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THE ERA OF INDEPENDENCE AS THE INCEPTION OF A NEW POETIC PARADIGM

The article examines the period of independence, when Azerbaijani poetry entered a new and dynamic phase characterized by extensive formal and genre studies. The analysis showed that under the influence of numerous global processes both within the country and internationally, significant transformations occurred in the thematic and ideological dimensions of poetry, which led to the emergence of new trends and creative inclinations. As a result, it became clear that the shifts deeply affected formal experiments in poetic expression, which led to the emergence of distinctive features in the poetic system. It is determined that the emergence of this new poetic stage in the era of independence was largely formed in harmony with the requirements of the emerging socio-political environment. It is concluded that, as in all spheres, this period clearly declared its influence on literary processes. The findings regarding not only the evolution of themes, images and genres in Azerbaijani literature but also the transformation of its very character and key attributes of development showed that the complex set of issues generated by this era, such as the collapse of the Soviet regime, the impact of global and domestic events on poetic thought, the painful traumas of the Karabakh conflict, the themes of martyrs and refugees, the figure of the warrior, the struggle for freedom and the celebration of independence, became central themes of literary discourse. The analysis showed that these issues catalyzed shifts in thematic and ideological paradigms, contributed to poetic innovation and influenced various creative tendencies, subsequently becoming central points of critical literary analysis. It has been proven that it is an undeniable historical reality that literature, especially modern literature, has consistently become an integral component of major historical transformations and new ideological processes throughout the world. From this perspective, it can be confidently stated that the socio-political upheavals that began in the late 1980s, both in the world and in the Soviet system, played a key role in the emergence of new literary movements. It is noted that the people's continuous struggle for liberation from the oppressive structures of the previous system and their willingness to endure sacrifices in this quest made the creation of a new literature not just a cultural aspiration, but an imperative shaped by historical necessity. It is concluded that this struggle gave a powerful impetus to literary expression, emphasizing the need to interpret historical events through the prism of lived historical realities, which became a fundamental responsibility of Azerbaijani literature, and especially its most dynamic and responsive form – poetry.

Key words: independence, poetry, new thinking, history, form, genre, exploration.

Introduction. Several years prior to the dissolution of the USSR, the journal *Ganjlik (Youth)* commenced its publication in 1988, followed by the emergence of the journal *Khazar (Caspian)* in 1989. Without considering the role of these journals within the context of the post-independence literary period, including their place within the history of contemporary Azerbaijani poetry, it would be impossible to conduct a theoretical classification of the new poetic phase that emerged after independence. Both literary journals contributed to the creation of distinct literary spaces that facilitated the development of new aesthetic evaluations from a theoretical perspective. In particular, *Ganjlik (Youth)* presented the literary movement in alignment with the national movement, thereby reflecting the spirit of freedom within society. This parallelism

was accompanied by the aesthetic tendencies prevalent in modern world literature, which began to take root within Azerbaijani poetry. The decline of socialist realism in Azerbaijani literature coincided with the publication of this journal. New literary trends began to take shape particularly around this journal during this period. In the second half of the 1990s, the *Dunya (World)* journal also emerged within this literary discourse.

Nonetheless, the process began earlier, between the 1960s and 1980s, within Azerbaijani poetry. The national leader not only created conditions for the free expression of independent thought in literature but also facilitated the development of literary trends. The influence of Soviet traditions, particularly the interference of the Communist Party in the literary

process, was minimized. It is noteworthy that the national leader, Heydar Aliyev, emphasized that the Azerbaijani people are a nation that holds poetry and literature in high regard, underscoring that poetry and literature play an integral role in the spiritual lives of individuals and the moral fabric of the nation, society, and the people. Even during the Soviet era, as the country's leader, Aliyev protected notable literary figures such as Rasul Rza, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh, Sohrab Tahir, Aliagha Kurchayli, Khalil Rza Uluturk, and Mammad Araz. These figures contributed to the formation of national consciousness, the struggle for independence, and the enhancement of national memory, shielding them from systemic pressures. Beginning in the early 1960s, Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh's ability to convey social-philosophical thought in his lyrical poetry gradually established him as one of the foremost creators of 20th-century Azerbaijani civic lyric poetry [28, p. 6].

Degree of Problem Elaboration. The emergence of the new poetic phase in post-independence Azerbaijani poetry has been studied by scholars such as Yashar Garayev [31; 32], Bakir Nabiyeu [41], Imamverdi Abilov [15; 16; 17], Elchin [13], Isa Habibbayli [27; 28], Shirin Dil Alishanli [5], Rahim Aliyev [20], Vagif Yusifli [54; 55], Cavan Shir Yusifli [51; 52; 53], Tehran Alishanoglu [21; 22], Tahira Mammad [39], Gurban Bayramov [7], Elnara Akimova [2; 3], Nargiz Jabbarli [10; 11], Hijran Nasibova [42; 43], Sudaba Agabalayeva [1], Asad Jahangir [12], Almaz Binnetova [8], Yaşar Gasimbeyli [33], Alizadeh Asgerli [23; 24; 25], Vagif Allahverdiyev [4], Tofiq Abdulhasanov [14], and Tofiq Guliyev [36], who have examined these issues in their respective research fields and put forward important scholarly propositions. Moreover, certain gaps exist in the analysis of Azerbaijani poetry's ideological content, genre, and form, which could further elucidate the essence of contemporary literary processes and their role in the broader cultural development of society.

Objectives and Purpose. This study aims to investigate the search for genre and form in post-independence Azerbaijani poetry and to examine the ideological, thematic, genre, and formal changes that contemporary Azerbaijani poetry has undergone since the 1990s. The following objectives have been set:

To characterize the period of independence as the beginning of a new poetic phase and to identify its unique characteristics.

To examine the profound shifts in the consciousness of poets and their manifestation in the "taste" of poetry across various genres.

To study the influence of the new socio-political environment on poetic thought and to explore both traditional and emerging creative directions.

To trace the manifestation of poetic explorations in new genres and forms.

Methodology. This article employs typological-comparative and structural analysis methodologies.

Main Body: The New Conditions and Environment of the Independence Period.

One of the key characteristics of each new phase of artistic thought is the addition of new national and spiritual treasures to the existing ones. This is a demand of the times. As a result of historical development, many elements that no longer prove valid are consigned to history, while new inquiries arising from the demands of the era gain the strength to endure. This law-governed process of development is one of the fundamental characteristics of the realm of artistic creation. If literary traditions were not enriched with innovative explorations in each renewed period, if new shades and poetic values were not added, the notion of art's progress and modernity would not even be conceivable.

During the period of independence, the new socio-political environment had a profound impact on literature and poetry. Poets succeeded in turning all the processes that occurred into the subject of poetic expression. Even during the Soviet era, prominent literary figures such as Rasul Rza [46], Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh [48], Zalimxan Yagub [50], Aliagha Kurchayli [30], Khalil Rza Uluturk [47], and Mammad Araz [6], who possessed national consciousness and contributed to the formation of Azerbaijani nationalism, the independence struggle, and the awakening of national memory, became key creators of Azerbaijani civic lyric poetry. From the late 1980s onward, the socio-political changes occurring in the world and within the Soviet system precipitated the emergence of a new literature. In this process of change, the continuous struggle of our country and people to free themselves from the undesirable yoke of the system, and their willingness to sacrifice for this cause, made the creation of new literature a crucial demand of the day. The necessity of assessing a historical event within the very context of that historical reality emerged as a central task for our literature, and particularly for its most dynamic branch-poetry.

The new phase of our independence poetry, initially founded by figures such as Mahammad Hadi [40], Huseyn Javid [40], Ahmed Cavad [40], and Almas Ildirim [40], and later continued by Rasul Rza [46] and Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh [48], was represented in its early stages by the poets Balash Azeroglu [40],

Aliagha Kurchaylı [30], Sohrab Tahir [40], Mammad Araz [6], Mammad Ismayıl [29], Musa Yagub [49], Sabir Rustamkhanlı [44; 45], and Fikret Goja [34]. These poets, first and foremost, expressed the national awakening and call for struggle of their people and country through their poetry.

Azadlığı dustaq,
taleyı yad əllərdə oyuncaq,
dili ali məktəblərdə yasaq,
səadəti qaçaq –
Let us imprison freedom,
let our fate be a toy in foreign hands,
let us ban language in universities,
let us flee happiness –
(R. Rza) [46, p. 13].

As always, poetry plays the role of connecting the past and the future in all circumstances. In this regard, the critic Aydin Mammadov notes: “Just as there is no poetry devoid of roots and tradition, it is also inconceivable for poetry to exist in a particular period without engaging with the future, ceasing to exist at any given point. Even when a language gradually loses its broad societal communicative function, the rich heritage and poetic tradition created in that language continues to preserve itself for an extended period, playing a crucial role in determining the ways and developmental perspectives of the poetic worldview of both the people to whom it belongs and other nations” [37, p. 9–10].

Indeed, one of the factors that opened perspectives for literary revival in the 1960s was Khrushchev’s policy of liberalization. However, despite Khrushchev’s failure to endorse aesthetic developments in art or allow the rise of new trends, it was precisely during this period that Azerbaijan’s poetry saw a significant increase in modernist tendencies. The first initiative came with Rasul Rza’s non-traditional approach to the Soviet man in the poems “İnsan” (“The Man”) and “Ölən nəğmə” (“My Dying Song”). For the first time since 1920, the nihilistic, pessimistic mood of the Soviet man became prominent in Azerbaijani poetry. As the critic Imamverdi Abilov wrote: “The lyrical hero in Rasul Rza’s poems “The Man” and “My Dying Song”, in terms of his worldview, societal position, and mode of thought, is entirely different from the person we encountered in his earlier works – an individual whose life was filled with intense struggle, whose heart was equally filled with both hatred and love. He may, in fact, be the opposite. The combative, optimistic, cheerful, and creative spirit seen in his previous poems gives way here to a submissive, pessimistic, and somewhat fatalistic individual. In the poem “The Man”, the author poses the question of

the relationship between death and man, between life and living. Death enters the room of the person: ‘I am death, I have arrived,’ it declares. The person, in turn, accepts death with great courtesy, rises, and without hesitation, joins death in its journey” [15, p. 98].

During these years, the concept of freedom in Azerbaijani poetry also began to be reinterpreted. The poem “Azadlıq” (“Freedom”) by Khalil Rza, written in 1960, was a vivid expression of this.

Azadlığı istəmirəm zərrə-zərrə, qıram-qıram,
Qolumdakı zəncirlər qıram gərək, qıram-qıram...
I don’t want freedom, bit by bit, I’ll break it,
I have to break the chains on my arm, I’ll break it... [47, p. 34].

Or, in the politically profound and simultaneously modernist-leaning poem “Yedək gəmi” (“Tugboat”) written by Aliagha Kurchaylı in 1966, the open call for independence was expressed through an aesthetic form of thought:

Arxada sürünən bir ömür boşdur.
Harda alqışlanıb gerilik, harda? Yedəkdə salamat
qalmaqdan xoşdur,
Müstəqil qərq olmaq fırtınalarda.

A life that crawls behind is empty.
Where is the praise and the backlash, where?
It is better to stay safe in tow,
To be independent in the storms. [30, p. 39]

The literary scholar Yashar Garayev writes: “The period between 1985 and 1992 cannot be considered a vacuum or an ‘ozone gap’ in terms of its role in leading to today’s historical finale in both literature and criticism: in politics and ideology, the social, public, and literary events of this period directly served as the threshold for the current stage” [32, p. 515].

The Independence Period as a New Poetic Stage.

Naturally, the beginning of the independence period marked the start of a new poetic stage, one that harmoniously aligned with the demands of the new socio-political environment. The period and the new stage, as in all other fields, clearly asserted its influence on the literary process. This was not only the case in poetry; the same process was evident in prose examples and even in all fields of literary studies. Serious scholarly conclusions began to emerge regarding the changes in the subjects, characters, and genres of Azerbaijani literature, and more broadly, the overall character and primary developmental features of the literature. It should be noted that this reformist thinking, the promotion of renewal as a crucial objective, became the subject of research for many years.

For instance, Parvana Isayeva, in her article *The Formation and Development of Modernism*, writes: “At the crossroads of centuries, the crisis within the society and the individual undergoing alienation, with a new sense of the world and worldview, created a need for a new type of literature and new types of analytical methods to explain this literature” [19, p. 244], while Tahira Mammad, in her article *The Theory of Independence, The Independence of Theory*, notes that “In recent years, the structure of artistic works, literary movements, the relationship between literature and art, literature and philosophy, the essence of literature, and the comparison of general and national literary structures have become the primary issues attracting the attention of theorists in Azerbaijan” [19, p. 64].

The period and society demanded that its poets not view themselves as mere bystanders to the socio-political processes and the new phase unfolding in the history of their country. At a time when the fate of the nation and the country they belonged to was in question, “the poet’s duty was to write about it, to write so that people could endure, to strengthen hearts, to remind of feelings of courage, honor, hope, pride, and sacrifice... In such a phase, the poet’s voice cannot be a mere echo; it must be a support, a foundation, and the pillar for victory and for enabling humanity to endure” [18, p. 154].

The literary process activated by the new socio-political environment of the 1980s and 1990s clearly advanced this trend with dignity. The first poetic stage of the independence period began in Azerbaijani poetry with the protest-filled, mobilizing voice of the national poet Bakhtiyar Vahabzadeh’s poem *Şəhidlər* (Martyrs). The poetic-political interpretation of the historical January 20 massacre was conveyed through the language of *Martyrs*:

Doğranıb töküldük biz çilik-çilik,
Stalin ölsə də, yuxarılarda
Hələ də yaşayır stalinçilik

We are crushed and crushed,
Although Stalin is dead,
Stalinism still lives on above [48, p. 108]

In the early 1990s, one of the foremost figures in Turkish nationalist poetry, Niyazi Yildirim Ganjosmanoglu, reflecting on the social and aesthetic role of Azerbaijani poetry, remarked: “If I encounter a profound awakening of the people in Azerbaijan today, literature, poetry, and the writers have contributed to it. Literature possesses a distinctive quality; when necessary, what one articulates is contingent upon

one’s talent, intuition, and, to put it succinctly, the very nature of one’s literary existence. It is superfluous to utter words that are not required by the people. The poet or writer must direct their message toward the sentiments awakened in the populace and convey their words accordingly” [26, p. 18].

Khalil Rza Uluturk, as a resolute artist who engaged in systematic and sustained efforts for the freedom and national ideals of the Azerbaijani people, “was among the most militant and principled figures within the cultural leadership of the independence movement. Beginning in 1988, he initiated a tenacious and unwavering struggle against Armenian chauvinism and Russian imperialism, spearheaded revolutionary actions across Azerbaijan’s regions, advanced programmatic objectives, and urged the populace to mobilize” [25, p. 3–4].

Khalil Rza Uluturk’s oeuvre, as a whole, occupies a distinct and significant position in the history of Azerbaijani literature, serving as a pivotal voice in the movement toward national independence. His poetry, particularly his political lyricism, is unequivocally directed toward the collective national consciousness:

Vur-çatdasın içində elə bilmə ki, təksən,
Yer də, göy də sənindir,
Sən qalib gələcəksən,
Sən qalib gələcəksən.

Don’t think you’re alone in the midst of your struggle,

The earth and the sky are yours,
You will win,
You will win. [47, p. 103]

During this period, these verses, which encapsulated the collective spirit of the nation and became a source of faith, resilience, and indomitability, were, in essence, an expression of how a man of letters transforms into an “armed soldier” at a decisive moment. Khalil Rza Uluturk vehemently conveyed his defiance to those who sought to break the will and endurance of the people by imprisoning the poet and subjecting him to interrogation in the Lefortovo prison. In a series of poems addressed to his beloved spouse Firangiz Khanum, penned even from behind the iron bars of Lefortovo, he delivered messages of unwavering faith and fortitude to his nation: “Take off that dark shawl from your head, / My rose, tears must not fall before the wolves!” [47, p. 415].

The ideological energy of poems such as “*Qalx ayağa, Azərbaycan*” (“*Rise, Azerbaijan*”) and “*Babək qılıncı*” (“*Babək’s Sword*”) by the People’s Poet Mammad Araz, written at a time when a new

chapter in the nation's history had begun, and the people had already filled the battleground of the independence struggle [6, p.13–15], played a guiding role in the process of national self-awareness alongside the poetry of Khalil Rza.

Similarly, the works of another poet, Mammad Ismayil – «*Savalanda yatan igid*» (“*The Brave Who Sleeps in Savalan*”) (1983), «*Mən şair deyiləm...*» (“*I Am Not a Poet...*”) (1969), «*Qisas qiyamətə qalmaz...*» (“*Vengeance Shall Not Wait Until Judgment Day...*”) (1984), «*Vətən*» (“*Homeland*”), «*Şah İsmayılın ruhu*» (“*The Spirit of Shah Ismayil*”) (1989), «*Sözüm sənədir, xalqım*» (“*My Words Are for You, My People*”) (1981), and «*Türkün sevgisi*» (“*The Love of the Turk*”) (1991) [29] – resonated as the earliest calls for independence, penetrating the collective consciousness and aligning with the people's spirit of resistance. His poem “*This Blood Will Not Be Left Unavenged*” (1990) [29, p.67] emerged as one of the first carriers of the faith and defiance that laid the foundation for the era of freedom.

During this period, themes of pain and suffering permeated Azerbaijani poetry. The agony of Karabakh never succumbed to sentiments of defeat; instead, the bloodshed, massacres, and the anguish of displacement went beyond merely reflecting the national fate. They also propelled the aesthetic explorations of poetry into a more dynamic phase.

Conclusion. Overall, when examining the classification of the key characteristics that define Azerbaijani poetry in the period of independence – a new poetic phase – we encounter the following landscape: the prominence of themes aimed at the continuous

promotion of the irrevocability of the path leading to freedom and independence as a central mission; the advancement of a mission focused on the elevation of the national spirit through the expression of the emotions and sentiments of our compatriots who became internally displaced persons and refugees due to Armenia's treacherous aggression and the loss of their homeland; the emergence of feelings of despair within the individual, burdened by the social and public issues brought about by these losses, with depressive moods taking precedence, leading to self-isolation from the world and people, spiritual alienation, and an increased tendency to address God – phenomena associated with decadence; the incorporation of the idea of Turkic unity into the poetic discourse, among others.

Research indicates that the period of independence represents a unique phase in Azerbaijan's historical destiny. The collapse of a political system that had maintained its dominance for seventy years, the escalation of processes related to Karabakh, the reality of occupation, the displacement of our compatriots from their native lands, reports of martyrs, and a succession of tragic events – all these factors coincided with the turbulent socio-political upheavals during which our independence emerged.

With the return to power of the national leader Heydar Aliyev in 1993, the independence period entered a new phase. A ceasefire was declared, peace and stability were restored, and the nation managed to overcome profound national and spiritual cataclysms. These developments also led to a revival of enthusiasm and a positive spirit within Azerbaijani poetry.

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Ісмаїлова Ш. ДОБА НЕЗАЛЕЖНОСТІ ЯК ЗАРОДЖЕННЯ НОВОЇ ПОЕТИЧНОЇ ПАРАДИГМИ

У статті розглядається період незалежності, коли азербайджанська поезія вступила в нову динамічну фазу, що характеризується широкими формальними та жанровими дослідженнями. Аналіз показав, що під впливом численних глобальних процесів як усередині країни, так і на міжнародному рівні відбулися суттєві трансформації в тематичному та ідейному вимірах поезії, що призвело до появи нових течій і творчих нахилів. У результаті з'ясувалося, що зрушення глибоко торкнулися формальних експериментів у поетичному вираженні, що призвело до появи відмінних рис у поетичній системі. Визначено, що становлення цього нового поетичного етапу в добу незалежності значною

мірою формувалося в гармонії з вимогами суспільно-політичного середовища, що формувалося. Зроблено висновок, що, як і в усіх сферах, цей період яскраво заявив про свій вплив на літературні процеси. Висновки, що стосуються не тільки еволюції тем, образів і жанрів в азербайджанській літературі, але й трансформації самого її характеру та ключових атрибутів розвитку, показали, що складний набір питань, породжених цією епохою, таких як крах радянського режиму, вплив глобальних і внутрішніх подій на поетичну думку, болючі травми карабаського конфлікту, теми мучеників і біженців, постать воїна, боротьба за свободу і святкування незалежності стали центральними темами літературного дискурсу. Аналіз показав, що ці питання каталізували зміни в тематичних та ідеологічних парадигмах, сприяли поетичному новаторству та впливали на різні творчі тенденції, згодом ставши центральними точками критичного літературного аналізу. Доведено, що література, особливо сучасна, незмінно стає невід'ємною складовою великих історичних трансформацій і нових ідеологічних процесів у всьому світі – це незаперечна історична реальність. З цієї точки зору можна впевнено стверджувати, що суспільно-політичні потрясіння, які почалися наприкінці 1980-х років як у світі, так і в радянській системі, відіграли ключову роль у виникненні нових літературних течій. Зазначається, що безперервна боротьба народу за визволення від гнобительських структур попередньої системи та його готовність йти на жертви в цьому прагненні зробили створення нової літератури не просто культурним прагненням, а імперативом, сформованим історичною необхідністю. Зроблено висновок, що ця боротьба дала потужний поштовх літературному вираженню, підкресливши необхідність інтерпретації історичних подій крізь призму пережитих історичних реалій, що стало фундаментальним обов'язком азербайджанської літератури, особливо її найбільш динамічної та чуйної форми – поезії.

Ключові слова: незалежність, поезія, нове мислення, історія, форма, жанр, розвідка.