

YEGANE ABDULLAYEVA
Azerbaijan University of Languages, Azerbaijan

Historical Imagination: Interpretation of the Past in Postmodern Novels *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* and *The Incomplete Manuscript*

Abstract

This article compares British novelist Julian Barnes's novel *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* with the novel *The Incomplete Manuscript* by Azerbaijani author Kamal Abdulla. In each novel accepted history is revised, the idea that history is subjective is explored, as well as the fact that history is fiction, and in the process a new alternative history is written. The postmodern liberation strategy of both authors emphasizes history, past revision, history's subjectivity, as well as the creation of a new alternative history to make history fictitious. The idea of history, catastrophe, error and human foolishness in Barnes's novel is similar to the ideas of a fictitious, imagined, authenticated reality in Abdulla's novel. This form of narration in Barnes's and Abdulla's novels is concerned with the ironic modes of 20th-century thinking and the fact that human thinking has cast doubt on our understanding of the world. In Barnes's novel, history is a catastrophe, an erroneous ghost, while in the novel by Abdulla we find fiction, fabrication, and reality.

Keywords: postmodern novels, historical imagination, irony, reflexion, fiction

Introduction

Julian Barnes's (1946) creativity as a writer in the formation and evaluation of the postmodernist novel in British prose shows itself in the most exhausting form of postmodernist aesthetics. The literary critic and writer Malcolm Bradbury's idea of contemporary British novelists "being engaged in creating a unique bridge between the past and the present" (Morace 2006: 87) can also be applied to the fictional Barnes's world.

In the British postmodern novel, there was an attempt to "revive" the past as a rule, to "return" to the past that is characteristic of that society. For the British, any knowledge gained from history was of great interest for its social and cultural context, and historiographical metafiction, based on the aesthetic principles of postmodernism, also tended to combine the above.

The characteristic feature of the British postmodern novel is an “obsession with history”. Timothy S. Gauthier studies “obsession with history” in the British novel in *Narrative Desire and Historical Reparations: A.S. Byatt, Ian McEwan, Salmon Rushdie* and determines that such novels interconnect the past and the present, and re-run past events. The author believes that the British novel uses the aesthetic principles of postmodernism to make the past valuable, but at the same time looks at it through the eyes of modern man, re-evaluating its values (Gauthier 2006).

In the British postmodern novel, reality, imagination, fiction and fact are depicted in the boundaries of historiographical metafiction, which is largely based on the thesis of postmodern novelists, that history is not history, but historians talking to us. Studying history in the British postmodern prose is only about “putting it on the plot” and “breaking” the boundaries of discourse between fiction and history.

British writers connected the past with modern times using various postmodernist writing styles, wanting to recover the memory of the past. This approach is also related to the term “A Study of History” (Toynbee 1993). Postmodernists have declared the end of history, but in the works of the new generation of British postmodern novels, it is generally not the end of history, but the end of a certain historical period. Postmodernism’s usage of the multivariate approach of poststructuralism changed the view of history, and history has become an open space for any number of changes. Postmodern writers who look back from a contemporary perspective, on the one hand, are philosophical, while on the other hand, use postmodernism’s mockery and playful principles to point out that past events are illusory and unrealistic. Thus, they try to explain that history is back to its own direction, and it is impossible to understand the true meaning of history. Postmodern writers, however, do not go back to the past but try to rebuild it, while, at the same time, learning how the past leads to the future.

According to Linda Hutcheon, the notion of “Historiographic Metafiction Parody and the Intertextuality of History” (Hutcheon 1989), based on the philosophical-aesthetic peculiarities of postmodernism, the word “historiographic” express the writing of history, and “metafiction” is the text that emphasizes imaginative “textuality of the text”. Hutcheon adds to this “those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages” (Hutcheon 1988: 5).

Such novels are usually encountered in intertextual play, mockery, and parody, which are the artistic paradigms of postmodernism, and the interest in history is not measured using the traditional approach, being more characterized by the aesthetics of postmodernism. In these novels, both the attitude of the author and of the reader to the past, and their approach to history, is viewed from a modern perspective. While describing historical parallels, modernity is understood in the context of other epochs. According to postmodernists, events that took place in the past can only be interpreted, which in turn creates new versions of that past events. As stated by Hayden White in his work *The historical text as literary artefact*: “No historical event is intrinsically tragic; it can only be conceived as such from a particular point of view or from within the context of a structured set of events of which it is an element enjoying a privileged place. For in history what is tragic from one perspective is comic from another” (White 1978: 47). Therefore, the modern reader wants to learn the past and tries to find its full interpretation. This is due to the fact that humans live in a chaotic reality. The world surrounding them is divided into fragments. The only way out is to “create” something about the past, which is happening in the past, and to “revive” it.

Hutcheon writes in the investigative work titled *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* “Historiographic metafiction both installs and then blurs the line between fiction and history.

Historiographic Metafiction: a postmodern ideology of plurality and recognition of difference. It plays upon the truth and lies of the historical record; incorporates, but rarely assimilates such data" (Hutcheon 1988: 113–114).

As it is seen, the concepts of the postmodernist novel help recipients to understand past and present, helping modern man to find truth in a chaotic world. Historiographic metafiction is looking for a connection between the past and the present and raises questions about history from the perspective of the modern man. In postmodern novels, this is usually the way the recipient responds to the text, and the activity of the recipient focuses on the search for answers. Taking these ideas into consideration, Frederick Holmes wrote that "Barnes stresses the unreliability of memory and the subjectivity of any interpretation of past events" (Holmes 2009: 106). Putting forward the idea of "reflections about the representation of the past, the knowledge of reality and the interpretation of signs" (Guignery 2006: 66) in Barnes's novels, critic Vanessa Guignery wrote that "Barnes's novel mixes reality and imagination, so the book is part history and part fiction" (Guignery 2006: 129).

Barnes's creativity is usually based on the relationship between history and memory, time and resources, past and present. In the novel *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* (1989), certain information that has been believed for many years is challenged, and sometimes overlooked or sometimes obscured under major problems. Sometimes obvious historical memory, creates new questions. Ordinary events gives a new meaning to historical events in the confusion of politics, religion, and philosophy. As in the case of world flood, the Biblical subject becomes an ordinary tale of life and survival narrated by a woodworm and involving canones, in which dogmas are disintegrated, and the idea of the limitations of past knowledge is highlighted. Barnes denies the progressive development of history throughout the novel, suggesting the co-existence of coincidences and realities in history. The author also emphasizes the impossibility of historical legitimacy and gives voice to the idea that there is no historical process by design. The novel consists of ten episodes, separated from each other in the form of fragments, but united under a new vision of history and memory. The text of the novel is based on the mosaic principle of different plot lines and is a strategy of reflection, which combines more documentary reporting with philosophical thoughts and parodic elements.

The postmodern novel in Azerbaijani prose, which had been a part of the Soviet Union for many years, is a new event. This is due to the fact that Azerbaijani literature has limited access to world literature, and literary ties have not been made. Therefore, new trends and literary trends have not been studied here. Integration into new developments in the world was possible only after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Postmodern prose, which has been studied in Western literature and is in the process of development, has had a novel effect on Azerbaijani prose. This is also due to the fact that Azerbaijan is more oriental in terms of geographical location and mental-moral values. Thus, these values are always connected to the past and traditions, and that is why the postmodern prose is not understood clearly. The loss of the concept of the traditional "I", which is one of the important signs of the postmodernist process, along with uncertainty, instability, chaos, text coding, unification, marginalization was also a new phenomenon for Azerbaijani prose. One of the main signs of postmodern prose is to create a dialogue between cultures, play with cultural signs and codes, rewrite history, in other words, to create a new vision of the past. These new qualities of postmodernist novel found in Western thought, are understood in Azerbaijan prose as the unity of the magic and fairy-tales.

On the other hand, the moral and spiritual state of Post-Soviet Azerbaijani society has also played a role in this "delay". In the case of "accelerating" the adoption of globalization at the cultural level in

Western society, the literary environment of Azerbaijan is far behind in this process. The role of the realist prose in this “delay” has been minimal, and the traditional discourse has for a long time prevented the emergence of new trends in the literary world and has hindered the formation of new Western media and media culture, especially modernism. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan’s literary environment began to approach Western literary and artistic values, and the first examples of postmodern prose were created in the literary process.

The Azerbaijani postmodernist novel, is the modification of of Western (America and Western Europe) and Eastern (Eastern Europe) postmodernist prose, which combine both models with a more diffuse zone. On the one hand, we have the postmodernist theory, part of Western culture, while on the other hand, the past of the East was related to the idea of “melting” the past in the secrets of history.

The Azerbaijani postmodern novel is connected with its original language in terms of semiotic language, and citations and retrospections used in the text are related to Eastern cultural traditions, especially the Turkish world and its traditions. One of the peculiarities of the Azerbaijani postmodern novel were the contradictions of the national style of thinking revealed with irony and black humor.

The first postmodern novel in Azerbaijan prose, by Kamal Abdulla (1950), is the work *The Uncompleted Manuscript* (2004). This novel has created an unexpected, sometimes shocking effect on Azerbaijani society, which is based on traditions being closely related to the past and demonstrates the national mentality in every aspect of life. The epic *The Book of Dada Gorgud*, a written literary sample in Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Central Asia, has been deconstructed; almost all its epic heroes have been turned into a postmodern “trickster”.

Although the epic *The Book of Dada Gorgud* emerged amongst the Oghuz Turkic tribes in Eastern Anatolia and is written in the old Anatolian-Turkish language of the late 15th century, its creation dates back to ancient times to the 10th century. The epic reflects the lifestyle and traditions of the ancient Turkish tribes.

The manuscripts of the epic are kept in libraries in Dresden and the Vatican. The Oghuz tribe depicted in the epic of *The Book of Dada Gorgud* are divided into two tribes, including the internal Oghuz and the exterior Oghuz, and the twelfth – the latest story of the epic talks about the treachery of the exterior Oghuz tribe against the internal one. *The Uncompleted Manuscript* is the deconstruction, postmodern narration of the epic text noted above. In Abdulla’s text, the intertextual dialogue is built upon retrospection.

An interesting piece of postmodernist discourse goes back to the Middle Ages, where the epic is formed, and it turns out that the epic which survived until the modern era was not original. The “uncompleted manuscript” behind the version of the epic is supposedly the original epic, and this idea is presented to the recipient throughout the novel. By using the aesthetic principles of postmodernist prose, the author’s presentation of dream, mystery, and magic, together with historical events, draws it closer to the novel world of Jorge Luis Borges, Umberto Eco, and Milorad Pavic.

The emergence of postmodernism in Azerbaijani prose was primarily an aesthetic reaction to the frustration of social, historical, philosophical, and artistic notions that existed in this structure. This is primarily due to the depletion of the traditional artistic reality and the adaptation of the new aesthetic system to the problems of a transition period. The new postmodernist prose does not see traditional literature as a description of reality, the leading principle of classical realism, which suggests that “literature is the mirror of life” (Leo Tolstoy) but presents the idea that “realistic works do not describe reality”.

This approach brought Azerbaijani prose closer to Western postmodern prose. The first prose written in this style was the *The Uncompleted Manuscript*. The novel does not describe the reality based on the aesthetic principles of postmodernism, creating the new text guided by fictionality and reality. This novel has much in common with notions such as J. Derrida's "the world is a text" (Derrida 1976), J.-F. Lyotard's "The Postmodern Condition" (Lyotard 1984), J. Baudrillard's "simulations" (Baudrillard 1983), R. Barthes's "The Death of the Author" (Barthes 1978), M. Foucault's "episteme" (Foucault 1994) and together with the novels – Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, and Pavić's *Dictionary of the Khazars*.

Abdulla, inspired by Western and Eastern postmodern prose, brought forth the thesis that time has a few "faces" of reality that arose from the aesthetic idea of postmodernism for the first time, that truth is multifaceted, more multilayered and polygonal, and everyone has a truth to add to their national literature. In the creative Abdulla's output, taboos are broken, stereotypes collapse, values are degraded, values are impaired, the world model changes in its sphere and the existing system of values is "dissatisfied". Abdulla's postmodernist narration - is built in accordance with the play with the text, play in the text, and as a result of a new revision of history and a reevaluation of values; a fictitious world model is created.

Ironic postmodern deconstruction of history in A History of the World in 10½ Chapters

In the first chapter of *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, woodworm falls to the center of a new creation, its divine purpose as the carrier of modern thinking. The woodworm, unaware of the Prophet Noah, comes to the Ark and thus makes the sacred image ordinary, introducing an ironic tone into the narration. The recipient of Noah's Ark's religious and mythological description becomes a witness to the author's irony and sarcasm: "Someone at the very top became obsessed with information gathering, and certain members of the travelers agreed to act as stool pigeons. I'm sorry to report that ranting to the authorities was at times widespread. It wasn't a nature reserve, that Ark of ours; at times it was more like a prison ship" (Barnes 1990: 16). The author's ironic encounter with the recipient from the first pages of the novel does not leave him until the end.

The news gathering of "the above" (tops) and the phrase "transmitters" refer to the contours of irony. Explicitly, the author's statement that the animals stored on the boat "not in the shelter, but in prisons" is a bit "heavy" for the narration. In addition to Barnes, the novel includes author masks, explicit and implicit authors.

The narration is made by authors who are fraudulent. These authors turn into characters throughout the novel, and Barnes, on the other hand, interprets "someone's" text using the "author mask". The creator of the explosion is the creator of a tree, and he plays the role of "linker" in the plotline, which is divided into fragments throughout all seasons. The woodworm is involved in ten chapters, further aggravating the ironic tone of the novel. When he describes himself, he does not "lag behind": "They were chosen, they endured, they survived: it's normal for them to gloss over the awkward episodes, to have convenient lapses of memory. But I am not constrained in that way. I was never chosen. In fact, like several other species, I was specially not chosen. I was a stowaway" (Barnes 1990: 16–17).

The author does not hold humor from the narrator-woodworm, exposing history to mockery by his “tongue”, capturing it, indicating its “fictitious” nature. Only the woodworm, paralleling past and present, casts doubt on the “seriousness” of the past.

The Biblical motifs reveal that Noah’s three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, were preserved along with the ship during the World Flood, and returned to land again. Barnes introduces a new brother called Varadi to the well-known plot, describing him as a decent person in the words of the narrator, emphasizing that humiliation is manifested by the “misfortune” of the human race. The narrator who says Varadi’s being the “most powerful”, “most deserving” and sense of humor, expressed a bitter mockery of being deprived of his “blessing” to the human race:

Still, the worst disaster by far was the loss of Varadi. You’re familiar with Ham and Shem and the other one, whose name began with a J; but you don’t know about Varadi, do you?... But whatever the truth behind Varadi’s disappearance, it was a severe loss to your species. His genes would have helped you a great deal. (Barnes 1990: 19–20)

According to the legend, Noah took a pair of every living creature into the ark during the flood. The author exposes him to mockery by the narrator’s language and emphasizes that he is not just and reasonable, but acts in accordance with his human “desires”. It turns out that discrimination has been made between animals collected on the boat, and their placement onboard is only based on the principles of “craving” and “wish”. It is also known that the ship consisted of a few small ships, and some of the animal species kept there were cleaned by chance and by inefficiency. The woodworm that came to our time did not come as a “chosen” one, but survived by chance and secretly embarked on the boat. When the narrator-woodworm narrates Noah’s true identity to the reader, the mockery of the author clearly exposes itself:

Every species wiped out except for a single breeding pair, and that couple consigned to the high seas under the charge of an old rogue with a drink problem who was already into his seventh century of life. So the word went out, but characteristically they didn’t tell us the truth. (Barnes 1990: 20)

Among the beasts that couldn’t come to Noah’s Ark, were female beasts who could not leave their infants, selected among its own generation, but there were also those who came alone. This included the noble species that did not submit to the “insurmountable laws” of God and Noah: “Some of the nobler species simply padded away into the forest, declining to survive on the insulting terms offered them by God and Noah, preferring extinction and the waves” (Barnes 1990: 20).

As is apparent, the author ironizes God the Almighty and exposes the principle of justice to mockery. Irony, the “rewritten”, and the “restoration” of history, one of the aesthetic principles of the postmodernist novel, continues until the last chapter of the novel. A new perspective on history is the mainline of the British postmodern novel. In such novels, history is mocked, it is given an ironic tone, and the desire to “revive” it from a modern point of view becomes a poetic principle. Critic Michiko Kakutani thus sums up Barnes’s comment on history:

The history of the world? Just voices echoing in the dark; images that burn for a few centuries and then fade; stories, old stories that sometimes seem to overlap; strange links, impertinent connections.” Given this definition, Mr. Barnes then proceeds to offer us his own highly subjective history of the world. (Kakutani: 1989)

Indeed, the author of the postmodernist novel gives a subjective picture of world history and generally mocks the “seriousness” of history:

You believe what you want to believe, and you go on believing it. But then, of course, you all have Noah's genes. No doubt this also accounts for the fact that you are often strangely incurious. You never ask, for instance, this question about your early history. (Barnes 1990: 48)

The narrator, who has been exposed to all the nudity of Noah's past, tries to show the sharp difference between what is said and reality:

Noah was not a nice man. I realize this idea is embarrassing, since you are all descended from him; still, there it is. He was a monster, a puffed-up patriarch who spent half his day groveling to his God and the other half taking it out on us. (Barnes 1990: 50)

The chapter “Wars of Religion” refers to the source with the expression “Source” and points to the “serious” nature of the text. The author's irony does not go beyond these chapters. “Source” tries to show the mockery of seriousness in the description of the manuscript taken from Bezanson's Municipal Archive and the decisions and acts of the church court in the 16th century as empty and meaningless. It turns out that the execution of court judgments on woodworms is related to the consequences of their “unforgivable” mistake. The lawyer of woodworm is Bartolome Shason, the most renowned church lawyer, and later chairman of the Provence Supreme Court. The author's irony does not go beyond the description of Bartolome Shasan, his “role” in the history of religion, from the “indisputable” accomplishments of the church (he was a spokesman for mice many years before he was a lawyer).

The claim against the woodworms was to deprive them of the Holy Church and God's protection, to prove their crimes before the church, and to dispatch them one by one. Bidders claim that the bishop's throne legs are “gnawing” by woodworms and demand their punishment:

And how the Bishop fell, striking his head upon the altar step and being hurled against his will into a state of imbecility. .the terrified petitioners did examine the Bishop's throne and discover in the leg that had tumbled down like the walls of Jericho a vile and unnatural infestation of woodworm, and how these woodworms, having secretly and darkly gone about their devilish work, had so devoured the leg that the Bishop did fall. (Barnes 1990: 68)

The archive materials of the court proceedings on woodworms tell us that the judicial process is indeed carried out. The removal of woodworms from the church and the removal of the temple brings bitterness and sarcasm to the text. Barnes laughs at “creatures” who live under the medieval church power, seek refuge in the church, and see the salvation of religion. The fact that the woodworm's “bleeding” feet of the bishop's throne are an act of satanic action by claimants. As a result of the court trial, the “bitterness of the devil, the religious temple” defiles and denies “The God.”

The explicit author makes the superstition and the chaos in the church an object of mockery throughout the novel. The writer laughs at the “bitter” fate of the chief bishop who “fell from his throne” and became “mad”, as well as the “tragedy” of the poor believers deprived of his blessings. The postmodernist mocking touches each of the characters by the explicit and implicit authors, and “creates a carnival effect” (Bakhtin1984) in the composition of the mysterious novel. Throughout history, the lifestyle of the human race is mocked under the mask of the author, and the sharp contradiction between the moral values and the values created by religious law is captured in the mockery of bitter laughter. It

turns out that the “actions” of woodworms have affected the temple of God, and the archive materials that are protected by law have become unrecognizable.

The unrecognizable state of the church document that has been exposed to insect attack tells us that the author’s irony, in the absence of a document that links us with the past, and the fact that our knowledge of reality is fragile, is in fact suspicion. Postmodernist discourse reveals history, past revision, the idea that history is subjective, along with the fact that history is a fiction, and a new alternative history is written.

History and Memory as Narration and Artistic “Archeology” in *The Incomplete Manuscript*

In the novel *The Incomplete Manuscript*, the deconstruction of historical knowledge reverses the historical model and destroys the memory model. The idea of rethinking values transforms the existing memory model into an object of laughter. The novel *The Incomplete Manuscript* can be regarded as an alternative to the historical model and as a new look at history. Asif Hacili, a researcher of Abdulla’s creative activity says of the novel:

The investigation shows that each one of us is a spy, but he is also a hero, ruler, and wise [...] All the things in the world are within us, and all the polarities of the universe are in our hearts”. Thus, the opposite is substantial, essentially universal, long-lasting [...]. (Hacili [2010] 2016: 62)

The Incomplete Manuscript does not repeat historical events in any of its epochs, but the text becomes urgent as a special symbolic language, an autonomous artistic logic, an alternative history, and a world model, and is presented not as the top layer of history, but as an invisible, mysterious world. Abdulla individualizes and even ironizes the epic *The Book of Dada Gorgud*, an unseen act in the context of the Turkic worldview and its history. Going forward he presents Shah Ismail Khatai, a ruler of the Safavid Empire of Turkic history, from the perspective of human drama, describing him not as a Shah but as an ordinary human full of internal contradictions. Thus, he offers the postmodernists’ alternative world model; historical events are incorporated into the text in a novel way, “material” from the epic loses its original meaning and disappears in the intertextual artistic world. In other words, in the words of Hacili: “The hereditary heroes are humanized and removed from the formality post in our mythicized history” (Hacili [2010] 2016: 63).

Abdulla’s novel, the real world, and history are not independent but presented rather as a world-text (J. Derrida). In other words, historical reality is substituted with the fictional world created by the author. The new world model presented in the deconstruction of history approaches reality ironically in *The Incomplete Manuscript*, creating a new point of view to the historical facts that come to us, not to the world of “Dada Gorgud” or Shah Ismail’s personality. In his work, Abdulla creates a postmodernist mockery of history, past and present, using the “game” principle of postmodernists. This mockery and irony, in turn, is aimed at liberating the frozen stereotypes that have been absorbed in the text of the novel. The work depicts the Ganja earthquake, the Oghuz world, the Khatai’s era, and the modern pyramid. In Hacili’s words, “[I]n the postmodern poetics of the “The Incomplete Manuscript”, the text surprises the reader unexpectedly, and then drives them through a specific creative interpretation process” (Hacili [2010] 2016: 67).

The novel begins with the announcement of the appearance of a spy and his subsequent release into Oghuz society for unknown reasons. As a result of the conflict between the Oghuz tribes, the spy's betrayal was the cause of the fall of Oghuz unity. In connection with this incident, Bayindir Khan starts to hold conversations and inquiries with well-known figures of the Oghuz Turks. Who is the spy, who kidnapped him from the dungeon and so on. During the survey, a discrepancy arises as a result of the testimony of the heroes. It also becomes clear that the internal conflicts and intrigues between the Oghuz tribes are caused by insidious cunning, anger, envy, and hypocrisy.

One of the characters coming to the stage again in the statements given to Bayindir Khan is Boghazja Fatma, the mother of the spy. This woman tells all the warriors one by one that "the spy is your son" (Abdulla 2013: 65). After these events, a young man who is detained as a spy is not killed but released. Interviews between Bayindir Khan and Gorgud are consistently clarified, and it turns out there is no spy and he has been used to investigate the conflict between the warriors. Boghazja Fatma's saying "the spy is your son" is also planned by Gorgud. As you can see, the author parodies the heroes of the epos, "destroys" their epic images, and describes the burning characteristics of ordinary, human sensations when under pressure.

From the first pages of the novel, there is postmodernist irony. Dada Gorgud, being the symbol of maturity, wisdom and prosperity in the Turkic world in the imagination of the reader has thrown his blame on another epic hero, Aruz, fearing the epic hero Kazan Khan. The recipient recognized Dada Gorgud as a peace-loving, in the epic. Oghuz Turks's wise-man Dada Gorgud is bewildered in this postmodern novel, he cannot tell the truth, and in some cases, he is silent, believing that other men would unite and take revenge on him. In one instance, when Bayindir Khan asked him of the root of the mysterious event, he speaks for three days and nights but does not come to the root cause of the scare:

I talked for three days and three nights. During that entire duration, Bayindir Khan did not say a word; he never attempted to interrupt me. Sometimes we ate, in silence, and then I would talk again. Bayindir Khan would sometimes slip into sleep...Three days and three nights passed. I said my last word and closed my mouth. (Abdulla 2013: 62)

Gorgud's always seeking to turn the situation to his own favor, as well as the ability to direct others to the events, differentiates him from the heroes of the epic.

The novel hero Gorgud is so afraid of Bayindir Khan that he states in one part of the work: "I don't think so at all, my Khan, "I said, but the lice in my hair had run down to my feet" (Abdulla 2013: 40). As is seen, the mockery of the postmodern novel does not cross the side from Dada Gorgud. The proverb of the ancestors of the Oghuz Turks "saying halva-halva doesn't make my mouth sweet" is replaced by Dada Gorgud's idea that "if I say 'halva-halva' very much, it can be":

"Majestic Khan, if you say, 'halva', your mouth will not taste sweetness. If you say, 'halva-halva', your mouth will still not taste sweetness. But – But what and tell me, Bayindir Khan interrupted, interested in what I had to say. If you say, 'halva', many times, your mouth may taste sweetness, my Khan, I said." (Abdulla 2013: 70)

The other character of the novel, Shirshamsaddin (the word shir – "lion" in the name of the hero marks his courage and bravery), is afraid of everything, of speaking, and even of flattery.

The name of the hero Gilbash also reveals the author's irony (Gil-Gul means word game, qil – "gentle, very delicate hair", while gul means servant). Since Gilbash is closer to the khan, though he is

stronger than Shirshamsaddin, it is not his heroism that makes him strong, but rather his closeness to the khan. Shirshamsaddin's persistent flattery, hypocrisy, cunning, and cowardice prove the author's irony in his harsh portrayal. The postmodernist's desire to disperse taboos, history and historical characters are derived from the artistic character of the postmodernist novel. When Bayindir Khan says that he will not "come to the root of the matter without emptying his heart", he informs him of his being a chatterer: "Shirshamsaddin did not want to stop. He had finally unburdened his heart, but he still carried on. At last, Bayindir Khan realized that it was hopeless. Shirshamsaddin would go on and on like the large intestine" (Abdulla 2013: 73). The question of "Who kidnapped a traitor in this part of the novel?" scares Shirshamsaddin so much that he whitens like a sheet of paper: "The color drained from Shirshamsaddin's face until he was as pale as the new paper before me a gift to Bayindir Khan from Trebizond" (Abdulla 2013: 74), or a Turkish Oghuz hero betrays his friend without thinking and saves his own life from the anger of the khan. Fear of the khan's anger is so strong that Shirshamsaddin loses consciousness: "Take him to the torture chamber. Give him to the flagellators! Bayindir Khan shouted. Shirshamsaddin blacked out" (Abdulla 2013: 76).

Bamsi Beyrak, known to the recipient as the symbol of heroism of the epic, is described as cowardly, intriguing and treacherous to his friends :

Gorgud, I will tell only you. Those that you called enemies were my companions. I had sent them in advance to intimidate the merchants. Then I moved in and scattered them." "How were you able to do it? Didn't you cut off their heads?" "I did, Gorgud! I beheaded one of our men. (Abdulla 2013: 77)

In the novel, Beyrak does not follow his promises, nor is he loyal to his love. He uses the help of an atheist's daughter in the enemy dungeon, lying to say that he has never loved his fiancé in his homeland to avoid her help. Nevertheless, the hero of the epic remains loyal to the girl he loves despite many years in the enemy dungeon and is ready to fight for her:

I have found the culmination of all my desires in you. I love you." "What about your fiancée, Banuchichak? What about her? Have you forgotten her?" she asked curiously." "I did not love her as I love you. My father betrothed us to one another before we were born. I did not disobey my father." (Abdulla 2013: 41)

If the epic hero Beyrak is a knight, brave on the battlefield, the novel's Beyrak is a coward: "I..I..I." was all he could manage to say. Meanwhile, Beyrak looked like he was about to pass out" (Abdulla 2013: 48). It is understood from the novel that Beyrak's award of a brave name among the Oghuz Turks is the result of his own plan. During his visit to Derbent, he deliberately drove his friends into enemy territory and then rescued them from the enemy as a savior. In the novel, we find that Beyrak deliberately attacks his friends and kills them, making sure that the "battle" appears arduous.

The hero of the epic, Beyrak, is captured on his wedding day and is held in prison for sixteen years. It is known from the novel that he himself asked the Derbent Khan to kidnap him on the wedding day. Beyrak does not suffer in prison for sixteen years, but betrays Banuchichak, killing time, so that he does not have to fight the One-Eyed (Cyclops) disaster of the Oghuzs and so protects his soul. Thus, the author's irony touches the reader's knowledge, implies that his knowledge is not the only reality, and reflects postmodernists' approach to break up this reality into several variants.

We read in another part of the novel that Beyrak loves the other Oghuz hero Bakil's wife and wants to marry her, but because of her marriage to Bakil, he has borne malice toward both of them for years. Beyrak (the hero of the epic), a symbol of bravery, and of solidarity, suffers the mockery of the author as a character caught up in intrigue, loving another's wife, "softening" his anger by humiliating her husband: "Beyrak placed his eyes on me, Gorgud. The eyes are bad; they are faithless. Years later, Beyrak wants to avenge the hurt on Bakil" (Abdulla 2013: 84).

Beyrak hates Bakil for many years, and at every opportunity, he "taunts" him. Kazan misrepresents "coldness" between him and Bakil and attributes Bakil's success on a hunting trip, not to Bakil's personal skill, but to the horse's ability. Kazan Khan, the symbol of the epic's heroism, humiliates Bakil on the hunt, ignoring his helper Beyrak's ravings. Kazan Khan receives his own trickery, not as a historical mythical personality Dada Gorgud:

While on Gazan's hunt, Bakil's horse had outrun all the nobles' horses. Once again, Bakil had been able to pierce the ear of an animal that was running past him while on his galloping horse". Gazan dismounted. "Is this the skill of horse or man?" he had asked. "This is the skill of man," the nobles replied. "No, this is the skill of the horse. If the horse does not do his job, a brave man cannot boast. (Abdulla 2013: 69)

Ancient Oghuzes' lack of discretion is painfully ridiculous in his work, and sometimes the characters in the novel explain the reason for not listening to a secret that they cannot hold on to. "It follows, therefore, that the people of Ancient Oghuz avoided secrets as much as possible; they did not like secrets at all" (Abdulla 2013: 109).

Once a year the Khan and noblemen shared state property with other Oghuz heroes according to the traditions of the ancient Oghuz Turks. In the novel, this description is mocked, and it turns out that Kazan Khan does not care about sharing the Khan's property with others. Even though his so-called wealth is said to be "halal," he inspects his elders, especially his close associates. The black humor and irony of the work manifest themselves in the scene of the sweeping of Kazan Khan's house by Oghuz Turks:

Then they slowly began to move forward. One after the other, they began to enter the tent. In a short while, they began to plunder, and oh, how they plundered! They carried goods out with their hands; they carried goods out with their teeth. (Abdulla 2013: 42)

As it turns out, they look at their friend's property as an enemy does, looting, plundering.

While the female characters of the *The Book of Dada Gorgud* epic are symbols of the Oghuz Turks, they are also exposed in the novel, not as epic personalities, but with features of their humanity. The author's mockery does not spare them. The female characters of the novel are cunning, hypocritical, slanderous, in each situation they can get away with it. In one part of the novel, the women say how Bayindir, though old already, is younger and cheerful:

We have grown old. What could we do?" "Why do you say you are old? I wish old age upon your enemies! Banuchichak replied. then she walked up to Bayindir Khan, kneeled before him, and embraced his feet." May those who have betrayed you grow old. May the gall bladder split of those who do not love you. (Abdulla 2013: 83)

One of the female characters of the novel is Boghazja Fatma. It is clear from the novel that her fatherless son works for the enemy and is therefore put into prison. From the rumors spread by Boghazja

Fatma, it turns out that in her youth, she was in close contact with many of the Oghuz brave-men. For this reason, her son's arrest causes the old mother to cast seeds of doubt among the Oghuz Turks, thus releasing her son from imprisonment, i.e., torture. Many characters in the novel come across her tricks, and each one falls into the trap she has created. Kazan Khan, Beyrak, Shirshamsaddin, and other characters join this row. Boghazja Fatma speaks of the mystery of the nights spent with every young man in her youth, and she utters to him the truth that he is the son's father:

My lion. He is ours. I am speaking the truth; he is your son, my Lord - our son. This is my secret, Boghazja Fatma had revealed. "Thanks be to God that I could reveal it to you. Now you know me. This boy is my reminder - a token of that night. Help, my lion, spare our son!" (Abdulla 2013: 115)

Bayindir Khan wants Gorgud, writing the epic for future generations, to erase the bride and groom's praise from the epics. Khan does not want future generations to see this "face" of women flattery. In other words, the postmodernist writer demonstrates that history is fiction and narrative. At this point, the incomplete manuscript is broken and what follows comes to the end of the tale. However, at the same time, this part of the text suggests that the text of the novel that has been corrupted by the reader for some reason remains in the form of drafts. Consequently, this part of the text confirms the idea that the coincidences in the postmodernist narrative tend to underline the importance of this element:

Personally, I think that the major differences between the people in *The Book of Dada Gorgud* and *The Incomplete Manuscript* and the reason for these differences have no importance to the Highest Truth - the Supreme Being who bears the name of God. (Abdulla 2013: 119)

The author laughs at history and says that history is no longer in the present and future. He is opposed to the fact that reality is connected to one truth, suggesting that history is a historical one and that it is too far from history. This moment of the novel carries the idea that history is that which is told to us, that history is made of subjectivity, important conditions of postmodernist prose:

But one thing is clear: From now on, everything will no longer look frozen, monumental, or lifeless. Many characters, who were created in accord with the laws of mythical poetry and are in some way statuesque, are suddenly released from frozen immobility in *The Incomplete Manuscript*. In fact, they begin to love, hate be faithful, cheat, scheme, laugh, and cry. (Abdulla 2013: 126)

The author, adding magic to the text that is built between reality and fiction, creates a shocking effect. Using an authoritative interpretation, the text is explicitly authored. In ancient Eastern folkloric texts, there is a folkloric-mythic hero burning a feather. Abdulla makes "sendings" using the intertextual text, creating representations. If Gorgud, known from the epic, is one of the first believers in Islam, in the novel he believed in the "Nur Stone", and the stone miraculously helped him. When Gorgud fell asleep beside it, he wandered all over the Oghuz Turkish land, saw everybody's actions, and sometimes even warned of accidents. In this part of the novel, Gazan Khan needs Gorgud's advice and remembers that Gorgud has a bird's feather. Gorgud appears as if Gazan Khan burns the feather. Apparently, using mythical magical elements, the author has created an alternative version of past events, displaying a new view of history. Ludmila Bejenaru, a Romanian researcher of Abdulla's fictions, describes his works as "the philosophy of integrity" and states that "on the basis of philosophical understanding and analysis of the first written monument of the Azerbaijan people, the writer resembles the old world, overlaps his ideology and creates his own philosophical mystery overthought *The Book of Dede Gorgud* in "unconventional" form" (Bejenaru [2016] 2018). According to Bejenaru:

Abdulla (under the mask of the author) captured in the records of investigative protocol the most subtle reflection of the course of history in the behavior and consciousness of the collective mentality of the ancestors of the Azerbaijanis. The author searches in the epic for the character of the true image of distant times, whose ideal features and course of events are reproduced correctly by the epic. (Bejenaru [2016] 2018)

There is also a plot that is included in the text that develops in parallel with other events. This is a narration about Shah Ismail, the ruler of the Safavid dynasty. From history, it is known that he expanded the borders of Azerbaijan and created the Safavid Empire, making Tabriz its capital. Shah Ismail fought in the Chaldiran Desert in 1514, against an occupation led by the Ottoman Empire's ruler I Salim, and was defeated in that war. The events described in the novel must be regarded as a new fictional version of this historical episode, as the author must write a new story, in other words, look at history from a new perspective. The second plot he created in the novel is based on fictional episodes, like the killing of Shah Ismail in the war and a poet named Khizir's coming to the throne, who was trained as a fighter. The historical ruler Shah Ismail actually wrote many poems under the pseudonym of Khatai, and most of them were poems written in the Azerbaijani language. It is clear from the novel that Khizir is a young, poor poet and he writes with the pseudonym Khatai. The author is skeptical of the true story of the Shah-poet in history and claims the idea that Shah Ismail could not write poetry and added an alternative version of Kizir's – similar to him, writing poetry under the pseudonym of Khatai, to the text. Later, it became clear from the novel that the presentation of a similar man was planned by Shah Ismail so that people should think of their own ruler existing in different places at the same time.

Then the events are described in the battle of Chaldiran. In the novel, Shah Ismail and Khizir sit in a tent and follow the battle, and then the supporters of the ruler who sees him lose the battle want to kidnap Shah Ismail. Shah Ismail gives the order to wait and goes to the tent and talks to Khizir. The dialogue between the ruler and the similar man ends with Shah Ismail's conviction that he is guilty of this war. Shah Ismail exchanges his clothes with Khizir and commits the country to him:

At that moment, the Shah looked deep into Khizir's eyes for the last time. Here, at this sad moment, the text about Shah Ismail breaks off for the last time and ends. In reality, the subject can also be considered finished. Nobody can ever say for certain whether what is described here truly happened or is simply a product of the author's imagination. (Abdulla 2013: 128)

The fragmented, unreadable text of this novel continues with the writing of the epic *The Book Dada Gorgud*. The heroes of the work come to Bayindir Khan, and the Khan questions them. Gorgud transcribes the conversations here. By the order of Bayindir Khan Gorgud writes what he has heard, but at the end of the work it turns out that the writing has no meaning, as there was no spy from the beginning, and the aim was simply to learn the root of the feud among the Turkish Oghuzs. As it turns out, the author points to a new perspective on history, questioning the seriousness of history, in other words, locating the postmodernist narrator principle as "history is not what happens but, that what is told us" in the text. The semantic meaning of the term "incomplete manuscript" in the name of the novel is also apparent in this contradiction.

Conclusion

The idea that there is not only one but many centers of history in postmodernism makes history ordinary, the historical hero becomes an ordinary man and is exposed to total irony by the principle of postmodernism. If there is no absolute truth, if the truth is multifaceted, then the idea that history does not reflect reality, comes from here. History which has been denied seriousness becomes a fiction. Fiction can provide the material for play. The boundaries of truth that people have been practicing for a long time go through their spirit and intellect.

The purpose of declaring a single thing “a lie” is to bring its depths to the surface. Testing the truth with so-called “humiliating” methods reveals elements that are so far down in the depths, and it turns out that the emancipation and excitement in our view of the world has resulted in the “death of the truth”. So the way out is the return of the person who knows the world and its subjectiveness. Postmodern writers who argue that human ideas are subjective rather than objective mock objectivity and grasp its seriousness. In texts exposed to historic irony, the postmodernist writer claims that it is welded from subjectivity.

If history loses its seriousness, it loses its relevance and can become the object of game. In the studies of Hutcheon, the idea that “real events, figures are changed, rewritten” is of great importance. Indeed, the history of mockery in postmodernist novels takes on the carnival (M. Bakhtin) effect with serious topics using “black humor”. The combination of a historical novel with fictitious history, the displacement of real characters with imaginary ones, creates a pastiche element. The unity of reality with imagination adds fantasy, magical and unusual elements to a realistic narration that creates a fabulation.

The typological comparison of Barnes’s *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* and Abdulla’s *The Incomplete Manuscript* suggests that both novels are most interesting examples of postmodern prose. Barnes creates an intertextual dialogue with the Old Testament, controlling the past, while history’s being subjective is emphasized, and along with the fact that history is a fiction, a new alternative history is written. Abdulla has deconstructed parts of *The Book of Dada Gorgud*, an epic of Turkish and Middle Eastern literature.

The stylistics of both novels are based on “irony, allusion, and contradiction”. The epic work of *The Book of Dada Gorgud*, as well as the well-known plot of the “Old Testament”, are exposed to irony moving away from canons. They are rewritten in inverted codes.

Suspicion towards the concepts of truth and reality in the postmodern worldview and the belief that history is not what happens but what we are told are clearly reflected in both novels. The idea of history, catastrophe, error and human foolishness in Barnes’s novel becomes similar to the ideas of fictitious, imagined, authentic reality in the novel of Abdulla. The compositional nature of both works realizes the author’s ideas. Fragmentation in the novels using the rhizome affect the image of the epilogue that is not related to one another is built on the principle of postmodern novel fragmentation. The game of the text of postmodernism connects to a sense of play in the text, as isolated subjects are combined in the general structure of the novel. Both novels border between imagination and reality. The “non-serious” approach to historical facts, and alternative versions of known events are related to the idea of the author’s past, the idea of illusion itself. This form of narration in Barnes and Abdulla’s novels is concerned with the ironic modes of 20th century thinking and the fact that human thinking has cast doubt on truthful understanding of the world. In this regard, both authors present historiographic

metafiction in history, not in the description of past and historical values, but in general, in the history of human thought on epistemological history.

Both authors suggest the idea of creating alternative historical realities and eradicating so-called realities from the official history of Western and Eastern civilization's histories, rather than clinging to the moral lessons of the events of the past.

References

- Abdulla, Kamal (2013) *The Incomplete Manuscript*. Houston: Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.
- Barnes, Julian (1990) *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*. New York: Vintage International.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail ([1965] 1984) [*Рабле и народная культура средневековья и Возрождения*] *Rabelais and His World*. Translated into English by Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Barthes, Roland ([1977] 1978) *Image-Music-Text*. Essays selected and translated into English by Stephen Heath. New York: Hill and Wang.
- Baudrillard, Jean ([1981] 1983) [*Simulacres et Simulation*. Paris: Éditions Galilée] *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated into English by S. F. Glaser. Ann Arbor The University of Michigan Press.
- Bejenaru, Ludmila ([2016] 2018) ["Камал Абдулла: Философия полнаты."] "Kamal Abdulla: the Philosophy of Fulfillness." Translated into English by Yegane Abdullayeva. [In:] *Azerbaijan № 11*. Retrieved from: <https://reading-hall.ru/publication.php?id=17331> [date of access: 20.10.2016].
- Derrida, Jacques ([1967] 1976) [*De la grammatologie*. Paris : Les Éditions de Minuit] *Of Grammatology*. Translated into English by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Foucault, Michel ([1966] 1994) [*Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard] *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Sciences*. Translated into English by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books.
- Gauthier, Timothy S. (2006) *Narrative Desire and Historical Reparations: A.S. Byatt, Ian McEwan, Salmon Rushdie*. New York: Routledge.
- Guignery, Vanessa (2006) *The Fiction of Julian Barnes: A reader's guide to essential criticism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hacili, Asif ([2010] 2016) [*Kamal Abdulla: seçimin morfologiyası*]. *Kamal Abdulla: the Morphology of Choice*. Translated into English by Yegane Abdullayeva. Baku: Mutercim Press.
- Hutcheon, Linda (1988) *A Poetics of Postmodernism. History, Theory, Fiction*. New York: Routledge.
- Hutcheon, Linda (1989) "Historiographic Metafiction Parody and the Intertextuality of History". [In:] *Intertextuality and Contemporary American Fiction*. Ed. Patrick O'Donnell and Robert Con Davis. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Holmes, Frederick M. (2009) *Julian Barnes (New British Fiction)*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kakutani, Mihiko (1989) "Books of The Times; A Cast of Characters Afloat On History's Indifferent Sea." [In:] *The New York Times. Books*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/1989/09/29/books/books-of-the-times-a-cast-of-characters-afloat-on-history-s-indifferent-sea.html> [date of access: 29.10.1989].
- Liotard, Jean-Francois ([1979] 1984) [*La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.] *The Postmodern Condition*. Translated into English by Geoffrey Bennington, Brian Massumi. University of Minnesota Press.
- Morace, Robert A. (2006) *The Dialogic Novels of Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge*. Southern Illinois University Press.

- Toynbee, Arnold J. ([1957] 1987) *A Study of History, Abridgement of Volumes VII-X*. Abridgement by David Churchill Somervell. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- White, Hayden (1978) "The historical text as literary artefact." [In:] R. H. Canary, H. Kozicki (Eds.) *The writing of history: Literary form and historical understanding*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.