

---

გლობალური თემები აზერბაიჯანულ ლიტერატურაში  
Exploring Global Themes through Azerbaijani Literature

---

Sabina Elkhan Agababayeva

*Baku Slavic University*

*Azerbaijan, Baku*

**Polyphony in Literature – Contemporary Postmodern Prose**  
**(Based on the Novels "The Valley of Wizards" by Kanak Abdullah and "Hopscotch"**  
**by Julio Cortazar)**

Literature reflects society, and people with certain sociological parameters through the meaning of speech, culture, philosophy, history, and science closely assist literature. The transition from one historical period to another naturally affects literary art as well, due to changes in socio-cultural and philosophical codes of society. Transition from the modern era to the postmodern era changed dominating thoughts and human typology, as well as the diversity in perceiving reality, thus becoming also as a topic of the new literary period, making the literary text open to various interpretations and polyphony, determined by the number of interpreters and leading to polyphony.

Polyphony is a literary conceptualization related to the dialogism theory by Mikhail Bakhtin ("Слово в романе", 1934), who created dialogism as a response to monological thought style. Bakhtin considered dialogism as a means of mutual communication between the main character and other characters and as an internal dialogue of a character. Polyphony is the reflection of this dialogism. Bakhtin argued that all works have a polyphonic quality. Thus, a literary work is read by tens, hundreds, and thousands of readers, meaning it engages in dialogue with tens, hundreds, and thousands of readers. Each phrase, each word in the work carries as many public meanings as the number of readers who read it. Thus, the work acquires polyphonic qualities carrying these public meanings within itself. The classical and modern understanding of works with a single central character loses its relevance in the postmodern era. Different characters load the work with different meanings within their individual consciousness.

In this study, the creativity of postmodern writers J. Cortazar and K. Abdulla, as examples, is explored in terms of the independent expression of the diverse interpreters' worldviews within the text, as well as the representation of diversity through the presence of multiple interpreters as one of the formal features of the text.

**Keywords:** M. Bakhtin, social parameter, a polyphony of the text, modernism, postmodernism, interpreter and character

As in other fields of art, postmodernism stands out for its uniqueness in literature. Postmodernism, which is primarily discussed in relation to modernism, with ongoing debates about the similarities and differences between the two, was characterized in its early stages by a mixture of modern and postmodern elements in literature. Traces of modernism were observed especially in the first examples of works written in the postmodern style. In modern as well as postmodern literature, the confused, complex, chaotic world is the main thing. Contemporary and postmodern literature are completely different in terms of conveying to the reader the world where chaos reigns and complex, tangled events take place. What is the main mission of man in this world? answers to such questions are sought in modern literature. What is the world of postmodernism? In a world devoid of beginning and end, in which confusion and chaos reign, man seems to know what to do, running aimlessly here and there. A meaningful interpretation of the world is abandoned in postmodern literature. In this sense, it can be said that epistemological features prevail in modern literature, and ontological features prevail in postmodern literature. When it becomes difficult to find answers to the epistemological questions of modernism, uncertainty arises in the text. Thus, epistemological uncertainty leads to ontological pluralism, a transition from modern literature to postmodern literature takes place. "Unlike modern literature, which is based on the understanding of reality through mimesis and didacticism, postmodern literature rejects all forms of reality and confidently defends the idea that reality does not exist." Postmodernism suggests that reality aims to suppress the individual. From this perspective, it rejects reality and all forms of correct approaches, shows no interest in the accuracy of information, and captures attention with metaphysical (abstract, incomprehensible, vague) ideas. Since there is no generally accepted reality, the text becomes a symbolic game with different semantic shades. The text seems to play the role of an "open door". In this role, the text is open to every interpretation with language games and different shades of meaning. Because meaning is not fixed, language turns text into its own playground. In postmodern literature, the formation and transmission of meaning occurs not at the expense of the author, but at the expense of the reader. So, in language games, the reader is the author's playmate. In postmodern prose, readers are distinguished by their activity. Works written in this style appeal to knowledgeable, intellectual, and professional readership. Understanding the meaning of postmodern texts, characterized by their multilayered, polyphonic structure, resembles solving a complex mathematical problem for hours or finding the answer to a challenging riddle. In this regard, the reader must be sufficiently professional and highly knowledgeable. In postmodern literature, the reader is one of the main artistic elements of the work. In relation to the changing perception of reality, postmodern writers make abundant use of fictional and fantastical elements for a more active, informed reader. Professional readers of postmodern works should view literature as a game or fiction, prioritizing the existence of the text over genre. The appeal of postmodernists to a more active reader, as opposed to the classical reader, reflects their desire and need to communicate with the reader. The multilayered, open-to-interpretation structure of postmodernism can be understood by an active, intellectual reader.

Among the areas where postmodernism manifests itself, literature is almost at the forefront. Gorkhmaz Guliyev writes about this: "...Only in the late 1960s -1970s, the concept of "postmodernism" began to be developed in order to identify new trends that appeared in various fields of art, primarily in architecture and the art of words" (Guliyev, 2019, p. 243). It should be noted that postmodernism was the main topic of all literary discussions in New York in the 1960s. In these discussions, postmodernism was discussed as a new aesthetic concept that surpasses the basic meanings of modern art. Postmodern aesthetics kind of eliminated the boundaries between art and everyday life. In these discussions, postmodernism was discussed as a new aesthetic concept that surpasses the basic meanings of modern art. Postmodern aesthetics kind of eliminated the boundaries between art and everyday life. Postmodern aesthetics questioned the creative potential of the artist in a way, put forward the idea that art was not created by the artist's creative

capabilities, innate talent, and special qualities. The fact that each topic is elaborated in advance proves once again that it is impossible to avoid repetitions.

Opposing the theory of "single truth" of modernism, postmodernism brings to the fore the idea that the main essence of the literary text is pluralism and multi-layered structure. The great works of modernism are replaced by texts open to different interpretations in postmodernism. As a figure of text, the author simply explains how he constructs the text. Instead of real facts, the text describes facts that the reader has to find and determine. All these initiatives stem from the attempt to make the reader a part of the text. The cause-effect relationship of modern literature manifests itself in the postmodern text as fragmentation, occasional gaps, and sudden changes. Heroes are "marionette" figures devoid of any symbolic dimension. They are in a state of confusion and cannot determine which world they are in.

Works written in the style of postmodernism are completely far from the consistency of classical works. For this reason, works written in the postmodern style cannot be taken as objects of traditional analysis. 'The supporters of this movement use self-contained concepts such as "the world as chaos," "post-modern sensitivity," "the world as text," intertextuality, "the crisis of authority," epistemological uncertainty, authorial mask, dual coding, the parodic mode of narration, pastiche, contradictions, discreteness, the fragmentary nature of narration, metanarrative, and so on' (Guliyev 2012: 255). The terms specific to postmodernism play the role of the main tool in the analysis of works written in this style.

Due to the rise of postmodern elements in literature, the meaning and functions of artistic work are also different. First, the word "work" is replaced by the word "text". "Capitalized text" is the main goal of postmodernism. In the postmodern discourse, innovations and multiple realities begin to take on special importance. A world devoid of beginning and end, where confusion and chaos prevail, is the basis of postmodernism. According to the idea of decentralization, nothing is fundamental in the postmodern world, so there is no need to assign special meaning to the literary text. Thus, literature is no longer a way of understanding culture and human existence. Literature is an experimental field with different views of the world, multiple approaches, everything is just a text in a world where everything is considered a text. Emphasizing that the core of postmodernism is the understanding of the text, and the hyperreal world presented by it, Elnara Garagozova writes: "Postmodern text is created on the basis of other texts, it contains archetypal signs and quotations from previous literary examples and myths" (Garagozova 2021: 7). The concept of text is the main, key concept of postmodernism. "Postmodernism looks at reality as a text, as a discourse, as a narration. "Nothing exists outside the text" – this famous saying of Derrida is one of the fundamental pillars of postmodernism" (Asadova, 2015, p. 46). Any text, which is an integral part of the general culture, includes previous texts and their parts, without exception, is perceived and understood as only one text. As a result, the text, which becomes only a part of the general universal text, loses its uniqueness and completeness. Postmodern literature is dominated by the idea that works are not subjective and independent, that each work is a part of the literary universe. The problem of reflecting reality in postmodern literature takes a new form compared to the literature of the previous period. According to some postmodernists, literature does not have to reflect current reality. "... Using various methods, he should create semantic gaps and silence in the text, convey the variability and diversity of reality to the reader" (Altın, 2013, p. 77-78). In a word, postmodernism emphasizes a new social understanding of reality – uncertainty, chaos, fragmentation.

One of the main reasons for the emergence of ambiguous and incomplete texts in postmodern literature is the lack of a core, central theme. From this point of view, postmodern works are not meaningless, they simply lack the focal subject, the main event. In the context of the postmodern paradigm, literature abandons the linear plot of the traditional novel. Events move away from the central theme. The logic of multifaceted events must be understood by the reader. "Multiple meanings of the text can be recreated with the active and continuous participation of the reader" (Demirtash, 2016, p. 55). The break between the

events is a process that the reader wants to complete. Thus, the reader must create a subjective reality from the fragmentary reality.

One of the most important features that attract attention in postmodern texts is polyphony. In postmodern literature with more than one interlocutor, polyphony is mainly determined by the number of interlocutors. "Polyphony in literary works is a text where there are other voices along with the author's voice. These voices mix with the author's voice, creating complex dialogic relationships between them. The musical term "polyphony" was first used in the analysis of the literary text by M.M. Bakhtin brought it" (Sharifova, 2018, p. 232). These ideas of Bakhtin were found in his book "Word in the novel" written in 1934. Polyphony is a literary conceptualization of the famous Russian philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. Mikhail Bakhtin created dialogism as a counter-response to monological way of thinking. Bakhtin considered dialogism, on the one hand, as a means of mutual communication between the main protagonist and other characters, and on the other hand, as an internal dialogue of a character. Polyphony is the literary reflection of this dialogism. Bakhtin suggested that all works have a polyphonic quality. So, a literary example is read by tens, hundreds, thousands of readers, so it enters a dialogue with tens, hundreds, thousands of readers. Each saying each word in the work is loaded with social meanings as many readers as the number of readers who read it. Thus, the work has polyphonic qualities that carry these socialites. The concept of a classic and modern work with a single character in the center is already losing its relevance in the postmodern era. Different characters attach different meanings to the work within the individual mind. Also, numerous developers of the text express their worldviews independently. Thus, in postmodern literature, the large number of contributors is not only one of the formal features of the text, but also an expression of polyphony.

Representatives of postmodern literature and writers who write in this style believe that time, space, character, event, and theme schematize classical artistic elements. From this point of view, postmodern writers consider these literary elements as the "main enemies" of the postmodern novel and try to do everything they can to destroy them and make them forget. For this, the writers divide the plot into small parts, the heroes of the work wander aimlessly, the space, as well as the time of events, are temporary in nature, the theme of the work is so meaningless and chaotic that it is impossible to determine the essence.

Thus, postmodernism, which goes beyond the limits of modernist ideas, also criticizes the modernist perception and understanding of history. He overturns the principle of cause-effect relationships and reality and can turn everything into an artistic fiction. Postmodernism, which is characterized by its complexity and ambiguity, and is "blamed" for being indifferent to traditions and values, does not worship traditions and the historical past, and appreciates them from a new point of view. Those who do not accept this new approach, new valuation, accuse postmodernism of "touching" values that are considered inviolable. In our opinion, this "freedom" of postmodernism should not be taken as its indifference to classical literary and artistic examples. The "freedom" of postmodernism can be associated with the characteristics of the period in which it appeared. Thus, history and ideology redefine their reality in every era. Newly formed realities lead to the transformation of literature as well as in all fields. The "freedom" of postmodernism, which arose in the age of speed and internet, when reality is replaced by hyperreality, refuses to examine a single objective reality, and claims that there is no center of the world, only different views and approaches, has a very natural effect.

In our opinion, the approach to postmodern literature, which deserves a indifferent attitude because it approaches traditions, values, and the historical past from a new perspective, is somewhat harsh. So, taking every senseless, chaotic text as an example of postmodern literature is not a correct approach to postmodern literature and the possibilities of this literature. Analyzing the examples of postmodern prose, at first glance, it attracts attention that there is a meaning in the senselessness of these texts, and an order in the chaos. "Meaningful vagueness", "orderly chaos" – it is precisely this subtle point that a professional

reader, not an amateur, can determine. From this point of view, it can be confidently emphasized that postmodern literature is aimed not at amateurs, but at the professional, intellectual reader.

In short, postmodern literature tries to establish order in chaos on the level of polyphony with multiple points of view and multi-layered structure. In the context of the problem posed in the article, Kamal Abdulla's "Valley of Wizards" from Azerbaijani literature and Julio Cortazar's "Hopscotch" from Latin American literature are involved in the research.

As the creator of the first literary and artistic examples that testify to the essence of postmodernism in Azerbaijani literature, Kamal Abdulla brought a completely new breath to modern Azerbaijani literature. In Azerbaijani postmodern prose, Kamal Abdulla's novel "Valley of Wizards" stands out for its uniqueness. The novel "Valley of Wizards" was first published in 2006. The novel "Valley of Wizards" attracts attention with its plot line, a very interesting, original theme. The novel combines history, culture, and religion as well as mythological elements. The novel, which also differs in terms of time and space structure, contains the main elements of postmodern prose. In the novel, it is clearly observed that the sequence of classical literary examples is broken. Thus, the alternation of several unrelated time periods, as well as the unusual spatial structure, constitute the main feature of the work.

The novel "Valley of Wizards" has a very complex plot. At first glance, it is difficult to determine the connection between the suddenly changing stories. There is a discontinuity between the events in the work. The novel lacks a single plot line. As we have already mentioned, in postmodern works, a single plot line, the main, central theme is abandoned. In general, it is imperative to note that the postmodern writer's conscious splitting of the plot, creation of discontinuity between events is based on the desire to "destroy" the traditional idea of the work's sequential development of events according to a certain logic and order. In a world where everything is confused and chaotic, this mission is primarily imposed on literature – rejection of the classic, traditional plot line. This factor is also the basis of the novel "Valley of Wizards". The work lacks a traditional plot line. It is impossible to follow the usual exposition, culmination, finale in order. When we look at the novel "Valley of Wizards" as an example of postmodern prose, it becomes clear that there is not one, but many plots. At first glance, it is thought that there is a weak organic connection between these multiple plots in the complex structure of the work. The writer has structured the work in short pieces and chapters. The reader must not follow one event from beginning to end, but several events that diverge within the same work. Complexity and transitions between events in the plot of the novel "Valley of Wizards", discontinuity are the main defining elements of postmodern texts. In fact, the irregularity between the events in the novel – the transition from the story of the caravan leader to the story of the executioner Mammadgulu, and the parallel story of the White Dervish – does not give reason to evaluate the work as chaotic and meaningless. Because the writer makes these transitions so skillfully that the irregularity is not noticeable. A professional, intellectual reader can identify the meaning behind the polyphony in the process of elaboration.

Julio Cortázar's novel "Hopscotch" published in 1963 is valued as the epitome of postmodernism in terms of style and content in Latin American literature. The novel "Hopscotch" translated into different languages of the world is considered the peak of Latin American postmodern prose. The novel "Hopscotch" which subverts all established norms of the classic novel, is considered as the beginning of a new page in Latin American literature in terms of its innovative features. The novel, which is notable for its rich problematic, shows a different perspective on the traditional relationship between the work and the reader. Cortazar's active search for readers with the novel "Hopscotch" attracts attention as one of the main features of the new Latin American novel.

The novel "Hopscotch" stands out for its original structure. Like all postmodern texts where the plot and composition in traditional literature are not followed, the novel "Hopscotch" does not have a single plot line. It overturns the traditional concept of a novel and the plot line of a classic novel. Based on this new

structure, the finale of the novel also changes according to the individual level of understanding and perception of each reader. The dynamic, moving structure of the novel "Hopscotch" offers a reading sequence that allows us to unravel its semantics in different ways. Different reading orders also change the semantics of the text. The change in the meaning of the text in different readings is due to the change in the location of the chapters that are important for its interpretation. If we start reading the novel in the usual, traditional way, we encounter the feelings and thoughts of the hero who is looking for Sibylla and remembers his past days with her.

The main part of the novel covers chapters 1-56. This part can be read in the usual manner – chapter by chapter – or it is also possible to complete it with the help of additional chapters, specifically chapters 57 to 155. The first sentence of the guide at the beginning of the work is: 'In a certain sense, this book is, for the most part, two books. The reader is given the right to choose one of two possible options' – clearly indicates that the reader is free to start reading the work in any way. In order to understand the ideological concept, idea-artistic features of the work to the smallest detail, it is necessary to read both parts of it according to the rules of the "hopscotch" "children's game. The reader is invited to follow the rules of the game, trying to reveal the "whimsical" course of the author's imagination. The writer gives a special code to include "non-important chapters" or "chapters that are intended to be read at the request of the reader" in the main chapters, which talk about different stages of the life of the heroes and other events. As if Cortazar wants to attract the reader with this unusual method. Depending on the reading scheme of the work, transitions from episode to episode, the logic of the development of events, even the finale of the work can be completely different and unpredictable. Jumping from chapter to chapter, from character to character, it is both difficult and very interesting to read the events.

Thus, Cortazar mocks the traditional forms of incitement and literary principles with the novel "Hopscotch". "Hopscotch" expresses the goal of a group of people living in chaos and turmoil in an absurd world that seems to be realistic and reaches the sky by reaching the last cell of the cell. The novel "Hopscotch" has a dynamic character in its structure. The language game is almost the "spinal column" of the novel, that is, the basis. Cortazar skillfully shows the ordinariness of everyday life with all the possibilities of language. Reality and dream, objectivity and subjectivity lose their characteristics, the border between them disappears in the novel "Hopscotch". With the novel "Hopscotch" Cortazar succeeds in creating a work that matches the worldview and way of thinking of a modern person by crossing the boundaries of the traditional novel. Thus, based on the novel "Hopscotch", which is the research subject of the dissertation, we can say that the language game in modern postmodern prose includes all chaotic situations and ambiguities and glorifies the multiplicity of meanings.

In general, "Hopscotch" is an experimental novel. Cortazar has written each chapter of the novel in a different style and plays with the reader as well as with the words. A confused reader must also understand the subject while trying to master the pages. In this book, the reader becomes a player, like a child who eagerly waits for his turn in every game. The reader is not a book, as if the book is reading the reader. The reader must be careful. The novel is difficult to read and understand. Also, language emphasis, philosophical conclusions, rich vocabulary and stormy thought confusion are intertwined in fiction. This work is a real source of spiritual pleasure for those who love to play games.

In particular, it should be noted that Cortazar does not only play the game of hopscotch in terms of his reading style, but there is also a game of hopscotch between ideas and events. In short, Cortazar is playing a game with the reader. To read this book, to analyze it, special analytical skills are needed. Thoughts and ideas seem to fly in the air in the novel. It is necessary not to rush, to understand, to grasp the meaning. Because the author does not directly say what he wants to say, the reader must try and struggle to understand the author's point of view. "The novel is full of scientific-philosophical, intellectual material (like all my works, the fault of "Hopscotch" lies in its hyper-intellectuality)" (Cortazar, 2010, p. 13). The

thesis that there is nothing concrete to say, which is one of the main slogans of postmodern philosophy, is clearly reflected in the novel "Hopscotch", which contains the most important features of postmodernism. Complex existential dilemmas, man's search for meaning, inner turmoil, continuous searches without results form the basis of the novel.

In a word, the result of Julio Cortazar's early search and thoughts, the novel "Hopscotch", which is valued as the starting point of his maturity, completely overturns the traditional concept of a novel and the plot line of a classic novel. One of the finest examples of Cortazar's experimental prose, "Hopscotch" is an innovative novel that offers a unique reading experience. The novel "Hopscotch" is a polyphonic, polysemantic text that includes methods of magical realism, absurdism and other avant-garde modernist trends.

Thus, in modern literature – postmodern prose, first, deviations and deformations in language and style do not go unnoticed. Postmodern texts are rich in images and symbols that contain allegorical and ironic meanings. The subject is continuous search, identity problems, turmoil and conflicts within the individual, crimes, sexuality, reaction to modernism, psychological problems, etc. processed. Interruptions and gaps often appear between the main structural elements of the text – plot, time, space. Polyphonic discourse is the most important element in postmodern prose.

#### **References:**

- Asadova, A. (2015). The problem of man and art in Sufism and postmodernism. Ph.D. dissertation in philology.
- Cortazar (Kortasar), X. (2010). Selected works, East-West.
- Garagozova (Karagözova), E. (2021). Postmodernism: a collection of articles. Khan publishing house, 60 p.
- Guliyev, G. (2012). Concepts of 20th century literary studies: "Bakhtiyar-4" Publishing House.
- Guliyev, G. (2019). Literary trends and trends. Monograph: "OL" NPKT.
- Sharifova, S. (2018). Classics and moderns at the word level: Science and education.
- Altın, Sh. (2013). The social foundations of the postmodern novel from the point of view of literary sociology. PhD thesis.
- Demirtaş (2016). "The Death of the Author" and "The Return": An Assessment of the Role of the Author. MSGSÜ Social Sciences, (20), 48-56.