

Evolution of Azerbaijani Science Fiction and Emin Mahmudov

Azərbaycan Bilim Kurgu Edebiyatının Evrimi ve Emin Mahmudov

Gunel ALASGAROVA 

Ohio State University, Higher Education and Student Affairs, Department of Educational Sciences, Columbus, USA

Ohio Devlet Üniversitesi, Yüksek Öğretim ve Öğrenci İşleri Enstitüsü, Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü, Columbus, ABD.



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Sorumlu Yazar/Corresponding author:
Gunel Asgarova
E-mail: gunelalasgarova@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

The evolution of science fiction literature in Azerbaijan has been characterized by a delayed emergence compared to European, American, and Russian counterparts. Despite this initial lag, Azerbaijani science fiction writers have made commendable strides, drawing influence from both global and local literary traditions. This article explores the historical context and thematic concerns of Azerbaijani science fiction literature, analyzing the impact of influential global authors on Azerbaijani writers and examining the stylistic elements present in their works. Additionally, the article delves into the life and career of Emin Mahmudov (1925-2010), a prominent Azerbaijani writer celebrated for his contributions to the genre. Mahmudov's vivid imagination, intellectual depth, and exploration of cosmic themes have left an indelible mark on Azerbaijani literature. Through an exploration of Mahmudov's works, such as "Prisoners of Neptune" and "Turbulence," which delve into existential questions amidst rapid cosmic voyages, this article sheds light on the unique trajectory of science fiction literature in Azerbaijan and its broader significance within the global literary landscape.

Keywords: Science fiction, Azerbaijani literature, Emin Mahmudov, cosmic themes

ÖZ

Azərbaycan'da bilim kurgu edebiyatının gelişimi, Avrupa, Amerika ve Rusya'daki emsallerine kıyasla gecikmiş bir ortaya çıkış süreciyle karakterize edilmiştir. Bu başlangıçtaki gecikmeye rağmen, Azerbaycanlı bilim kurgu yazarları, hem küresel hem de yerel edebi geleneklerden etkilenecek kayda değer ilerlemeler kaydetmiştir. Bu makale, Azerbaycan bilim kurgu edebiyatının tarihsel bağlamını ve tematik kaygılarını inceleyerek, küresel düzeyde etkili yazarların Azerbaycanlı yazarlara olan etkisini ve eserlerinde bulunan stilistik unsurları analiz etmektedir. Ayrıca, bu makale, türün gelişimine önemli katkılarda bulunmuş olan ünlü Azerbaycanlı yazar Emin Mahmudov'un (1925-2010) hayatını ve kariyerini ele almaktadır. Mahmudov'un zengin hayal gücü, entelektüel derinliği ve kozmik temaları keşfetmesi, Azerbaycan edebiyatında silinmez bir iz bırakmıştır. Bu makale, "Neptün'ün Esirleri" ve "Türbülans" gibi eserlerinde hızlı kozmik yolculuklar arasında varoluşsal soruları irdeleyen Mahmudov'un eserleri üzerinden Azerbaycan'da bilim kurgu edebiyatının kendine özgü gelişim sürecini ve bu sürecin küresel edebi bağlamdaki daha geniş anlamını ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Bilim kurgu, Azerbaycan edebiyatı, Emin Mahmudov, kozmik temalar

Introduction

The science fiction genre, celebrated for its expansive scope of imaginative inquiry and speculative discourse, has perennially captivated audiences by deploying visionary narratives and intellectually stimulating themes. As scientific fiction narratives traverse temporal bounds, speculating on both historical precedents and prospective trajectories of scientific advancement, and as fantastical elements are interwoven with literary conventions, they wield considerable influence in fostering the development and enrichment of imaginative faculties and creative endeavors among diverse demographics, notably the younger generation. These narratives engender immersive scenarios that evoke aspirations for a utopian society devoid of conflict, characterized by happiness and intellectual

flourishing (Sadykhova, 2011). The genesis of fantasy literature emanates from a collective human interest in envisioning prospective futures, coupled with a collective impetus to catalyze societal progress and accelerate scientific and technological innovation.

Prominent literary scholar Jamal Ahmadov offered a distinctive elucidation of the nascent science fiction genre that began to take shape in Azerbaijan post-1950s: “The essence of the science fiction genre necessitates the writer’s extrapolation from scientific insights and technological advancements. During this period, cultivating lofty ideals in readers and fostering an elevated imagination became feasible. A writer venturing into the realm of science fiction cannot simply reiterate established facts but must chart new territories of thought” (Ahmadov, 1975, p. 12). This insight underscores the evolving nature of Azerbaijani literature during this era, marked by a burgeoning exploration of speculative fiction that transcended conventional narrative boundaries.

From the 1950s to the 21st century, Azerbaijan experienced a period of great awakening, innovation, and progress in its socio-political, literary, and cultural life. Since the 1960s, Azerbaijani readers have warmly welcomed examples of the science fiction genre and have eagerly read domestic and foreign works (Haciyeva, 2016). During this period, the public, political, and cultural events found their reflection in the works created. In the second half of the 20th century, science fiction’s intense and plot-rich genre emerged prominently in literary creativity. The development of the modern cinema genre confirms the importance of the science fiction genre and even demonstrates its expansion (Aligizi, 2010).

In contrast to the longstanding tradition of the science fiction genre in European countries, US, and Russia, Azerbaijan saw a notable emergence of noteworthy literary works within this domain only in the latter half of the 20th century. Despite this delayed development, interest in science fiction steadily gained momentum in subsequent years. While the first documented instance of Azerbaijani science fiction dates back to Yusif Vazir Chamanzaminli’s “The City of the Future” in 1933, coinciding with the rapid growth of the “Golden Age” period in American science fiction, the genre’s establishment in Azerbaijani literature occurred much later (Alasgarova, 2016). Nevertheless, the strides made in this genre, particularly compared to other Muslim nations, are commendable, albeit influenced by objective and subjective factors. One significant obstacle is the absence of regions within Azerbaijan actively engaged in producing advanced technological equipment crucial for space exploration, limiting the scope for writers to portray cosmic narratives convincingly. Despite these challenges, the allure of technological progress and the portrayal of extraterrestrial civilizations continue to captivate Azerbaijani readers, mirroring global trends within the science fiction genre (Omarov, 2013).

As noted earlier, Azerbaijan stands out among other Muslim nations for its notable contributions to the science fiction genre. Despite being a relatively small cohort, a cadre of talented writers has emerged, leaving indelible marks on the landscape of fantasy literature. Among these luminaries are Ahmed Khaspoladov, Huseyn Ibrahimov, Namiq Abdullayev, Allahverdi Eminov, Gabil Ahmadov, Emin Mahmudov, Ibrahim Huseynov, the sole female author Elmira Zamanova, and promising young talents like Vusal Nur. Throughout the Soviet era, select works of these compatriots were translated into Russian and disseminated in anthology formats, garnering avid readership. The discerning analyses of esteemed scholars and erudite professors of Azerbaijani literary criticism, including Naila Sadiqova, Jamal Ahmadov, and Zeydulla Agayev, have delved into the intricacies of fantasy literature, exploring its unique attributes, the challenges faced by our national fantasists, and the evolution of the science fiction genre within the 20th-century Azerbaijani literary landscape (Samadova, 2017; Soltanova, 2010).

Alasgarova’s study (2020) investigated the declining popularity of science fiction literature in Azerbaijan in recent decades. The research aimed to discern whether the lack of availability of science fiction novels in the market or the perceived low quality of modern works contributes to their unpopularity in society. Data collection involved surveys among the public and interviews with literature experts. Examination of libraries, bookshops, and school literature textbooks was conducted to assess the presence of science fiction works. Survey results highlighted reasons for the genre’s unpopularity and evaluated the roles of authors, works, libraries, and bookshops. Findings revealed that while people still engage with science fiction, they predominantly favor world classics over national literature. Despite an adequate presence of science fiction books in modern Azerbaijani literature, they are not adequately promoted by bookshops, social media, T.V. programs, or school textbooks. Experts noted that newly published novels often lack engagement or appeal to a broad audience. Furthermore, the study notes the waning prestige of science fiction compared to fantasy worldwide, including in Azerbaijan. These findings partly support previous research characterizing science fiction as unpopular in Azerbaijan in the 21st century while also suggesting the existence of readable works that require further promotion and advancement.

Influence of Global Science Fiction Authors

Azerbaijani writers, situated within the former Soviet Union, initially drew inspiration from Russian fantasy literature and subsequently from translated works of foreign authors. Renowned figures in global science fiction, including Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, Arthur Conan

Doyle, Isaac Asimov, Poul Anderson, Stanisław Lem, Alexander Belyaev, and Ivan Yefremov, exerted a profound influence on Azerbaijani fantasists. Their works served as catalysts for the creation of parallel and analogous fantasy narratives within the Azerbaijani literary landscape. Noteworthy authors such as Emin Mahmudov, Namiq Abdullayev, Gabil Ahmadov, Elmira Zamanova, and Ibrahim Huseynov approached universal themes and issues depicted in the works of Asimov, Lem, and Belyaev with a fresh perspective, contributing to the evolution of Azerbaijani science fiction (Ahmadova, 2014).

In 1964, a collection titled “Formula of the Impossibility” showcased the works of Azerbaijani science fiction writers, skillfully translated into Russian by Rafail Bakhtamov under the supervision of Yevgeni Voyskunsky, then chairman of the Azerbaijan Science Fiction Writers’ Union. Voyskunsky’s leadership also facilitated the translation of novels by renowned writers such as Stanisław Lem, Isaac Asimov, and Ray Bradbury into Azerbaijani (Amnel, 2005). Alongside contributions from Jewish and Russian-born science fiction writers, the collection featured novels by two Azerbaijani writers, Emin Mahmudov and Novruz Ganjali. Mahmudov, a member of the Azerbaijan Science Fiction Writers’ Union during the 1960s alongside Genrikh Altov, emerged as a prominent figure with his novel “These Amazing Stars,” which garnered a circulation of 200,000 copies upon its release, followed by the publication of “The Pole of Risk” in 1970, sustaining significant demand until 1985 (Ahmedova, 2014).

Renowned science fiction writer and war journalist Evgeny Voiskunsky, a Baku native, recollected his collaboration with a group of esteemed colleagues, including Heinrich Altov, Valentina Zhuravleva, Rafail Shapiro (Bakhtamov), and Isay Lukodyanov, in the capacity of co-author. Together, they played an active role in the Commission’s activities, which involved the engagement of young, emerging science fiction writers such as Emin Makhmudov, Pavel Amnel (2005), and Vladimir Karakhanov. Their collective efforts culminated in the preparation and publication of three notable collections (Alasgarova, 2020).

Azerbaijani science fiction writers have drawn inspiration from their counterparts in the Soviet Union, adopting similar stylistic elements and narrative approaches. While the term “science fiction” in English conveys the idea of speculative storytelling, its Russian counterpart, “*научная фантастика*” has been translated into Azerbaijani as “*elmi-fantastika*,” which literally means “scientific fantasy.” This translation, inherited from Russian influence, has led to the amalgamation of scientific literature and literary fantasy under the single term “*elmi-fantastika*.” However, this terminology oversight lacks the nuanced genre differentiation found in Western literary criticism. In Western discourse, “scientific literature” encompasses narratives rooted in scientific principles and technological advancements, provided they adhere to the laws of nature. Conversely, “fantasy” encompasses narratives that defy the laws of nature, delving into the realm of the supernatural or the non-natural (Abilov, 2016).

Throughout the Soviet period, a notable trend emerged wherein literary critics and writers often blurred the distinctions between “fantasy,” “artistic fiction,” and “science fiction.” Emin Mahmudov, in his 1964 article “Life and Fantasy,” acknowledged the challenge writers face in predicting technological advancements, noting that high-tech innovations often outpaced the publication of books. Consequently, Mahmudov suggested that depicting voyages into undiscovered space emerged as an effective strategy for captivating readers’ attention (Mahmudov, 1964).

Analyses have highlighted intriguing parallels between Mahmudov’s narrative creations and those of renowned authors such as Arthur Conan Doyle and Alexander Belyaev. For instance, Mahmudov’s tale “Sea of Darkness” exhibits resonances with Doyle’s “The Lost World,” while motifs in Mahmudov’s “The King of Turtles” echo themes found in Belyaev’s “The Head of Professor Dowell.” Similarly, Mahmudov’s “The Atlantean Girl” explores thematic terrain akin to Belyaev’s “The Last Atlantean.” Much like Asimov, Emin Mahmudov crafted various literary works tailored for student audiences, delving into themes such as space exploration, distant futures, and robotics. Namiq Abdullayev, on the other hand, drew inspiration from the works of acclaimed authors such as Poul Anderson, H.G. Wells, and Arthur C. Clarke, infusing his narratives with echoes of their visionary ideas. This convergence of themes and motifs between Azerbaijani fantasists and their international counterparts underscores the cross-pollination of ideas within the science fiction genre. As Azerbaijani writers engaged with global literary currents, they contributed novel perspectives and dialogues with established literary traditions, enriching the landscape of speculative fiction for readers worldwide (Omarov, 2003).

“The Anthology of World Science Fiction Literature, Volume I” and “The Anthology of World Science Fiction Literature, Volume II” were published in 2013-2014 (Orucov & Orucova, 2013; Orucov & Orucova, 2014). Primarily, science fiction works in English and Russian have been translated, bringing H.G. Wells’s “The Invisible Man,” E. Norton’s “Star Born,” E. Hamilton’s “Star Kings,” A. E. van Vogt’s “The World of Null-A,” Arthur C. Clarke’s “The Light of Other Days,” Murray Leinster’s “First Contact,” Alexander Belyaev’s “Amphibian Man,” “The Head of Professor Dowell,” Alexei Tolstoy’s “The Hyperboloid of Engineer Garin,” and other science fiction works to Azerbaijani readers, enriching their thought process. Unfortunately, none of the works of Azerbaijani science fiction writers have been translated into English.

Lastly, in 2016, a book titled “Fantastic Almanac” was published in Russian to support young writers’ activities in the fantasy and science fiction fields.

Unlike other Muslim countries, high-quality works have been created in the genre of science fiction in our country. Although the number of such works is limited, talented writers who have achieved remarkable success in the field of science fiction include Namig Abdullayev, Allahverdi Eminov, Gabil Ahmadov, Emin Mahmudov, Ibrahim Huseynov, the only female writer Elmira Zamanova, as well as two of the youngest authors, Lala Hasanova and Vusal Nuru. In the ‘ocean of literature’ created by these writers, readers continuously adjust their sails to the wind, exploring new horizons alongside them.

The distinctive features and various challenges of science fiction, along with examples of national science fiction literature, have been thoroughly analyzed in the research of prominent Azerbaijani literary scholars and esteemed professors such as Naile Sadiqova, Jamal Ahmadov, Zeydulla Agayev, and others. Additionally, the genre of science fiction in the literature of the 20th century in Russia, England, the USA, and Azerbaijan has been the subject of detailed study.

Emin Mahmudov: A Journey Through Literary Pursuits and Public Service

Emin Mahmudov, born on January 1, 1925, in Goychay, Azerbaijan, led a diverse career encompassing literary pursuits and public service. Initially educated at School Number 1 in his hometown, Mahmudov proceeded to teach at an orphanage following his graduation. His path then led him to military service from 1943 to 1945, after which he pursued higher education.

From 1945 to 1950, Mahmudov immersed himself in academic pursuits at the University of Foreign Languages, ultimately earning a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism. While his literary journey began with poetry, Mahmudov’s interests gradually shifted towards science fiction and literary translation. His first foray into science fiction literature, “RT-1,” debuted in 1952 on the pages of “Pioneer” magazine. The year 1953 marked the publication of his initial collection of science fiction stories, titled “City of the Sun,” released under the auspices of the “Ushaqganjnashr” publication (Haciyeva, 2016).

Mahmudov’s impact on the literary landscape was multifaceted, evidenced by his diverse roles such as a censor at the Main Press Office in Baku (1948-1952), executive secretary of the “Azerbaijani Woman” magazine (1955-1966), and literary operative at the “Literature and Art” newspaper (1953-1954). Acknowledgment of his commendable service came in the form of several prestigious medals. His admission to the Azerbaijan Writers’ Union in 1954 marked a significant milestone in his literary journey, cementing his standing within the Azerbaijani literary sphere. His tenure as the executive secretary of the “Azerbaijan Pioneer” newspaper (1967-1971) and subsequent position as a senior editor at the Azerbaijan State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (1973-1982) further highlighted his varied engagements in media and communication.

Transitioning to the entertainment sector in the eighties, Mahmudov assumed editorial responsibilities for the “Saturday Meetings” program on Azerbaijani television, collaborating with director Sadraddin Badirkhanov. Renowned for his amiable demeanor and keen sense of humor, Mahmudov garnered admiration from peers and artists alike. A deep-seated commitment to reading and extensive publication of articles across various newspapers honed Mahmudov’s artistic understanding and refined his expressive style.

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Mahmudov’s financial circumstances deteriorated, prompting his emigration to the United States with his wife and family. Mammad Oruc (2009) fondly recalls his friend, Emin, who moved to America to connect his sons with their relatives overseas. Mammad wrote that Emin planned to return for his 85th birthday celebration at the Natavan Club but mentioned the high cost of traveling to his home country. While his friends Namig Abdullayev and Ahmad Khaspoladov focused on science fiction, Emin preferred writing stories for kids. According to Mammad Oruc, Emin’s books were top-rated among schoolchildren from the 1960s to the 1980s. Emin also made ends meet by translating. Despite the challenges, Emin enjoyed life in America, where hard work was valued.

In his later years, Mahmudov resided in the United States, where he passed away on August 31, 2010, in Santa Monica. I personally contacted his son, asking about Mahmudov’s work in America. His son said he would not write a lot as he was already old and had only a couple of drafts on their old computer. His enduring legacy serves as a testament to his profound influence on Azerbaijani literature and cultural heritage. Acknowledging his literary contributions, Masud A. (1960), a literary critic, lauded Mahmudov as a progressive writer and astute engineer, heralding his pivotal role in steering Azerbaijani literature toward new horizons.

Aydin Khan Abilov (2004) asserts that the most reliable source of information regarding science fiction in the Azerbaijani language is Emin Mahmudov’s article “Life and Fiction,” published in the “Literature and Art” newspaper. Despite its predominantly scientific nature rather than purely literary criticism, the article offers a fresh perspective on the poetics of fiction during the period in which it was written.

Mahmudov initiates his discourse by suggesting that reducing science fiction merely to a genre of literature undermines its broader significance, stating, "To understand science fiction only in the sense of fiction literature is, in fact, to downplay the meaning of this concept. Fiction is a person's dream" (Abilov, 2004, p. 188) Mahmudov endeavors to elucidate this concept in his article, referencing authors such as Herbert Wells, Jules Verne, A.K. Doyle, and Jack London and illustrating how their imaginative ideas and hypotheses have manifested in reality. He contends, "It is possible to show that the events described in their works have already become a reality of life" (Abilov, 2004, p. 189).

Emin Mahmudov's Literary Catalog

Emin Mahmudov's literary contributions encompass diverse works spanning various genres, primarily targeting children and young adults. His bibliography includes several notable publications: "Aurora in Mugan" (1954); "Ship of the Universe" (1957); "The Sky of Venus is on Fire" (1960); "Faded Sounds" (1964); "How Iron Began to Walk" (1967); "Sea of Darkness" (1972); "The Stars are Waiting for Us Ahead" (1975); "Seeking an Eternal Melody" (1979); "High Stage" (1985); "Breath of the Day" (1986); "Daughter of Atlantis" (1986).

Additionally, in 2013, a collection of Mahmudov's short stories titled "South of the Astronauts Bay" was published in Yekaterinburg, comprising ten stories. Mahmudov's works have also been featured in separate publications such as "RT-1" (1952), "Cloud Medicine" (1964), "Phenomenon" (1964), "Merciless Judge" (1966), "Symphony of Life" (1966), "Voice of the Earth" (1968), "South of the Astronauts Bay" (1968), "To the Question of..." (1970), "Royal Gambit" (1974), and "Turtle" (1974).

Notably, Mahmudov's first book, "City of the Sun," comprised seven short stories, including "RT-1," "Incident in the Apartment," "The Far Village," "The Secret of Volga," and "Microtelescope." Additionally, "Faded Sounds" featured stories such as "Stone Gingerbread," "Man in Black," "Strange Memory," and "Stormy Ocean is Silent." Furthermore, Mahmudov's play "Lucky Ring" is structured into four acts and six parts. His works have been translated into Russian by notable translators such as Lukodyanov, Isai Borisovich, and Shapiro, Rafael Borisovich.

Emin Mahmudov's involvement extended beyond his own literary creations; he also undertook the translation of various works, including: V. Zakharchenko's "Conversation with the Electric Brain" (1970); V. Levi's "Following the Idea" (1972); R. Bakhtamov's "The Law is the Law" (1974); Z. Seyidmammadova's "Pilot's Notes" (1976); "Shishpapak" (Story) (1964); "Lightning in the Mountains" (Story) (1967); "Rain Song" (1968); "Narratives and Stories" (1976); "Grandfather's Tale" (Narrative and Stories) (1978); "Telegram" (Narratives and Stories) (1982). These translated works were published in Baku under the imprint of the "Youth" publishing house, with varying page counts reflecting the length and complexity of each text.

Literary Analysis of Mahmudov's Works

The author's collection of nine books comprises stories and narratives dedicated to a wide array of topics. He articulates his works with a profound sense of humanity, love for individuals, and credibility. His works address contemporary issues of chemistry, physics, and astronomy (Soltanova, 2010). A notable aspect of interest in his works is the author's comprehensive understanding of the subjects he undertakes, enabling him to express them in both scientific and literary dimensions with depth and richness.

Central to Mahmudov's narrative oeuvre is the theme of extending the human lifespan through high-speed space travel. This motif finds resonance in the fate of the character Grona, conceived by Mahmudov's predecessor. Mahmudov intricately weaves this theme throughout his works, emphasizing the longevity of the Soviet system, as evidenced by the portrayal of Azerbaijani compatriots navigating spaceships centuries into the future, with their endeavors guided by Russian counterparts. This portrayal reflects Mahmudov's belief in the enduring legacy of the Soviet regime, echoing sentiments expressed by his predecessor.

In Azerbaijani literature, the topic of cosmic exploration was initially broached by E. Mahmudov. In his narrative "The Spaceship," the author presents a series of prognostications concerning humanity's cosmic future. Specifically, the writer anticipates the historical timeline of lunar exploration and the notion of discovering water on Mars. Furthermore, Mahmudov's prescient anticipation of finding water in liquid form on the surface of Mars represents a subject matter previously unexplored within the scientific fiction community (Abdullayeva, 2022).

Mahmudov highlights the rapid advancement of modern technology, expressing skepticism that any idea, once conceived, will remain purely fantastical before being materialized into a work of art. Consequently, he suggests that writers prefer to explore the realms of space for inspiration, as the space age presents boundless opportunities for imagination. Mahmudov distinguishes between a writer's imagination and a scientist's, emphasizing that while both are essential, their aims and methods differ. He notes that in the twentieth

century, impressing individuals has become increasingly challenging, leading to the emergence of “ultra-modern” Western fantasies characterized by sensational elements such as cannibal trees and flying saucers. In contrast, Mahmudov advocates for a more grounded approach in science fiction that stimulates contemplation about a brighter future for humanity. He posits that actual development in science fiction lies not in astonishing readers but in encouraging them to envision a more optimistic tomorrow (Omarov, 2003).

Mahmudov’s thematic focus extends to profound societal concerns, including environmental degradation, the human condition amidst conflict, gender equality, and the intricacies of interpersonal relationships. Reflecting broader trends in global science fiction literature, Mahmudov’s narratives also grapple with the ramifications of planetary destruction, ecological crises, and the prospect of interstellar contact. Examples such as Mahmudov’s “Turbulence” underscore ecological themes’ prominence in Azerbaijani literature.

Central to Mahmudov’s narrative prowess is his remarkable command over subject matter, seamlessly integrating scientific and artistic elements with a robust narrative structure characterized by compelling plotlines and logical coherence. Mahmudov’s writing style exhibits remarkable clarity and simplicity, devoid of excessive scientific jargon or abstract musings. Instead, he presents innovative scientific concepts in an accessible and engaging manner, deftly intertwining them with natural language and vivid imagery.

Furthermore, Mahmudov’s narratives often explore the complexities of interspecies communication and the readiness of society to engage with beings from other worlds, as depicted in stories like “Daughter of Atlantis” and “Ship of the Universe.” Additionally, Mahmudov’s works delve into the unresolved mysteries of various scientific disciplines, as evidenced by narratives like “City of the Sun” and “Polar Shine in Mugan.”

In Mahmudov’s narratives, protagonists such as Arif serve as conduits for storytelling, while the author assumes the chief investigator role, as seen in “Daughter of Atlantis.” Through Mahmudov’s multifaceted narratives, readers are invited to contemplate the intricate interplay between humanity, science, and the broader cosmos, offering profound insights into the human condition and the challenges that lie ahead.

Gulsum Ahmadova (2014) conducted a nuanced analysis of the intersection between English literary classics and Azerbaijani science fiction, with a particular focus on the narratives of Emin Mahmudov. That study highlighted a significant departure from prior scholarship, representing the inaugural exploration of Western literary influences on Azerbaijani science fiction. Central to Ahmadova’s examination is the identification of parallels between Mahmudov’s narrative “Sea of Darkness” and the English novel “The Lost World” by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, illuminating a shared thematic emphasis on the preservation of an ancient living world submerged within an expansive subterranean aquatic environment, evocative of Mahmudov’s English precursor.

Furthermore, Ahmadova (2014) discerns instances wherein Mahmudov’s narratives intersect with renowned literary works. For example, she observes that “The Royal Turtle” draws inspiration from A. Belyayev’s “Professor Dowell’s Head,” while “Daughter of Atlantis” explores themes resonant with the literary composition “The Last Resident of Atlantis” of the same writer.

Ahmadova’s (2014) critical appraisal of Emin Mahmudov’s literary oeuvre underscores its multifaceted thematic breadth and profound humanistic orientation. Mahmudov’s narratives, spanning nine volumes, traverse a diverse array of subjects imbued with a palpable sense of empathy and advocacy for the human condition. Delving into contemporary issues across the domains of chemistry, physics, and astronomy, Mahmudov’s characters exhibit a blend of realistic pragmatism and cognitive depth.

Mahmudov’s literary endeavors extended to educational realms, promoting scientific and technical curiosity among the youth through informative publications highlighting advancements in cosmonautics, nuclear energy, oceanography, and the petroleum industry. As an esteemed figure in Azerbaijani science fiction literature, Mahmudov’s legacy is commemorated by educational initiatives in children’s libraries, underscoring the enduring significance of his works. Similar to A. Azimov Emin Mahmudov authored numerous works tailored for school-aged readers, exploring themes such as space exploration, distant futures, and robotics. It is known that Mahmudov published his books for schoolchildren, such as “Sun City,” “How Iron Opened Its Feet,” and “Sea of Darkness.”

Over the years, Mahmudov demonstrated remarkable growth in his creative prowess, evident in works such as “Symphony of Life,” “Ship of the Universe,” and “The Skies of Venus are on Fire,” released separately in 1957 and 1960. Notably, Mahmudov’s magnum opus “Daughter of Atlantis” captivated generations of young readers with its vivid depiction of epic scenes, remaining an enduring hallmark of Azerbaijani science fiction.

Readers of Emin Mahmudov’s “Spaceship” (1957) and “The Skies of Venus are on Fire” published between 1957 and 1961, find themselves acquainted with a grand civilization submerged in the waters of the Atlantic Ocean-Atlantis-as well as learn about the phenomenon of

lunar gravity being six times weaker than that on Earth. Within these narratives, Mahmudov portrays the Burmanid people, who have traveled from another world to Earth, showcasing their intellectual and physical distinctiveness from Earthlings. They marvel at the lack of any transparent coverings on Earthlings' heads and the accelerated passage of time on Earth compared to their home planet. Moreover, they become aware of other planets, such as Mercury, Jupiter, Venus, and Mars, which orbit the sun besides Earth, as well as gain information about the planet Phaeton, which has fragmented due to reasons still unknown to Earth's science, transforming into cosmic debris (Ahmadova, 2014). In "Greetings to the Sun," events transpiring on Earth and in our contemporary times are elucidated through the perspectives of two extraterrestrial beings. In Mahmudov's works dedicated to the planet Panquea and the novel "New Star," influences from both Mahmudov's work and Ivan Yefremov's "The Andromeda Nebula" are readily apparent.

Emin Mahmudov's oeuvre encompasses a series of narratives that have captured the attention of readers across various age groups. Among these, "The Phenomenon," "The Formula of Impossibility," "Symphony," "From the Clouds to the Cure," and others stand out. One such narrative, "The Phenomenon" (1964), centers around a remarkable student girl named Nilufar, whose extraordinary ability emerges following a severe car accident, resulting in long-term memory loss. However, through experimental medical intervention, she begins to exhibit a phenomenal memory. The central protagonist effortlessly acquires proficiency in multiple languages, memorizing every piece of information, article, and calculation akin to a computer. Nilufar recounts her story to the reader, revealing that an unknown experiment was conducted on a girl in the hospital. Professor Gemberov's experiment is novel and mysterious yet poses no danger to Nilufar. "Gemberov gave me various questions and pressed buttons without taking his eyes off the devices' screens. I heard an incomprehensible buzz in my ears. I felt a pleasant warmth in my brain. It was as if they were heating my head with a green light lamp. I fell asleep. After waking up, I memorized the three-line poem Gembrov gave me without any difficulty. After two months of treatment, an unprecedented memory appeared in me" (The Phenomenon, 1964, p. 17).

The question remains unanswered whether this phenomenal memory makes this girl from the rural extraordinary, superhuman, or not. The ability to retain every detail in memory is not an ordinary human trait, but does Mahmudov's protagonist elevate the human race? Strengthening and extending memory has always been an elusive desire for ordinary individuals, and in the realm of science fiction, this has been realized. Through the example of Nilufar, it becomes evident that a phenomenal memory does not overload the brain and does not negatively affect human psychology; instead, it provides comfort and ease in life. Nilufar quickly learns Russian and Latin languages and becomes a beacon of hope for ordinary people aspiring to learn languages. However, another question arises—does the current state of affairs truly bring happiness to Nilufar? It is precisely through her extraordinary memory that Nilufar secures employment, advances in life, and achieves success. Ultimately, at the end of the narrative, it becomes apparent that experiments on human memory are not limited to our country alone but continue in other countries as well, remaining shrouded in secrecy.

Emin Mahmudov's works "Prisoners of Neptune" and "Turbulence" exhibit a significant thematic affinity, with many episodes bearing complete analogies. The events narrated in "Sea of Darkness" are recounted by the protagonist Arif, whereas in "Daughter of Atlantis," the author himself assumes the role of the primary narrator. Within these narratives, the issue of the transience of human life amidst rapid cosmic voyages is foregrounded against the backdrop of the character Qrona, created by Emin Mahmudov.

The vivid depiction of the epic scenes featuring the Atlantis continent in "Daughter of Atlantis" has significantly contributed to the aesthetic enjoyment of multiple generations of young readers in the republic over half a century. This enduring work remains unparalleled in its depiction of science fiction within Azerbaijan, representing a pinnacle achievement in the genre's literary landscape to date (Omarov, 2013).

Conclusion

The development of the science fiction genre in Azerbaijan reflects a distinctive narrative journey, marked by its late emergence in comparison to global counterparts but enriched by creative exploration and literary contributions. Despite challenges such as the limited presence of advanced technological industries and the genre's niche status, Azerbaijani science fiction has succeeded in carving a unique space, especially among Muslim nations. From early works like Yusif Vazir Chamanzaminli's "The City of the Future" to the contributions of modern authors, the genre has evolved, balancing speculative thought with cultural and political realities.

The analysis presented in this article demonstrates that while Azerbaijani science fiction has not yet reached the prominence it holds in Western and Russian traditions, it remains a vital platform for imaginative inquiry and societal reflection. The efforts of talented writers and literary scholars have propelled the genre forward, fostering intellectual engagement and inspiring future generations. However, as recent studies indicate, the genre faces new challenges in the 21st century, such as diminished popularity, limited promotion, and competition with fantasy literature. Addressing these challenges will require strategic efforts from publishers, educators, and cultural

Despite challenges, Azerbaijani science fiction holds a unique place among Muslim nations, offering high-quality narratives that inspire readers to explore imaginative horizons. This chapter underscores the importance of cross-cultural literary exchange, as well as the need to promote Azerbaijani science fiction domestically and internationally to ensure its continued growth and relevance.

In conclusion, Emin Mahmudov's life and work stand as a testament to his enduring impact on Azerbaijani literature, particularly within the realm of science fiction. Through his imaginative narratives, Mahmudov entertained readers, challenged societal norms, and explored profound existential themes. His exploration of cosmic voyages, human consciousness, and the intersection of science and humanity reflected a deep curiosity about the universe and the human condition. Mahmudov's legacy inspires generations of readers and writers, leaving an indelible mark on Azerbaijani literary tradition. As a pioneer in the genre of Azerbaijani science fiction, Mahmudov's contributions remain both influential and enduring, ensuring his place among the literary luminaries of his time.

institutions to revitalize public interest in science fiction and promote national works alongside international classics. Ultimately, Azerbaijani science fiction holds the potential to thrive further, provided it receives the support necessary to reach broader audiences and foster a deeper appreciation for the imaginative possibilities it offers.

While Azerbaijani writers initially drew inspiration from Russian and Western literary traditions, they gradually developed a distinct narrative style that reflects national concerns and cultural nuances. Prominent authors like Emin Mahmudov, Namig Abdullayev, and Elmira Zamanova have enriched the genre with works that resonate with international science fiction themes, such as space exploration, technological innovation, and speculative futures.

The blending of "scientific fantasy" with narrative fiction, inherited from Russian influence, demonstrates both the opportunities and challenges faced by Azerbaijani science fiction writers. Although limited in number, these authors have produced works that captivate readers and explore universal themes, contributing meaningfully to the broader landscape of speculative literature. However, the lack of genre differentiation and insufficient translation of Azerbaijani works into English remain obstacles to global recognition.

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