

Chapter 4

Chingiz Aitmatov's Grand Narrative

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ABSTRACT

Beyond political and cultural criticisms, grand narratives have the authority to disclose real facts. This authority is most effective in the field of culture. Grand narratives are the universal presentation of local culture. In a culture dominated by grand narratives, the dominant ideology of the regime is to control knowledge. Grand narratives play a role in generalizing and transferring information skillfully while describing the contemporary situation. A novelist was defined as a mirror reflecting the period and society in which he lived. Likewise, Chingiz Aitmatov tried to depict the political, social, and cultural structure of his period, and accordingly, formed his own grand narrative. The author skillfully revealed the facts of the period regarding the Marxist tradition and described the social, cultural, and political structure of the period using a tentative language in parallel with the facts such as analogy, myth, and legend.

INTRODUCTION

All types of communication or narration contain signs and codes. A sign refers to something other than itself. These signs and codes are conveyed to others or made available for others. Conveying or receiving signs, codes, or communication is the practice of social relations (Fiske, 2003, p. 16). Therefore, a sign consists of a signifier and a signified. Signifier forms the plane of narrative and signified becomes the plane of content (Barthes, 1993, p. 40). The fact that the signs or the narrative are the practices of social relations leads to the coding cultural codes at the social level or the collective acceptance of certain ideologies. In this respect, Malpas placed the narrative knowledge at the foundation of the society and stated that it enables us to express who we are, what we believe, and what we want (2005, p. 21). In Barthes's words, the presence of countless narratives (myths, legends, movies, novels, stories,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-4903-2.ch004

newspapers, bodily movements, etc.) in the world (1993, p. 83), reflects the potential of the narrative to surround the structure of society and penetrate it. Since narrative permeates all the cultural codes and society, it has become a research area of many disciplines and researchers.

François Lyotard associated the concept of narrative with modernism and postmodernism, and he discussed it from a global perspective. Lyotard explains the concept of postmodernism in the axis of trust and credibility in grand narratives. The term 'modern' can be associated with forms of knowledge through grand narratives about the development of the mind, freedom, maximum prosperity, happiness as a result of production, etc. If a narrative or discourse has distrust and disbelief towards the grand narratives that legitimize modernism then this will be described as a postmodern situation (Lyotard, 2014). For Lyotard, grand narratives indicate the knowledge and science of modernity, and these are also the fundamental principles and ideas that everything is grounded and legitimized. On the other hand, the grand narratives of modernity are universality, freedom, the dialectic of the spirit, justice, equality, wealth, etc. According to Lyotard, the major grand narrative of modernity is the project of liberation of the universal subject of history (Readings, 1991, p. 48). On the other hand, postmodernity is the expression of the minor narrative that allows difference and multiplicity to express themselves against all kinds of systematic and totalitarian structures (Kılıç, 2015, p. 106). Postmodernism seeks to provide a critical interpretation of the modern cultural crisis and reveals the core of new social lifestyles (Litvinseva, 2014, p.163). From this point of view, postmodernity represents the stance against all grand narratives that create and reinforce modernity. Grand narratives function as a control mechanism for dictating an ideology or a behavior to society (Parslov, 2019, p. 25).

According to Lyotard, the most important reason for the transition from modernity to the postmodern information society is the change in the technical and social conditions of communication. (Harvey, 2014, p. 65). Based on this view, it is clear that why the belief in the grand narratives inherited from modernity has been damaged and a pluralist understanding has prevailed against them (Ertan, 2019, p. 37).

Lyotard considers grand narratives as absolute truths beyond any criticism of their political and cultural views. Grand narratives have full authority over culture but reduce local elements to universal codes. The ideology of the dominant regime had the final say on knowledge.

Regarding the national grand narratives, Western and Russian postmodernism have their own characteristics. Western European postmodernism addresses the styles, concepts and values of the modern age with a spirit of democratic and cultural pluralism. Besides, Russian postmodernism aimed to overcome any authoritarian regime and totalitarian consciousness. Their grand narratives, the basis of generalizing worldviews, certain standards, and rules of life are shaped by religious values (Litvinseva, 2017).

Chingiz Aitmatov stands out as a man who can create his own grand narrative with his works. He became one of the rare writers who skillfully kneaded the realities of his political and cultural world and could reveal his absolute truths during and after the Soviet era.

Chingiz Aitmatov chose some facts of his own geography, such as war, friendship, love, the pain and legends of the war period, and wrote them in Kyrgyz and Russian. Aitmatov is one of the rare authors who did not ignore the other nations in the Soviet geography he lived in, and able to immortalize the values, experiences, and historical events of different nations living in this geography by skillfully telling in his works. The author has published works that can be considered as the mirror of his period and tried to reflect the troubles, pain, joy, and happiness of the Kyrgyz and other Soviet peoples with an artistic language.

Chingiz Aitmatov, as a writer who is aware of his responsibilities, referred to the values, traditions, and customs of his nation and tried to enrich them (Kolcu, 2008, p. 69). While writing his works, he

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