



MODERN AZERBAIJANI LITERATURE: DIRECTIONS, TENDENCIES

Alimova Mamurakhon

Trainee Teacher the Department of
Russian and Literature Kokand state University

Abstract

The article examines the main directions of development of modern Azerbaijani literature, its thematic and genre diversity. Particular attention is paid to issues of national identity, post-Soviet transformations and the role of women in the literary process. Key trends, authorial strategies and current problems faced by modern writers are analyzed. The dynamism of the literary process and its important role in the formation of the cultural consciousness of society are noted.

Keywords: motives, mythopoetics, essays, dramaturgy, self-reflection, cultural dialogue.

Introduction

Contemporary Azerbaijani literature is a dynamically developing area of national culture, in which traditional forms and motifs are closely intertwined with new artistic approaches. Over the past decades, it has actively responded to socio-political transformations, issues of national identity, globalization challenges and internal cultural processes. The post-Soviet period became a turning point in the development of Azerbaijani literature, opened up new horizons for self-expression of writers and stimulated the formation of new literary trends and styles.

After the collapse of the USSR, Azerbaijan, as an independent state, found itself at the center of political and cultural transformations. Literature, freed from ideological pressure, received the opportunity to more freely express internal conflicts of the individual, explore the traumatic experience of collective



***Modern American Journal of
Linguistics, Education, and Pedagogy***

ISSN (E): 3067-7874

Volume 01, **Issue** 02, **May**, 2025

Website: usajournals.org

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memory, including those associated with the Karabakh conflict, migration, and the collapse of imperial structures. This transitional period was accompanied by a rethinking of historical narratives and a search for a new literary identity.

Azerbaijani literature of the nineteenth century was profoundly influenced by the Russian conquest of the territory of present-day Republic of Azerbaijan, as a result of Russo-Persian Wars, which separated the territory of nowadays Azerbaijan, from Iran. Azerbaijani-Turkish writer Ali bey Huseynzade's poem Turan inspired Turanism and pan-Turkism among Turkish intellectuals during the First World War and early Republican period. Hüseynzade emphasized the linguistic bonds between the Turks, who were Muslim, and the Christian people of Hungary.

The fascination with language is seen in the work of Mirzə Cəlil Məmmədquluzadə who was an influential figure in the development of Azerbaijani nationalism in Soviet Azerbaijan. Məmmədquluzadə, who was also the founder of the satirical journal Molla Nasraddin, wrote the play Anamın kitabı (My Mother's Book) in 1920 in Karabakh. It was about a wealthy widow who lived with her three sons who had graduated from universities in St. Petersburg, Istanbul and Najaf. The brothers had adapted to the culture and languages of the cities in which they were educated and were not able to understand one another or their mother. Their sister, Gülbahar, only able to read in Muslim language (müsəlmanca savadlı), burns her brothers' books at the end. After the Russian vocabularies, Ottoman poems, and Persian astronomy books are destroyed, the only book that survives Gülbahar's "cultural revolution" is a notebook, written in Azerbaijani language, containing wishes for the unity of the family.

Writers began to address topics that were previously considered marginal or taboo: individual freedom, gender roles, the conflict between tradition and modernity, alienation in the context of urbanization. The path to an active dialogue with the Western literary tradition was opened, which was reflected in the genre and stylistic diversity.



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Linguistics, Education, and Pedagogy***

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Contemporary Azerbaijani literature covers a wide range of genres - from poetry and short fiction to the postmodern novel, essays and drama. The leading trends include:

1. Postmodern play with form and meaning. Writers experiment with narrative structure, combine realism with elements of fantasy, mythopoeics, intertextuality.
2. Addressing the problems of national and personal identity. The heroes of modern prose are often distinguished by an internal crisis, attempts at self-determination against the backdrop of historical and cultural upheavals.
3. Globalization and cultural dialogue. Many authors include themes of emigration, diaspora, and bilingualism in their texts, which reflects the trends of the global literary space.
4. Feminist and gender agenda. The voices of women writers exploring gender inequality, the role of women in traditional society, and the challenges of modernity are becoming increasingly vocal.

Urban Literature

Urban literature in Azerbaijan reflects the rapid transformation of cities—especially Baku—during the post-Soviet and globalization eras. This direction focuses on:

- the clash between traditional values and modern lifestyles;
- alienation, loneliness, and existential anxiety in the urban environment;
- consumerism, corruption, and changing social hierarchies;
- identity struggles among youth in big cities.

Baku often becomes a central character in itself, symbolizing both opportunity and disorientation. The city is portrayed as a space of contradictions—between East and West, past and future, spirituality and materialism.

Contemporary Azerbaijani literature is a space of numerous meanings and artistic solutions. Thematic diversity includes:

Problems of memory and oblivion, especially in the context of the Karabakh tragedy;



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Linguistics, Education, and Pedagogy***

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The city as a symbol of alienation and freedom at the same time;
The search for lost roots and connection with folklore;
Relations between generations, in which the archaic and modern collide;
The female voice, which is gaining more and more strength and influence.
The poetic language of contemporary Azerbaijani poetry often relies on symbolism, metaphor, and lyricism. Poets strive for inner freedom of expression, often overcoming normative frameworks and creating unique forms.
Despite obvious progress, contemporary Azerbaijani literature faces a number of difficulties. Among them:
Insufficient institutional support, limited literary criticism and scientific analysis of new phenomena;
Little volume of translations of contemporary Azerbaijani literature into other languages;
The gap between “high” and mass literature, the absence of a lively dialogue between them.
However, the development of digital platforms, international literary festivals, as well as the activity of young authors create favorable conditions for the further expansion of the literary space and the involvement of new readerships.
From writers of modern Azerbaijan, the most famous were the screenwriter Rustam Ibragimbekov and the author of the detective novels Chingiz Abdullayev, who wrote exclusively in Russian.
Poetry is represented by famous poets Nariman Hasanzade, Khalil Rza, Sabir Novruz, Vagif Samadoghlu, Nusrat Kesemenli, Ramiz Rovshan, Hamlet Isakhanli, Zalimkhan Yagub, etc. Among modern Azerbaijani playwrights, F. Goja, Elchin, K. Abdullah, A. Masud, G. Miralamov, E. Huseynbeyli, A. Ragimov, R. Akber, A. Amirley, and others.
The framework of the new Azerbaijani prose is expanded by elements of the detective, fiction, anti-utopia, Turkic mythology, eastern surrealism. Among the writers working in this genre one can name such writers as Anar, M. Suleymanly, N. Rasulzade, R. Rahmanoglu. The new Azerbaijani realism began to gain



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Linguistics, Education, and Pedagogy***

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momentum when young prose writers began to turn increasingly to national history and ethnic memory. In this regard, it is worth noting the historical and synthetic novel "The Thirteenth Apostle, or One Hundred Forty-First Don Juan" by Elchin Huseynbeyli and the historical novels "Shah Abbas" and "Nadir Shah" by Yunus Oguz.

After gaining independence in Azerbaijan, an important role was played by the liberation of the occupied territories, love of the Motherland and justice. One of the most famous books about Karabakh are: "Karabakh – mountains call us" Elbrus Orujev, "Azerbaijan Diary: A Rogue Reporter's Adventures in an Oil-Rich, War-Torn, Post-Soviet Republic" Thomas Goltz "History of Azerbaijan on documents and Ziya Bunyatov. The Karabakh war left its misprint in the modern Azerbaijani literature: such writers as G. Anargizy, M. Suleymanly, A. Rahimov, S. Ahmedli, V. Babally, K. Nezirli, A. Kuliev, A. Abbas, M. Bekirli turned to the themes of the fate of refugees, longing for the lost Shusha, Khojaly massacre, cruelty of war, etc.

Modern Azerbaijani literature is a living, polyphonic, ambiguous environment in which new aesthetic codes are formed, old meanings are rethought, and a complex but important interaction between tradition and innovation occurs. Literature is becoming a space not only for artistic expression, but also for social action, self-reflection and cultural dialogue. This is its strength, relevance and prospects.

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Linguistics, Education, and Pedagogy***

ISSN (E): 3067-7874

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Website: usajournals.org

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