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# Accelerated Development and the Formation of North Caucasian Postmodern Literature

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**Abstract:** In the mid-twentieth century, the academician G. D. Gachev proposed the theory of "accelerated development," according to which the literatures of minority peoples having been delayed in their historical evolution for various reasons are capable of rapidly integrating into the unified global literary process and, within a short period, catching up with or even surpassing highly developed national literatures. The present article substantiates the relevance of Gachev's theory through the example of North Caucasian postmodern literature, which has emerged as a coherent literary school. Focusing on the novel *In Your World I Am a Passer-By* by Dina Damian (the pseudonym of Madina Tlostanova), the study demonstrates how a single "turbulent genius," represented by the Kabardian writer, accomplishes a dual task: elevating regional postmodernism to an unprecedented level while simultaneously enriching world literature with an innovative poetics and a range of original philosophical concepts. The novel also addresses several additional issues related to clarifying the philosophical, historical, social, and aesthetic foundations of postmodernism.

**Keys words:** postmodernism, literature, North Caucasus, novel, Dina Damian, gender, intertextuality, poetics, symbolism.

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Main part. The literary foundation of a fictional text represents a synthesis of its constituent elements: artistic imagination and the author's reflection on a worldview shaped by lived reality. The transition from one literary movement to another demonstrates not only historical and event-based change, but also an internal transformation what may be described as the evolving "thesaurus" of the human soul. When examining the interaction between human thought and philosophical paradigms, it is essential to take into account the author's ethnocultural background. Within the global literary continuum, there exists a core sequence of cultural epochs, each characterized by distinct principles and conditions that generate new modes of thinking and artistic imagery. However, within the triadic framework of world, Russian, and national literatures, these movements, when integrated into the microcosm of a particular people, develop their own conditional interpretations. Consequently, many epochs and literary trends that were influential in the West acquired markedly different forms in Russian and national literary traditions.

G. D. Gachev's original concept of the significance of ethnocultural self-expression emphasizing that every nation possesses its own unique "grid of cognitive coordinates," shaped by landscape and cultural code has made a substantial contribution to the understanding of national literature and its distinctive structure. The Cosmos, Logos, and Psyche of the national world followed an alternative path of literary development. The system of ideas embedded in national literature is typically marked by a strong and enduring connection to mythological origins, reflecting heroic narratives, ancient culture and traditions,

as well as socially, historically, and personally significant values. This conceptual framework closely aligns with Gachev's "theory of accelerated development," which posits that newly literate literatures of the twentieth century made a dramatic leap forward by drawing upon the experience of world classical literature.

With the establishment of socialist realism, many significant themes of national life became subject to censorship, while the expression of a collective, totalizing, and ostensibly "happy" *we* appeared in nearly every new novel. This state of affairs created the illusion of exaggerated well-being and functioned as an accumulative ideological mechanism.

During the twentieth century, the conception of the world underwent profound transformation. Changes in spiritual and intellectual life began with the spread of European self-consciousness, which also encompassed the Russian intelligentsia. The modernist era was shaped by the influence of the New Age, understood as the rejection of the old and the creation of innovative tools for representing reality. According to contemporary literary scholars, the desire to depict more fully the individual of the modern era replaced earlier aesthetic instruments: artistic creation entered an open space in which traditional criteria of artistic value themselves dissolved. Innovation now emerged through the overcoming of narrow professional and stylistic boundaries. As a result, the artist came to be evaluated not by technical mastery, but by the significance of ideas and the global scope of their expression.

Postmodernism introduced a philosophical dimension to the image of the artist, who became not merely a creator of works but a producer of complex spiritual and intellectual concepts. A key feature of this movement lies in the author's "inimitable strangeness" of vision an extreme subjectivity and an insistence on the individuality of the perceived world.

The philosophical roots of postmodernism are indirectly connected to Romanticism, whose essence is defined by the principle of dual worlds. The opposition between the real and the unreal, romantic tragic awareness of human "smallness," the imperfection of the world, and existential disappointment found renewed expression in postmodernism through the "death" of foundational absolutes: God (Nietzsche), the author (Barthes), and the human subject (humanism). This tendency is historically conditioned, as modernism's attempt to articulate a new understanding of reality compelled postmodernism to follow a different path. In its artistic practice, postmodernism seeks to diminish and parody the ideas of the avant-garde, classical imagery, and established conceptual systems.

The world is now perceived as a vast, timeless space in which all movements and ideas converge into a single, expansive intertextual field. As has been noted, "the space of postmodern reality is a rupture through which the gaping emptiness of Nothingness is revealed." The central and most radical claim of postmodernism asserts that reality itself is an illusion. This concept finds particularly vivid expression in visual art, where each image represents an unfinished stage of something else—abstraction exists only as a tentative sketch of meaning rather than its precise articulation or definition.

Consequently, reality is called into question: everything has already been articulated and discovered, leaving only the task of reinterpreting the known to the point of unrecognizability in order to rediscover tools for describing the world. Durability, tradition, continuity, and preservation lose their value; instead, a unique form of self-destruction and punk aesthetics emerges, in which any attempt at accurate representation passes through absurdity and grotesque distortion.

Such a worldview was shaped by the dual reality of the second half of the twentieth century: high levels of cultural and spiritual development alongside wars, repression, and disillusionment with evolutionary ideals and scientific progress; the invention of the atomic bomb alongside the Cold War; the conquest of space alongside the inability to live harmoniously on one's own planet. All these contradictions profoundly marked the spiritual consciousness of humanity, compelling individuals to doubt the very existence of goodness and, consequently, the reality of the world itself.

In Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Solaris*, based on the novel of the same name by Stanisław Lem, one of the characters, Snaut, offers a profound reflection on human aspirations, ultimately concluding that only

love can serve as genuine salvation. He observes that humanity does not truly seek to conquer outer space, but rather to extend the boundaries of Earth to its limits. Other worlds are unnecessary; what humanity seeks is a mirror of itself. The pursuit of contact, according to Snaut, is doomed to failure, because human beings fear and do not genuinely need the very goals toward which they strive. What humans ultimately require is another human being.

Within the paradigm of postmodernism, the human subject withdraws from the center of meaning, and with this withdrawal all other structures follow; the subject is excluded from the process of development. In this context, a renewed articulation of the theme of the “superfluous” or “little” person emerges as an individual mourning the loss of meaning and coherence in existence.

Every national literature possesses its own distinct form of postmodernism, and the literatures of the peoples of the North Caucasus are no exception. Cultural memory, preserved at a genetic and collective level, involuntarily reproduces traumatic images of the historical past: the consequences of the Caucasian War (1817–1864), revolution followed by renewed warfare, deportations, and totalitarian oppression. At the same time, the daily struggle for survival unfolds against the background of a rich and unique cultural and spiritual heritage, creating a profound and enduring paradox.

A retrospective interpretation of the history of the Kabardian people is presented in the distinctive novel *Roots* by Alim Keshokov, a classic of Kabardian literature. Largely grounded in documentary evidence, the work incorporates elements of Adyghe ethnoculture alongside philosophical reflections on ancestors, moral foundations of life, the search for a people’s origins, and the complex, often contradictory pages of national history. In depicting harsh and traumatic historical periods, Keshokov introduces a chilling episode from the archaic existence of his ancestors: the birth of a girl is accompanied by her mother sewing a protective prayer (*dua*) into a piece of rawhide to ward off the evil eye—yet such protection proves futile when hardship leads the father himself to consider selling the child in order to save the family from starvation.

Such realities coexist paradoxically within national memory and literary representation alongside idealized images of Circassian women, traditions of deep respect for women, and reverence for elevated spiritual customs and moral values. The tragic tableaux recreated by the writer constitute a profound psychological trauma for the people—a pain rarely spoken of, yet persistent and inescapable. Moreover, this suppressed suffering becomes fertile ground for the development of the “Cosmo-Psycho-Logos” of North Caucasian postmodernism.

The postmodern condition of the contemporary era erases boundaries between traditional culture and lived reality, between the ethnic and the pan-European, and between gender roles shaped by cultural codes where men are conventionally positioned as leaders and women are reduced to simplified stereotypes, once cynically described as “mechanical dolls with brains attached.” Postmodernism challenges and dismantles such reductive models.

Several North Caucasian peoples including the Balkars, Ingush, Karachays, and Chechens endured immense suffering as a result of Stalinist repression and forced deportation. Ethnic identity alone served as grounds for punishment: individuals were uprooted from their ancestral lands, climates, and landscapes. The loss of homeland—understood as the territory of a people’s spiritual and cultural existence, within which a unique ethnoculture had evolved over centuries constituted a catastrophic national tragedy.

In the specific historical context of the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic, both constituent peoples experienced this fate: the mass resettlement of Kabardians to the Ottoman Empire during the Caucasian War and the deportation of the Balkars to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan during the Second World War. Such crisis-laden and traumatic experiences shaped a distinctive postmodern worldview, marked by the radical rejection of all forms of totalitarianism and the abandonment of conventional binaries such as “good and evil,” “evolution and progress,” and “the permissible and the impermissible.” Postmodernism thus undermines Enlightenment-derived rational models that posit a single correct framework for human

existence. The national specificity of postmodernism developed within the context of the Soviet past. While this movement advanced rapidly in the West, within the USSR it was articulated only through the cautious and often suppressed voices of progressive youth.

**Conclusion.** The philosophy of postmodernism creates a new reality in which the “broken” individual radically rethinks the entire course of history from the very beginning and interprets it by combining all genres and social movements, without separating life (reality) and art, the masculine and the feminine, the national and the universal, thus transforming everything into a single cultural space. Within the framework of Gachev’s theory of accelerated development, by the first two decades of the 21st century an aesthetically complete artistic subculture had formed in the south of Russia, typologically defined as “North Caucasian postmodern literature.” Its philosophical roots are shaped by new “existential laws” that allow individuals to ironically reinterpret fundamental, traditional values. A person possessing an ethnic metacode seeks to comprehend the contemporary era by going beyond the boundaries of their knowledge and habitual ways of describing reality. The social and historical foundations of North Caucasian postmodernism are rooted in events caused by the tragedy of the Caucasian War and the forced displacement (deportation) of a number of indigenous mountain peoples at various historical periods to Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Central Asia, and Kazakhstan. The cultural roots of postmodernism go back to the principle of romantic dual-worldness, which in its expanded form generates the idea of the multidimensional nature of the human being and their cross-cultural, transcultural, and multicultural variability.

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