last ending expresses that "though Jerry is still registering the world in aesthetic terms, it has lost much of its beauty" (ibid 107-108). The present writer tries to consider these three different endings from romance sphere to prove *Marry Me's* dissociation from the happy ending elements of conventional romances.

As a typical romance, *Pride and Prejudice* is of value to be reviewed in terms of its form. In comparison to *Marry Me*, it contains all elements of conventional romance regarding

form. Romance is seasonal and as a mythos of summer, it shifts from order to chaos and then to reorder. *Pride and Prejudice* opens near the end of September and ends in the autumn the year after. Before the beginning of the autumn, the couples, Jane and Mr. Bingley; Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy, meet each other and fall in love. During the winter they are almost separated. In the spring, Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy run into each other and he proposes to her while she refuses. In the summer, Elizabeth goes on a holiday with the Gardiners to the Lake District. Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy meet each other several times. In the autumn, Jane and Mr. Bingley; Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy get married which has made the novel a comedy of manner. In addition, *Pride and prejudice* end with the marriage of the couples which illustrates the happy ending of a romance novel.

3.3.2. Romance and Historical Mode

Frye considers romance a historical mode which means that romance concludes the reality of the time it is written. *Marry Me* was published at the time when an Evangelical revival took place and the born-again Christian was practiced by Jimmy Carter's proponents. Also, the law of the first 'no-fault' divorce was enforced in 1969 and the rate of divorce in America peaked. Furthermore, Updike divorced his first wife Marry Pennington the same year he published *Marry Me*. According to authenticating social influences in *Marry Me*, Updike remains faithful to this realm of romance genre.

The time of the novel is of significance during the 'Camelot' of the Kennedy region that illustrates the occurrence of romance in the remote past, it happens the time which is claimed to be the golden time that Updike feels nostalgic about it. Updike describes the time as: "that year, the first of Kennedy's presidency, the rivers and ponds froze early and black-smooth for beautiful skating" (*Marry Me* 96). George W. Hunt in *John Updike and the Three Great Secret Things: Sex, Religion, and Art* claims that "The Kennedy era was the age of

Camelot in America, in retrospect, it appears as remote as the age of the Round Table. That particular sense of a distant and irretrievable past is characteristic of Romance” (140).

Updike cites that “it’s the story that could only have happened in John Kennedy’s region. He infused all of us with a romantic sense of ourselves that’s gone. Anything that happened before 1965 seems kind of innocence to me” (ibid 140).

Moreover, Updike insists on being American by attributing marriage to America and adultery to Europe. When Sally asks him “if you can’t take me as a wife, don’t spoil me as a mistress”, Jerry responds: “But I don’t want you as a mistress; our lives just aren’t built for it. Mistresses are for European novels. Here, there’s no institution except marriage” (*Marry Me* 52). As a result, divorce outweighs adultery and for doing so this divorce would be romantic. Freeman’s opinion about this comparison is “for the American Adam, for whom divorce is an option, adultery loses much of its romantic power. For the American Adam, adultery most realistically leads to divorce, and most romantically leads to remarriage” (109). From Jerry’s point of view, even when he is not married to Sally, this mistress should be considered as a wife, a temporary wife, who is imagined in a sort of fairy tale

You were a territory where I went on tip-toe to steal a magic mirror. You were a prince married to an ogre. I would go to meet you as a knight, to rescue you and would become instead the dragon, and ravish you.... What a lazy, lovely naked child you were, my mistress and temporary wife (*Marry Me* 37).

Austen reflects England’s class divisions, the prejudices of upper-class people, marriage, social etiquettes, etc. in *Pride and Prejudice* during Victorian period. Similar to Austen, Updike depicts the golden time of the ‘Camelot’ of the Kennedy region. He shows divorce, marriage, adultery, family crisis, and social etiquettes in America.

3.3.3. Romance Hero and Heroine

According to Frye the hero's actions are marvelous as he has come from an upper world unlike his enemy who has come from a lower world. In *Anatomy of Criticism* He declares that

The romance hero is analogous to the mythical Messiah or deliverer who comes from an upper world, and his enemy is analogous to the demonic powers of a lower world. The conflict however takes place in, or at any rate primarily concerns, our world, which is in the middle, and which is characterized by the cyclical movement of nature. Hence the opposite poles of the cycles of nature are assimilated to the opposition of the hero and his enemy. The enemy is associated with winter, darkness, confusion, sterility, moribund life, and old age, and the hero with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigor, and youth (187).

Differently, Jerry lacks such brevity and marvelous actions. He is afraid of death and because of such panic he gets asthma attacks and insomnia. At a midnight he wakes up and tells his wife that "someday he would die" (*Marry Me* 77). He is religious and the only way to escape from such dread is having affairs with Sally, the woman with whom he is in love. The first night when they were on their second trip to Washington, in hotel, Jerry gets insomnia and says: "you don't give me insomnia. The Lord gives me insomnia....I love insomnia. It's a proof that I'm alive" (ibid 31). Updike describes Jerry's behavior when he has asthmatic attacks in the following lines

When Jerry has his asthmatic attacks, he would wake in the night and find his breathing shallow. He would go to the bathroom for a drink of water or the ease of moving about and come back to the bed, where she had usually

awakened, with his back bent. He describes it as a wall in his lungs, or a floor that kept rising, so that he could not take enough air in; and the harder he tried, the tighter the wall became, so that he would break into a sweat, and cry out this was death, and ask her why she was smothering him, why she had had so many children, why she couldn't keep the house dusted, why she refused to believe in Jesus Christ, the resurrection of Lazarus, the immortality of the soul – there was no limit to the height of his accusations against her, and she submitted to them because she knew as long as he could find breath to voice them he was not asphyxiating. At last, after an hour or more, he would tire of abusing her, and God beyond her, and relax, and fall asleep, snoring trustingly as beside him she stared into the dark (ibid 142).

Jerry makes Ruth have sex with him on Sunday nights: “usually on Sunday nights, stirred up, he would insist on making love” (ibid 148). He does it in order to satisfy his religious beliefs and escape from his dread. Likewise, when Jerry was in doubt about leaving Ruth and marrying Sally, he recognized that his wife might be pregnant; as a result, he would have left Sally and Jerry's decision as “if you're pregnant, I'll come back and be your husband and Sally and I will forget each other...I've been waiting for an act of God and this is it” (ibid 201).

Also, Jerry's actions, as a romance hero, are not astonishing and remarkable. He is doubtful about divorcing Ruth and marrying Sally. He is in a permanent dilemma and although he claims to be deeply in love with Sally, he is not such a lover. Even in the story, he confesses to be an unreal lover: “that's what I am an unreal lover” (ibid 17). Moreover, before taking the second trip to Washington, Sally asks him: ““you'll miss Ruth too”, he replies “not so much”, and she replies “No? Hey I love you for saying, ‘Not so much’. A real

lover would have said, 'Not at all'" (ibid 16-17). Nonetheless, the heroine is absolutely courageous and tends to sacrifice everything to reach the hero. Just opposite to conventional romance heroes, Jerry's deeds are not as marvelous as what is expected.

From the beginning of the story, Sally's enthusiasm towards Jerry and getting married to him is obvious and undoubted. When Sally wants to go on a trip to Washington with Jerry, he refuses and considers Sally's tension futile. "Sally don't come. You'll just crucify yourself for nothing" (ibid 17). He continues by saying: "You are so gallant. It would never swing. They'd find out and he wouldn't let you have the children", she replies "I don't want the children, I want you" (ibid 17), and "I don't think we should take any risks until we know what we're going to do" (ibid 18). Just carefree to all her family members and her marital life which she risks, she goes to Washington alone and when Jerry asks her: "how on earth you get away?" She replies: "I just said good-bye and got in the Saab and drove to the airport" and he answers: "you know, it's marvelous to meet a woman who can really use the twentieth century" (ibid 29). Besides, when Jerry asks her not to return home and stay with him, Jerry says: "Do you want to not go back? Shall we just run off? You'd lose your children" she answers "I'm willing" (ibid 38).

Jerry is not a romance hero as what Frye describes a romance hero should be. The hero is "superior in degree to other men and to his environment" (33), however, Jerry is an ordinary upper-middle class dweller with a handful conflicts in his mind and his life. The narrator reports: He "became an unsuccessful cartoonist and then a successful animator of television commercials" (*Marry Me* 77). On the other hand, his rival, Richard is very rich and has inherited the money from his dead father who "had owned a liquor store in Cannonpart, which had fostered branches in in shopping malls as the little city metastasized and merged with exurban New York" (ibid 79). In comparison to Richard who "was native to the region",

Jerry is “an inland boy, squeamish and hydrophobic”, “a skinny slave, preoccupied and cruel” (ibid 80). Also, opposite Richard who is “a big overweight man A deep voice that in every swollen syllable expressed oral conceit”, Jerry is not that strong when Updike describes: “his skinny chest gleaming like metal in the dying light” (ibid 79).

In contrast to the conventional romance, where the woman had a secondary position in the story, Sally is in the center of attention. She is gorgeous and eye-catching “flashy and over animated and highly visible” (ibid 80). Supposedly, Updike’s hero’s and heroine’s roles are changed. Sally is the one trying to capture Jerry and crucifying her family for him. As such we can see how Updike reverses the traditional role of the hero in romance. Jerry is not similar to Odysseus who is brave and fights to death to overcome all barriers in order to get reunion with the heroine, Penelope.

The romance hero is analogous to the mythical Messiah or deliverer who comes from an upper world, and his enemy is analogous to the demonic powers of a lower world. The conflict however takes place in, or at any rate primarily concerns, our world, which is in the middle, and which is characterized by the cyclical movement of nature. Hence the opposite poles of the cycles of nature are assimilated to the opposition of the hero and his enemy. The enemy is associated with winter, darkness, confusion, sterility, moribund life, and old age, and the hero with spring, dawn, order, fertility, vigor, and youth (Frye 187).

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Darcy and Mr. Bingley are from aristocrat level of society. They are rich and handsome. Austen opens *Pride and Prejudice* with the famous sentence describing “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife” (Austen 1). The main hero of *Pride and Prejudice*, Mr. Darcy, is rich, well-known, a successful business man, and he does marvelous actions to

reach Elizabeth. He overcomes his pride and misbehaviors. He finds Lydia and pays Wickham's debt. He writes a letter to Elizabeth in order to dispel her misunderstanding about Wickham and the separation between Jane and Mr. Bingley that he made. As a result, Mr. Darcy is superior in degree to other characters.

3.3.4. Romance and Myth

Frye separates myth from romance when he asserts: "the hero's power of action" (188). The traces of myth in *Marry Me* is in the first chapter, *Warm Wine*, where Updike idyllically and idealistically symbolizes Sally and Jerry Adam and Eve by saying: "Jerry and Sally, the original man and woman" (*Marry Me* 7) and in the second chapter, *The wait*, Updike describes their affairs as "Jerry and Sally made love lucidly, like Adam and Eve when the human world was of two halves purely" (ibid 33) in order to verify their union and marriage.

The role of journeys in *Marry Me* differs from conventional romance pertaining to being together and having affairs just oppose to leading to self-discovery and winning the heroin in conventional romance. Sally tries to convince Jerry to accompany him to the second trip to Washington while Jerry refuses and says: "it would not be as good as the first time" (ibid 20). There is no self- realization after these trips neither for Sally nor for Jerry. Updike does not signify the role of journey self-realization. He devalues the significant role of journey from hero's self-realization to an insignificant role of journey which is lovemaking.

The only relationship between Austin's *Pride and Prejudice* with mythology is the "presentation of sibling loyalty, sibling rivalry, and the incestuous unions with which some of the novels end reveal her concern with preserving the sacred inviolability of the home in a time of upheaval and social change" (Hudson 125). *Pride and Prejudice* ends with the marriage of Jane and Mr. Bingley; Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy.

3.3.5. Romance' Subtitle

Nathaniel Hawthorne in his preface to *The House of the Seven Gables* justifies why writers add *A Romance* to their works

When a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former- while, as a work of art, it might rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably, so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart- has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of writer's own choosing or creation (1).

However, Updike in *John Updike: A Study of Short Fiction* expresses the idea of adding the subtitle of romance to *Marry Me* as a compensation for the lack of sociology. He says that "my unease about the book's lack of, let's say, 'sociology' led me to give it the subtitle as a way of cutting it off from the other novels" (172). On the other hand, Freeman comes out with the opinion that "calling it a romance allows Updike more room for imagination. He does not feel as constricted by the 'sociological' realism that characterizes the novel, even though the book does deal with the 'sociological' issue of divorce" (105). Newman adds that Updike gives the subtitle in order to "underline the less realistic nature of the work. In its structure this romance emphasizes the subjectivity of each character, with individual chapters ostensibly presented from the point of view of one protagonist" (95).

3.3.6. Romance Characters

Concerning characters, Updike's concern in *Marry Me* is not developing characters by going into their thoughts. Chase states that romance "tends to prefer action to character" (13), Updike does not give readers precise and sufficient information about character's mind. Instead, he mostly describes the environment where they live and things they use in order to highlight American atmosphere. Alfred Kazin in *Alfred Kazin on Fiction, a Review of Marry Me*, claims:

Updike is always at his best in handling the social matters: cars, children, parties, the drinks, and the kitchen talk late at night, the bitter sympathy between women rivals for the same man who equally mistrust him. There is all that American role playing, very real indeed when we are all in suburbia and find our only models in each other (80).

Except some minor information given by characters about each other, especially in the conversations between Ruth and Richard, the rest of the information is about the appearance of characters rather than their personality and way of thinking. For example, Ruth talks to Richard about Jerry. She says:

He says he sees death everywhere- in the newspaper, in the grass. He looks at the children and says they're sucking the life out of him. He says there're are too many", "He hates psychiatry. He hates it if I suggest there's anything abnormal about his state. When I say I'm not afraid of death, he tells me I'm a spiritual cripple. He says I'm not afraid because I have no imagination. No soul, I think is what he means (*Marry Me* 88).

In addition, Richard says: "I'd never appreciated how neurotic this guy is. I would have written him off as a simple manic depressive, but his death-wish sounds pretty

psychotic” (ibid 88). The only character that Updike penetrates into his mind and describes his attitude is Jerry in some imaginative scenes which are supposed to be the closest parts to romance illustrated by:

Oh Sally, my lost only Sally, let me say now, now before forget, while the spark still glitters on the waterfall, that I love you, that the sight of you shamed my eyes. You were a territory where I went on tip-toe to steal a magic mirror. You were a princess married to an ogre. I would go to meet you as a knight, to rescue you, and would become instead the dragon, and ravish you. You weighed me out in jewels, though ashes were what I could afford...Can I forget, forget though I live forever in Heaven among the chariots whose wheels are all eyes giving God the glory, how I saw you step from a tub, your body abruptly a waterfall? Like a man you tucked a towel about your woman's hips, and had me enter the water your flesh had charmed to a silvery opacity. I became your child, with a drenched blinding cloth that searches out even the hollows of my ears, you, my mother, my slave, dissolved me in tender abrasions. I forgot, sank. And we dried each other's beaded back, and went to the bed as if to sleep instantly, two obedient children dreaming in a low tent drumming with the excluded rain (33-34).

In the airplane before the airplane takes off, Jerry imagines

Oh, Sally, it was such a beautiful ride! Do you remember at what altitude we flew? How our little plane, like a swan boat mildly bobbing in an occasional current, carried us through the middle air that was spangled with constellations above and cities below? I saw, past the halo of your sleeping hair, the capital's

spoke wheel of light expand, tilt, and expand again: Dante could not have dreamed such a rose...

He continues

And it was you, your beauty. Through the strait gate between your legs I had entered this firmament...Oblivious, you were mine. I loved the oval of black Heaven beside your face. I love the chill that brought your head to my shoulder. I love your rough knuckle, and your downy forearms, and the way you were lost in the shape of my coat.

Then I left you...I left you half asleep, pushing the hair back from your lips, abandoned, the prey of feeding eyes. I felt you watching me race, cowardly, across the cement, diminishing, flickering in the whirling lights. Already I had seen Ruth's face lifted in the crowd behind the glass doors. I felt myself disappear in your eyes. I remember her (ibid 69-71).

And finally, before the ending of the end of the novel Jerry imagines a conversation between Sally and himself

...I'm still very shaken, but it's less bad. I'm not yours anymore. You should know that. After a while I'll probably get bitter about you and hate you because you humiliated me, and then that will go too, and I won't care either way very much. You'll be my ex-lover and we might even be friends.

Sounds awful. Awful.

Women try to be like men, Jerry, and imagine things, but in the end we're all practical, we have to be. You must go on alone.

No. I don't believe you. I loved you because you believed what I believed.

There was a place I went to with you.

Any woman in bed will take you there. There's no place, darling, but here, here and now, with Richard and Ruth. Love Ruth, Jerry. Now I must stop talking to you, because people will say I'm a whore (ibid 300-301)

In *Pride and Prejudice* Austin goes through the character's minds. She describes what they think about, their appearance, and characteristics in details.

3.5. Postmodern Elements of *Marry Me*

The elements of postmodern romance such as ambiguity, paradox, irony, parody, pastiche, intertextuality, and self-reflexivity make this romance a postmodern one. First, the paradox of this romance is paying attention to daily life of the characters and not to depicting the aspects of traditional ones as an elevated love, the marvelous actions of the hero, and the indicative quest. Therefore, it can be considered a romance of divorce, a romance of common people, and a romance of common places. Jerry could not be considered to be a hero since he does not have the features of a conventional romance hero according to what had been discussed earlier. In addition, the quests to Washington do not lead the hero to self-discovery and win the heroine.

Second, being a romance of divorce instead of marriage is ironic. The relationship between Sally and Jerry is adulterous and out of the wed-lock and these characters tend to get divorced and get remarried with each other. The novel concerns about divorce and the detrimental impacts which it causes on both families and it lacks marriage. Furthermore, the three endings of the novel disables readers to come to a conclusion that determines the destiny of these two lovers; therefore; it leads readers to ambiguity.

Third, being a realistic novel in the romance frame highlights the features of parody and pastiche as Updike's *Marry Me* is both realistic and romantic. Besides, Updike's *A Month of Sundays* (1975) has an intertextual relationship with Nathaniel Hawthorne's *the Scarlet Letter* (1850) in terms of using the aesthetic past and the theme of adultery. On the other hand, *Marry Me* lacks such an intertextual relationship except in using the same characters and themes of his other works. As it was mentioned, Updike usually uses the theme of love, marriage, divorce, family disintegration, family crisis, religion, sexuality, adultery, and the life of upper middle class people.

Forth, Updike in *Marry Me* asserts that "any romance that does not end in marriage fails" (97) to reflect that this romance fails at the end of the book when Sally and Jerry get separated in both the second and the third endings and this sentence indicates the self-reflexivity of this postmodern romance.

In this chapter the dissociation of *Marry Me* from conventional romance regarding form have been studied. Although some critics do not consider *Marry Me* to be a romance, according to what was argued in this chapter over deconstruction of form of the conventional romance, *Marry Me* is a postmodern romance since Updike dissociates it from the norms of the conventional romance genre. Opposite to the conventional seasonal romances, *Marry Me* is dissociated from such a norm by offering three different endings in different times. The time of the first ending is unknown, the time of the second one is in November, and the time of the third one is in March. Updike deconstructs the happy ending of a romance novel, too.

Jerry is afraid of death, he has asthmatic attacks, and he gets insomnia. Jerry is doubtful about giving up Ruth or Sally and divorcing Ruth and marrying to Sally. A conventional romance hero achieves self-realization after solving the hindrances. Quest as one of the important elements of conventional romance loses its significant role and value.

Quest's role used to be hero's self-discovery in conventional romance. On the other hand, in *Marry Me* Jerry goes on a trip to Washington for a business purpose and Sally accompanies him twice. Instead of fighting the obstacles and achieving self-realization they have affairs in Washington.

The dissociation of *Marry Me* in terms of generic plot will be discussed in chapter four. The points where Updike is faithful to the conventions of generic plot and the points where Updike subverts them will be argued in the following chapter.

Chapter IV:

Postmodern Romance and Its Dissociation from Conventional Romance in Terms of Generic Plot

4.1. Introduction

To label *Marry Me* as a postmodern romance, it is important to study the generic plot of the book and analyze the ways Updike deconstructs the generic plot of conventional romance. This chapter aims at debating the ways that John Updike dissociates *Marry Me* from conventional romance, recovers and alters romance strategies in terms of generic plot mostly by adhering to the romance novel's theories of Pamela Regis in *A Natural History of Romance Novel*.

John Updike's contribution to *Marry Me* as a postmodern romance is deconstructing the concepts of cultural codes namely love, marriage, divorce, fidelity, and family. Love is not as high dignified as what it has been expected and formed. Although being devoted to each other, Jerry and Sally are not similar to Romeo and Juliet who sacrifice themselves and everything to get married and be together. Jerry loves Sally while he says: "I don't think we should take any risks until we know what we're going to do" and Sally says: "we mustn't be reckless. There are too many other people involved" (*Marry Me* 18). When Ruth asks Jerry to decide between Sally and her, he says: "I can't. What I want is too tied up with how it affects everybody else" (ibid 175).

Moreover, Jerry loves her own wife and he declares it several times and also he has affairs with Ruth. One night after making love, Jerry tells Ruth: "you're making me betray Sally by being so sweetly whorish" (ibid 153). In addition, the first night in the hotel Jerry makes a comparison between Ruth and Sally when he says: "you are a little cooler than Ruth, somehow" (ibid 31) and at the second night when she wants to passionate him when he is sleeping he "drowsily called her 'Ruth'" (ibid 32). As a result, his love to Sally is not pure and selfish and he is not loyal to his mistress.

The microcosm where Updike sets *Marry Me* concerns with divorce rather than marriage. Marriage loses its high value when it is dependent on divorce. Jerry while being married, asks Sally to get married several times and it is an irony of situation. Just opposed to conventional romance concerning with happy ending and marriage, this one concerns getting divorce and then getting married. They, especially Jerry, pay attention to their family members and the detrimental impacts that divorce may affect them. They do not want to spoil other people after getting divorce.

4.2. The Essential Elements of a Romance Novel

Pamela Regis in *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* asserts that a novel could be a romance novel only if it has the eight essential elements namely “Society defined, The Meeting, The Barrier, The Attraction, The Declaration, Point of Ritual Death, The Recognition, and The Betrothal”, in the meantime, three accidental elements namely “Wedding, Dance, or fete, Scapegoat Exiled, and The Bad Converted” (30). Although some of these features are present in *Marry Me*, some of them are converted.

4.2.1. Society Define

First, the society where the Conants and the Mathiases are living is set in the first year of Kennedy’s presidency in a fictional Connecticut suburb called Greenwood. Both Greenwood and Washington are adulterous and Updike in disguise pictures it when he describes Jerry and Sally’s affairs, Richard’s affairs with other women and Ruth, and when Sally and Jerry are in the same room in the hotel for the second time in Washington, Updike poses a question in the novel: “how many adulterous and drunken couplings had they been compelled to witness?” (ibid 32). These descriptions let Updike illustrate the corrupted American society.

Also, the society is materialistic. While describing Richard's personality, Updike asserts that "Richard was one of the few people they have ever met, in their thirty years in materialist America, who professed being an atheist" (ibid 82). Updike details the objects and Mathias' interest in holding parties: "the Mathiases did share a love of parties and the things money bought and a certain callowness that was reflected in the faces of their children" (ibid 83). Obviously, by depicting two different types of men in the novel, Updike suggests that America at that time was full of controversies namely religious beliefs as Jerry is a dogmatic religious guy while Richard is an atheist.

Regis discusses that "near the beginning of the novel [any romance novel], the society that the heroine and the hero will confront in their courtship is defined for the reader. This society is in some way flawed, it may be incomplete, superannuated, or corrupted" (My edition, Regis 31). According to the above discussion, Updike brilliantly sketches this society in different parts of the novel. Certainly, Updike abides by this etiquette of conventional romance novel.

Considering Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) as a solid and conventional romance and a romance novel, the elements discussed above are shortly studied here. Society is depicted in detail as a one divided by different walks of life when Mr. Bennet talks about some leading families who are going to attend the party at that night and talking about Bingley's income.

4.2.2. The Meeting

Second, Regis maintains that "usually near the beginning of the novel [any romance novel], but also sometimes presented in flashback, the heroine and hero meet for the first time" (My edition, ibid 31). In the first chapter, *Warm Wine*, the meeting of Jerry and Sally is presented while this meeting is not their first meeting. Later, in the third chapter, *The*

Reaction of Ruth, Updike illuminates the couples' first meeting. He writes: "They were all new in town, with tiny children and houses that felt like enormous playhouses, and the Mathiases had invited the Conants to go musseling in their boat" (*Marry Me* 79). Also, in the second chapter, *The Wait*, Jerry says to Sally, "the first time I saw you, I loved you, and you were eight months pregnant with Peter" (ibid 45).

Regis declares that "some hints of the conflict to come is often introduced" (Regis 31). Updike does not give any information about the conflicts regarding Sally's and Jerry's betrothal while he brings some comparison between these people in terms of their appearance, life style, religion, thoughts, and beliefs. As an example, Sally and Richard "seemed determined to enjoy life; such determined hedonism seemed blasphemous to Jerry and vulgar Ruth" (*Marry Me* 80). Clearly, Updike stays loyal to this element, too.

In *Pride and Prejudice*. Elizabeth Bennet and Fitzwilliam Darcy, the main hero and heroine, and also Jane Bennet and Charles Bingley, the second significant couple meet each other for the first time at the ball at Meryton.

4.2.3. The Barrier

Third, one of the significant elements of the conventional romance novel is the existence of a kind of barrier which can be either internal, "a circumstance that exists outside of a heroine or a hero's mind", or external, "a circumstance that comes from within either or both" (Regis 32), and both kinds of barriers get solved in the romance novel. From Regis' point of view "the barrier drives the romance novel" (32). Both internal and external barriers simultaneously drive *Marry Me* as follows:

A large number of external barriers, the most significant being Ruth, Richard, and children, prevent Sally and Jerry to be united. Ruth as the spouse of Jerry and the mother of his children puts numerous obstacles in the way of the lovers' betrothal. At first she poses

some questions about whether their marriage is a mistake or not. Jerry asks if they have made a mistake when they got married. Then he wants to know if their permanent marital life is not a mistake. He says: "I'm just asking you if we aren't making a terrible mistake in staying married forever" (*Marry Me* 109). First, she thinks about herself and asks Jerry whether he is going to leave her or not. Then she thinks about her children and asks: "what about the children?" and Jerry answers: "I've been thinking, couldn't we divide them up somehow? They could see each other and us all they wanted and it really wouldn't be so bad if we both wanted it" and she answers back: "they need each other, and I need them. All of them. And we all need you" (ibid 110).

Then, Jerry confesses that Ruth is in love with Sally. "I think I'm in love'... 'It's Sally'... 'I've always liked Sally'... 'I'm in love with Sally...Sally Mathias. Just saying her name makes me happy" (ibid 115-117). On the other hand, Ruth tries to find out more details about their lovemaking by asking: "Have you [Jerry] been to bed with her [Sally]?" (My edition, ibid 116). She makes Jerry confess about the times and places when and where Jerry and Sally have been together. Jerry says: "we meet here and there. At beaches. Her house. In the city once in a while. This spring she was with me in Washington" (ibid 116). After acquiring some information about their relationship, Ruth says: "maybe I should talk to Richard... and get his reaction" (ibid 118). Jerry tries to convince her not to tell Richard by saying that "if you tell him, and he divorces her because of me, I'd be obliged to marry her", but she insists on informing Richard "I would say... maybe he wouldn't divorce her. He's had affairs, and probably she has. Maybe they've agreed to let this be a part of their marriage" (ibid 118).

After many discussions, Ruth asks him: "promise not to do anything until the end of the summer" (ibid 123) and not to be in touch with her anymore to decide on giving up Sally or Ruth. She tries hard not to get separated from his husband and confesses it when Jerry asks

her: “tell me about you. How do you feel? Happy? Sad? Want a divorce?” and she replies: “I’m not happy and I don’t want a divorce” (ibid 139). When their affairs in bed get better, as she tries to be more whorish to grab her husband’s attention, she proposes to Jerry that “I think it would be silly for you to go now that I’ getting better in bed” (ibid 154). Although she has had affairs with Richard, when she has an accident and Richard drives her out of the town to the woods to make love, she refuses. She says: “take me home. Take me to my house and drop me. That’s what I asked you to do, that’s what you promised you’d do, I don’t want to neck, I don’t want to have a cozy talk, I just want to go home and die, Richard” (ibid 167).

Then she becomes calm and accepts to get divorced, but Jerry refuses to leave her and his children as Ruth says to her son, Charlie’ that “daddy wants to leave us and go live with Mrs. Mathias!” (ibid 179). Charlie starts crying and shouting. This way Ruth makes him stay with them. Jerry tells his wife that “I told her I can’t come to her. I described the incident with Charlie and said I just couldn’t do it. She’s flying back to Richard tomorrow. She said she wasn’t too surprised. She was pretty sore at you for using the children but I told her you hadn’t meant to” (ibid 180). Again, after some days when they are invited to a dancing party in Cannonport, he decides to go to Sally and tells her wife: “I must leave you. She’s too lovely. I can’t let her go” (ibid 190). And Jerry says at night that

I saw it tonight, very clearly. A revelation. I’ve been waiting for one, and there it was. I must go to her. I must go to that orange dress and drive in and disappear. I don’t care if it kills me, I don’t care if it kills you. Anything that gets in the way – the children, the money, our parents, Richard – none of it matters. It’s just stuff, bad stuff. Tough stuff. It needs faith. I’ve just lacked faith, in a funny way faith in you. I didn’t think you were a person, apart from me. But I am sure. Quite sure. It’s great relief to be sure. I’m very thankful.

I'm numb and scared, but glad. Be glad too. Please? I was just nibbling you to death this other way (ibid 190).

She accepts but again and again, she tries to use her children to convince him to stay with them. She asks: "when will you tell the children?" (ibid 190). Then, she realizes that her period was five days late and she doubts if she is pregnant. Again, Jerry decides to stay with her and says: "if you're pregnant, I'll come back and be your husband and Sally and I will forget each other" (ibid 201). Nonetheless, the day after "she discovered that she was bleeding" (ibid 201).

Ruth, the most important external barrier with a large number of efforts, fails to make them separated. Ruth makes no efforts to separate them under the influence of Richard when she recognizes his carefree attitude towards Sally's and Jerry's divorce and remarriage. Throughout *Marry Me* this barrier is solved by Updike.

Richard, just opposite to Ruth does not put efforts into being an obstacle on the way of the lovers' betrothal and somehow he seems happy. Nevertheless, Richard leaves his house to Jerry and explains his own conditions to accept a divorce by saying that

...my intention is, in regard to the house, to live in it. I assume you and she will locate a new place for her as soon as possible; until such time, she and I will continue to live together, but not, so to speak, as man and wife, ...secondly I will divorce Sally if you agree to marry her, ...thirdly if you do not marry Sally, I intend to sue you for alienation affections. (ibid 247-248).

Then he adds that "if you [Ruth] desert Sally, I will dispose of her in my own way" (My edition, ibid 249). They also decide on children's custody. Richard gives the custody of his own children to Jerry as he considers him a good father. He says: "I know you'll be a

good father to my children. I've seen you with yours, and you're a good father" (ibid 225).

On the other hand, Ruth does not give the custody of her children to Sally and Jerry. By the way neither children nor Richard are strong barriers.

Apart from external barriers, there is an internal one that does not seem to be solved throughout the novel except in the first ending that is the betrothal of the lovers. This way Updike breaks the rule of solving all barriers before the happy ending. Jerry himself is the weightiest internal barrier. His doubts on giving up one of the women and his reluctance to be with Sally are the main obstacle driving *Marry Me*. From the very beginning of the novel Jerry does not seem to be a common romance hero as it has been discussed several times in the previous chapter.

Sally wants to accompany Jerry to Washington as she has done once while Jerry is not as enthusiastic as Sally. From Jerry's point of view, if Sally accompanies him, she'll harass herself for nothing. He says: "Sally don't come. You'll just crucify yourself for nothing. We'd only be there one night" (ibid 17). For Sally the one night is a great opportunity to be with him. She asks: "you think a night with me is nothing", he responds: "I think a night with you is everything. I'm hoping for a life time of the", and he says: "I don't think we should take any risks until we know what we're going to do" (ibid 18).

When they are waiting in the airport in the second chapter: *The Wait*, Jerry says,

I've figured out the bind I'm in. it's between death and death. To live without you is death to me. On the other hand, to abandon my family is a sin; to do it I'd have to deny God, and by denying God I'd give up all claim to immorality...I look at your face, and imagine myself lying in bed dying, and ask myself, 'is this the face I want at my death-bed?' and I don't know. I honestly don't know, Sally...you are my only woman, you're the only woman

I want. You were given to me in Heaven, and Heaven won't let me have you
(ibid 55).

On the other hand, before getting on the airplane he changes his mind and decides to marry her. He proposes to her: "let's get married", and because he has changed his mind several times Sally cannot believe it and says: "I don't think you mean it"; however, he suggests to her not to go home and stay together. He continues: "I don't see any other way but to go back to the hotel and call up Ruth and Richard eventually get married. It's the only thing I can think of. I'm tired right now, but I think I'll be very happy" (ibid 67). Now, Jerry's suspense for marrying her leaves no doubt while it seems that he does not do it to his heart's generic plot because at the end of the second chapter, they get separated.

Ruth has an influential impact on his doubt about deciding on giving up one of the women by using their children and being nicer to him than she used to be. Both Sally and Ruth know that the only one who can finish the terrible condition of suffering is Jerry who has not decided yet. Sally says to Ruth: "he'd kill himself, trying to support two women" and "there is no point in our quarreling. What we think about each other doesn't matter. Jerry must decide" (ibid 132).

Ruth wants to pack a punch on Jerry's decision and help him to decide to leave one of the women. After visiting Sally in her home, Ruth explains the discussion between Sally and herself on Jerry's decision. Jerry replies: "how can I decide? I don't know enough. I don't know if you love me or not; you say you do, but I don't feel it. Maybe a divorce from me is what you really want, and you're just too polite to tell me. Maybe it would be the best thing that ever happened to you" and about Sally he says: "I don't know if the children would have nervous breakdowns or not. I don't know if Sally' once she had me in the bag, wouldn't find

me boring. Sometimes I think my charms for her is that I'm not in the bag. Maybe she only likes things she can't have. Maybe we're all like that" (ibid 138).

Jerry encourages Sally to go to Florida because he thinks she has been in a bind. When Ruth asks him what the bind is exactly, he replies: "a bind is when all the alternatives are impossible. Life is a bind. It's impossible to live forever, it's impossible to die. It's impossible for me to marry Sally, it's impossible for me to live without her" (ibid 173). After a while Ruth pleads: "decide, please.... we'll all survive, just do what you want and stop caring about us", but he replies: "I can't.... what I want is to tied up with how it affects everybody else. It's like one of those equations with nothing but variable. I can't solve it. I can't solve it" (ibid 175). As a result, he is not able to decide and remove the internal barrier which is doubt.

The removal of the barrier should bring some sort of freedom and happiness for the heroine as Regis asserts

Removal of the barrier usually involves the heroine's freedom from societal, civic, or even religious strictures that prevented the union between her and the hero. This release is an important source of the happiness in the romance novel's happy ending. The barrier's fall is a liberation for the heroine. It is a moment of rejoicing for the reader, whose response to the heroine's freedom is joy (Regis 33).

At the end of the third chapter, *The Reacting of Richard*, Sally and Jerry get separated and go back to their spouses. The last chapter, *Wyoming*, is about these internal barriers. They are still present and unsolved in the second and the third endings. If we consider the reunion of Sally and Jerry in the first ending the real one, then Updike stays faithful to the strategy posed by Regis that indicates the betrothal of the lovers. Updike is not loyal to this element of

a romance novel as he refuses giving readers any absolute ending; therefor, the freedom and the happiness of Sally remain mysterious to readers. Jerry asks Sally: “are you free?” and she responds “of some things” (*Marry Me* 289). Therefore, Regis’ definition of romance novel, “a work of prose fiction that tells the story of the courtship and betrothal of one or more heroines”, (Regis 14) is deciphered.

Although there are some different barriers among other couples in *Pride and Prejudice*, the most serious and complicated one is between Darcy and Elizabeth. The first and the most important obstacle between them which has been depicted from the beginning of the story is the society and the different walks of life that they come from. Lady Catherine de Bourgh, both Mr. and Mrs. Bennet, Wickham, and Caroline Bingley are the other external barriers while the internal ones are Elizabeth’s prejudice and Darcy’s pride.

4.2.4. The Attraction

Fourth, the attraction between the hero and the heroine is the next element of the romance novel which makes the lovers stay enthusiastic while they are facing the barriers. Regis defines the attraction as “a scene or series of scenes scattered throughout the novel establishes for the reader the reason that this couple must marry” (33). The attraction between Jerry and Sally is mostly sexual. From the first chapter of *Marry Me*, Updike delineates the sexual attraction between Sally and Jerry. Updike describes their affairs as follows: “Her lovemaking was wonderfully virginal, simple, and quick.... With Sally there was always, for all the times she had endured this before, a priceless sense of her being, yet once again, innocently amazed” (*Marry Me* 10). In the second chapter, Updike sketches their two trips to Washington and their sojourn in the same hotel and their lovemaking.

Also, Jerry likes lovemaking with Sally rather than his wife because he thinks Sally does it to have fun. He says to Ruth: “she hasn’t made a religion out of sex, the way you have. She thinks it’s fun” (ibid 144). One night while having sex, Ruth asks Jerry if she is more whorish than Sally and Jerry answers: “oh, much. She is very demure. With you, it’s a roll in the mud. Mother mud. With her.... It’s a butterfly alighting on a little flower” (ibid 153).

Regis believes that “attraction can be based on a combination of sexual chemistry, friendship, shared goals or feelings, society’s expectations, and economic issues” (33). In *Marry Me* the prevailing reason of attraction is sex as the couple live in an adulterous society where there is no strict rules for people committing adultery as there used to be. Jerry tells Sally: “the court don’t really care who commits adultery any more” (67).

Updike tries to portray the adulterous American society by illustrating the sexual attraction between Jerry and Sally, and Richard and Ruth.

Similarly, in *Pride and Prejudice* the attraction among the couples differs from one to another, but in the case of Elizabeth and Darcy the attraction is both sexual and emotional.

4.2.5. The Declaration

Fifth, the hero and the heroine announce their love for each other repeatedly throughout the story. Regis claims about the declaration as “the scene or scenes in which the hero declares his love for the heroine, and the heroine her love for the hero, can occur anywhere in the narrative” (34). Jerry and Sally acknowledge their feels in numerous times. In the first chapter, on shore, they proclaim each other their love. Jerry says: “...I love you” and Sally responds: “I know, I know, and I love you...” (*Marry Me* 12).

In the second chapter, when they are making love in the hotel, Jerry asks her to close her eyes during lovemaking while she refuses and he closes his. Then, he fantasizes his declaration of his feelings by saying: “Oh Sally, my lost only Sally, let me say now, now before we both forget, while the spark still glitters on the waterfall, that I love you, that the sight of you shamed my eyes...” (ibid 33).

Furthermore, he answers his question about why he loves Sally and he says: “well, you’re gorgeous, brave, kind – really so kind- alive, female, and all the rest of it that anybody can see. To this extent, anyone who sees you come into a room loves you. The first time I saw you, I loved you, and you were eight months pregnant with Peter” (ibid 45).

In chapter three, both Sally and Jerry reveal their loves for each other while talking with Ruth. In chapter four, Jerry declares his love for Sally to Richard when Richard is talking about the length of their relationship which has taken six months. Jerry tells him that “longer than that.... I’ve always loved Sally” (ibid 214). Also, both Sally and Jerry declare their love for each other many times throughout this chapter. Sally calls him from Florida and says to Jerry her feeling towards him and her feelings towards love

Oh Jerry, there’s no rush, take all the time you need, because I know, I know every time I see you, that it’s you, and it will be. It doesn’t matter so much what you decide, or if you decide at all, we’re not that important, I mean us as people, it’s our love that’s important, what we feel for each other, that’s what we must protect, what we must never let the world take from us (ibid 274).

Updike uses the element of declaration in many parts of the story in a common way similar to all romance novels; thus, it shows that he is loyal to this element of a romance novel.

In *Pride and Prejudice* while Elizabeth declares her love for Darcy at the end of the book by saying: “Elizabeth... gave him to understand that her sentiments had undergone so material a change, since the period to which he alluded, so to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure, his present assurances” (Austin 366), Darcy declares his love for her at the middle of the story when he says: “in vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be suppressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and I love you” (ibid 189).

4.2.6. Point of Ritual Death

Sixth, the point of ritual death defined by Regis as it “marks the moment in the narrative when the union between heroine and hero, the hoped-for resolution, seems absolutely impossible, when it seems that the barrier will remain, more substantial than ever” (35). In *Marry Me*, the point of ritual death is the signs of Ruth’s pregnancy. She seems to be pregnant because she is five days late. If she was pregnant, the reunion of Jerry and Sally would become impossible because the main target of the ritual death is the heroine. Sally would have been separated from her beloved if Ruth was pregnant. Jerry would decide to leave Sally, if Ruth was pregnant. Jerry asserts that “I don’t want you to have an abortion” and “if you’re pregnant, I’ll come back and be your husband and Sally and I will forget each other” (201).

There is no real and actual death in the story, the death is ritual. To put it another way, Ruth’s bleeding can symbolize the death. This death gives Sally the opportunity to escape from separating from Jerry, and getting married to the hero. Regis advances that “the death is, however ritual. The heroine does not die. She is freed from its presence, and this freedom is the mythic counterpart of the freedom that results from the lifting of the barrier” (35).

Now, Ruth' pregnancy as a fierce obstacle solves and Jerry gets back to Sally which brings happiness and joy for her. To this extent, Updike once more remains in the frame of conventional romance story.

Lydia's elopement is considered as the point of ritual death in *Pride and Prejudice* because although she has been still alive, her family members behave and talk as if she is dead in some scenes illustrated by when Jane asks: "can I suppose her so lust to everything?" (Austin 275), when Elizabeth says: "she is lost forever" (ibid 277), and in Mr. Collins' letter when he asserts that "the death of your daughter would have been a blessing in comparison of this" (ibid 296-297).

4.2.7. The Recognition

Seventh, the recognition is the last step before the betrothal. It happens when the author "represents the new information that will overcome the barrier" (Regis 36). In *Marry Me*, the external barriers - Ruth, Richard, and children, are removed and become less disregarded. On the other hand, the internal barrier of Jerry is not solved to the end of the chapter four. In a common romance novel, Regis asserts: "the recognition scene consists of the heroine understanding her own psyche better" (37); however, in *Marry Me*, this concentration is on Jerry who is unable to decide on giving up one of the women to be survived.

In a wide range of sceneries, Jerry decides to give her wife up in favor of Sally and to give up Sally in favor of Ruth and his children. Therefore, the internal barrier of Jerry remains unsolved. Apparently, Updike decodes this element as well. Not only does he deconstruct the subject or the gender of the ritual death who has been the heroine, but also he deconstructs the removal of the internal barrier.

The internal barriers in *Pride and Prejudice* disappear when Elizabeth finds out her prejudice and Darcy finds out his pride while the external ones drift apart one by one.

4.2.8. The Betrothal

Eighth, the betrothal is when “the hero asks the heroine to marry him and she accepts; or the heroine asks the hero, and he accepts” (ibid 37). Ironically, Jerry has proposed to Sally numerous times while both of them are married. *Marry Me* as a postmodern romance, is concerned with the irony of situation and Updike decodes the concept of marriage in this novel. Before Jerry’s and Sally’s confessions to their spouses, Jerry asks Sally to marry him a handful of times. For instance, he proposes her at the airport in Washington. He declares: “let’s get married” (*Marry Me* 67).

Regis assumes that “in romance novels from the last quarter of the twentieth century marriage is not necessary as long as it is clear that heroine and hero will end up together” (37-38). Updike converts such a happy ending after the disappearance of all barriers to the second chapter of *Marry Me* when Jerry considers Ruth his woman and momentary wife. He fantasizes a talk with Sally and says: “.... I was trying to tell you then. I was a father. Our love of children implies our loss of them. What a lazy lovely naked child you were, my mistress and momentary wife...” (*Marry Me* 33). Sally also considers herself his wife and says: “Jerry I’m your woman” (ibid 37). Moreover, when they are hopeless to get home on time by plane, they decide to get to New York to get on a plane. While taking a cab, he explains that “my wife and I, I guess, would prefer to drive alone” (ibid 60).

Before the last chapter of *Marry Me*, in *The Reacting of Richard*, Sally and Jerry get separated and return to their spouses. Richard asks Jerry: “do I understand you correctly in that if I divorce Sally you will not stand by her? Repeat, will not?” and Jerry responds ‘that is correct. I will not stand by her’ (285). Finally, in the last chapter, *Wyoming*, Updike portrays

their reunion in West. On the other hand, Updike pictures two other endings where Jerry returns to his wife and takes a trip to East, France, and also he depicts in the third ending where Jerry is alone in the West. Jerry imagines a conversation with Sally which signifies their separation.

And now, how do you feel? I feel dead.

I'm still very shaken, but it's less bad. I'm not yours anymore. You should know that. After a while I'll probably get bitter about you and hate you because you humiliated me, and then that will go too, and I won't care either way very much. You'll be my ex-lover and we might even be friends.

Sounds awful. Awful.

Women try to be like men, Jerry, and imagine things, but in the end we're all practical, we have to be. You must go on alone.

No. I don't believe you. I loved you because you believed what I believed. There was a place I went to with you.

Any woman in bed will take you there. There's no place, darling, but here, here and now, with Richard and Ruth. Love Ruth, Jerry. Now I must stop talking to you, because people will say I'm a whore (300-301).

Undoubtedly, Updike breaks the orthodox rules of conventional romance novel strategy to make *Marry Me* a postmodern romance by adopting three different endings whereby readers are not sure about the happy ending of this romance novel. The concept of the three different endings can be under the debate over both form and generic plot of romance. Updike finishes *Marry Me* in a hallucinating way where Jerry asks Sally to get married to her again.

Jerry had rolled down his window, in his impatience to be free, to mix himself up with the spaced house, the drab and patient shops, the Lutheran church left by the Danes, the fort – all of it lying in the tranquil pink shadow cast by the high green sea. He inhaled the air. This was the place, it tasted right. He had always told her there was a place, and now he had found it, made good his promise, and brought them here. He was intensely, passingly happy. The existence of this place satisfied him that there was a dimension in which he did go, as was right, at that party, or the next, and stand, timid and exultant, above the downcast eyes of her gracious, sorrowing face, and say to Sally, *Marry Me* (303).

Regis believes that “these essential narrative events provide a romance novel with its basic structure. Without these, the work is not a romance novel” (38). It is clear that *Marry Me* has all these eight urgent characteristics; however, some of them are revised by the writer. Updike by both adhering to and dissociating from the norms of conventional romance novel strategies pointed by Regis, escapes from the normal and accepted way of writing a romance novel. Deconstruction of some of these strategies makes Updike able to form a postmodern romance which is both ardent to and at the same time unfaithful to the romance genre generally.

In addition, the traces of the other three minor elements of a romance novel being the wedding, dance, or fete; the exile of a scapegoat character; and the conversion of a bad or evil character are apparent in *Marry Me* although they are not as important as the eight elements since Regis considers them minor ones whose absence in a romance novel does not have a considerable effect.

4.2.9. Wedding, Dance, or Fete

First, *Marry Me* contains a handful of parties and gatherings, although they are not described in details. Regis points out that “in a scene or scenes the promised wedding is depicted, or some other celebration of the new community is staged, such as a dance or a fete” (38). Sally and Jerry meet each other at a party for the first time. The party is held by the Mathiases in order to get familiar with new people in Greenwood. Updike portrays their first meeting in the beginning of the third chapter. He writes: “they were all new in town, with tiny children and houses that felt like enormous playhouses, and the Mathiases had invited the Conants to go musselling in their boat” (*Marry Me* 79).

He also points out to some other parties where Ruth and Richard dance and Richard suggests she hang out with Richard illustrated by “dancing with her at a party, Richard stroked, not patted, her buttocks and told her he had always thought she had the sexiest bottom in town” (ibid 84). Once Jerry complains about Ruth spending too much time with Richard at the parties she answers: “he talks to me woman to woman” (ibid 84). At another party, Richard invites Ruth to have lunch with in a Chinese restaurant, but “she thanks him and refuses” (ibid 84).

One of the important parties in the story where Sally and Jerry meet each other again after a period of alienation, is held by the Collinses in Cannonport. Jerry invites Sally to dance and at the center of the floor. The narrator narrates: “Jerry and Sally took everyone’s eye; there was something striking about them as a couple, something adolescent and tall, vaguely comic and dramatically demanding, as actors are demanding of their audience” (ibid 189). After the party, Jerry decides to go to Sally. He says to Ruth: “I must leave you. She’s too lovely. I can’t let her go” (ibid 190).

Although Updike does not write the lover's wedding party, he keeps being attached to this element of a romance novel by dedicating some sceneries to different parties.

4.2.10. Scapegoat Exiled

Second, Ruth plays the role of the scape goat in *Marry Me* as “a representative of wrongheadedness in the romance novel, a character who, wittingly or not, prevents the heroine and hero from marrying, in ejected from the new society formed by their union” (Regis 39). Ruth is the hardest barrier in *Marry Me*. She asks Jerry to promise not to do anything before the end of the summer and also she abuses her children to force Jerry to stay with them and forget Sally. If we consider the first ending of the novel, the reunion of Jerry and Sally, as the exact ending, there is no place for Ruth in West where Jerry and Sally flies to.

Although there is no precise escape goat in *Marry Me*, Ruth is the only one who probably is. By considering Ruth the escape goat, Updike deliberately portrays the second minor feature of a romance novel.

4.2.11. The Bad Converted

Finally, Ruth is the bad converted in *Marry Me*. The opponents of the lover's marriage “converted to an acceptance of it and incorporated into the society formed by the union at the end of the novel” (ibid 39). When Jerry decides to marry Sally, Ruth changes her mind and wants to help them to get united. She says: “if you've made up your mind, I promised to help you” (*Marry Me* 190). Updike does not give his readers any other information about how Ruth helps Jerry and Sally to get married; however he just points to them.

Before the betrothal in *Pride and Prejudice*, Lady Catherine's action to Elizabeth converts and makes the couple closer. Finally, Darcy's propose is accepted by Elizabeth. All in all, according to Pamela Regis' theory on romance novel, *Pride and Prejudice* is a romance novel.

As a minor feature of a romance novel, it is not that important to dedicate a lot of information on explaining in detail how the bad ones are converted in a precise way. Once more, Updike stays loyal to the last minor element to show *Marry Me* is a true romance.

4.4. Conclusion

To sum up one can conclude that not only does Updike relates his novel to the eight essential characteristics of a romance novel, but he also employs the other three minor features in *Marry Me*. He deconstructs some of these essential elements to depart his romance novel from conventional ones in order to make it a postmodern romance. Updike sticks to elements of conventional romance novels namely society defined, the meeting, the attraction, the declaration, point of ritual death, wedding, dance, or fete, scapegoat exiled, and the bad converted. Nevertheless, Updike dissociates from conventional romance novels in terms of the barrier, the recognition, and the betrothal.

Chapter v: Conclusion

Romance was revived in the late twentieth century and gained new characteristics known as ambiguity, parody, pastiche, paradox, contradiction, self-reflexivity, and lacking any coherence and form. Such a hybrid construction made romance a postmodern genre. Romance and postmodernism exceed both culture and history. Romance also exceeds the form of the genre in terms of form and generic plot as postmodernism breaks all boundaries including genres. As a result, the new kind of romance is a postmodern phenomenon.

Though romance is contaminated with the inundation of history, postmodernism is contaminated with the inundation of romance. It is impossible to locate the exact history where the postmodern romance refers. Besides, it is implausible to divide romance and realism. Realism recalls the past in order to forget it while postmodernism recalls the past to make it impossible to forget throughout the figure of woman. Opposite to traditional romance which considered woman's state poor, postmodernism reevaluates women and revolves around women's desires.

Romance became a genre in the twelfth century while many romances had been written before that time. Romance was changed a lot up to the Twentieth century although with the advent of postmodern romance this change becomes more significant. The main ingredients of romance such as love, travel, and adventure have been utilized in writing romances.

This thesis was divided into five chapters. In the introduction, a general overview on Updike and *Marry Me* was given. *Marry Me*, the eighth novel of Updike, is a romance written

when Updike was under the influence of ‘no-fault’ divorce in California and the divorce between Updike and his first wife.

Chapter two was organized around the theoretical views on romance, postmodernism, and postmodern romance. Romance is a genre opened to debate by many critics and scholars throughout the history as a genre which contains realism, fantasy, and extraordinary matters. Romance is an amalgamation of other genres namely science fiction, fairy tales, postcolonial literature, detective story, and etc. Therefore, romance can be considered a genre which does not accept any frame and fixity.

The dissociation of *Marry Me* from conventional romance in terms of form was discussed in chapter three. Just opposed to conventional romance which is seasonal, *Marry Me* deviates from such a rule by choosing three different endings in different times. The first ending time is unknown, the second ending time is in November, and the third one is in March. In this way, Updike deconstructs the happy ending of romance novels. *Marry Me* pictures divorce and its detrimental impacts on all family members rather than marriage.

Updike dissociates *Marry Me* from conventional romance in terms of generic plot as discussed in chapter four. According to Pamela Regis’ theories on romance, Updike departs *Marry Me* from conventional romance by deconstructing a handful of elements discussed by Regis including the barrier, the recognition, and the betrothal.

Although the external barriers namely Ruth, Richard, and children are removed in *Marry Me*, the internal barrier of Jerry which is his doubt on giving up Ruth or Sally is not. In the first and the second endings Jerry’s confusion is solved by choosing one of them, while in the third ending he gives up everything and travels to the West alone. In addition, unlike conventional romance where the heroine understands her own psyche better; however in *Marry Me* the hero has some struggles to know his psyche. Obviously, Jerry fails to give up

one of the women in sake of the other one. Moreover, the betrothal of Sally and Jerry stays mysterious to the readers.

All in all, Updike to some extent I remains loyal to the conventions of romance genre. Yet at the same time he dissociates *Marry Me* from some of the conventions discussed above. Updike is loyal to romance elements in terms of form such as historical mode, not developing characters; however, in terms of generic plot he sticks to the elements of conventional romance novels such as Society Defined, The Meeting, The Attraction, The Declaration, Point of Ritual Death, Wedding, Dance, or Fete, Scapegoat Exiled, and The Bad Converted. Nonetheless, he dissociates *Marry Me* from conventional romance in terms of form namely being seasonal, hero's marvelous actions, quest and self-realization. In terms of generic plot, he departed *Marry Me* from conventional romance novels namely the Barrier, The Recognition, and The Betrothal.

Suggestions for Further Researches

For further study, if anyone interested in advancing the present research, he or she can make a research on Updike's *Couples* and *The Maples Stories*. They are highly recommended since Updike once more dissociates these works from conventional romance. More to this, other researchers can compare Updike's *Marry Me* with Persian romances such as Nizami Ganjavi's *Khosrow o Shirin* (1177-1180) and *Layli o Majnun* (1192) which are great lyrical romances with their great adherence to the conventions of romance genre; however, the poet avoids a happy ending for these two romances too.

Romance is one of the most important genres not only in literature, but also in other fields like art as it plays a crucial role in the majority of genres. It is impossible to overlook romance in all aspects of our lives since it is impossible to divide romance from reality.

Romance is a significant part of all human beings. All we are revolves around romance.

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