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Presentation date: September, 2023

Date of acceptance: January, 2024

Publication date: March, 2024

PERSPECTIVES

ON GENDER IN LITERATURE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE AZERBAIJANI WRITER'S PIONEERING INSIGHTS AND WESTERN COUNTERPARTS

PERSPECTIVAS DE GÉNERO EN LA LITERATURA: UN ESTUDIO COMPARATIVO DE LAS IDEAS PIONERAS DEL ESCRITOR AZERBAIYANO Y SUS HOMÓLOGOS OCCIDENTALES

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Suggested citation (APA, seventh ed.)

Aghabayli, V. (2024). Perspectives on Gender in Literature: A Comparative Study of the Azerbaijani Writer's Pioneering Insights and Western Counterparts. *Universidad y Sociedad*, 16(2), 331-338.

ABSTRACT

This research paper delves into the intricate landscape of gender concerns in literature, focusing on the perspectives of the pioneering Azerbaijani writer J. Mammadguluzadeh in comparison to their Western counterparts. Through a comprehensive examination of the author's works, this study aims to illuminate unique insights into gender dynamics, shedding light on how cultural contexts shape literary expressions of gender. This exploration contributes to the ongoing discourse on gender representation in literature, offering a nuanced understanding of diverse voices and experiences within the realm of literary expression. The article explores the pioneering contributions of J. Mammadguluzadeh, in advocating for women's rights and gender equality in the late XIX and early XX century. Often recognized as the "Eastern Mark Twain," Mammadguluzadeh is known for his satirical and progressive writings that challenged societal norms and traditional gender roles in predominantly conservative Eastern societies. Thus, through an in-depth analysis of his literary works, the article highlights Mammadguluzadeh's unique role as an influential feminist writer in the East, highlighting the challenges he faced as a progressive thinker in a conservative society.

Keywords: Azerbaijani literature, Women's rights, Gender equality, Eastern society, Progressive thinking, Cultural influence

RESUMEN

Este trabajo de investigación profundiza en el intrincado panorama de las preocupaciones de género en la literatura, centrándose en las perspectivas del escritor pionero azerbaiyano J. Mammadguluzadeh en comparación con sus homólogos occidentales. A través de un examen exhaustivo de las obras del autor, este estudio pretende arrojar luz sobre ideas únicas sobre la dinámica de género, arrojando luz sobre cómo los contextos culturales dan forma a las expresiones literarias de género. Esta exploración contribuye al discurso actual sobre la representación de género en la literatura, ofreciendo una comprensión matizada de diversas voces y experiencias dentro del ámbito de la expresión literaria. El artículo explora las contribuciones pioneras de J. Mammadguluzadeh en la defensa de los derechos de las mujeres y la igualdad de género a finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX. A menudo reconocido como el "Mark Twain oriental", Mammadguluzadeh es conocido por sus escritos satíricos y progresistas que desafiaron las normas sociales y los roles tradicionales de género en sociedades orientales predominantemente conservadoras. Así, a través de un análisis en profundidad de sus obras literarias, el artículo destaca el papel único de Mammadguluzadeh como escritora feminista influyente en Oriente, destacando los desafíos que enfrentó como pensador progresista en una sociedad conservadora.

Palabras clave: Literatura azerbaiyana, Derechos de la mujer, Igualdad de género, Sociedad oriental, Pensamiento progresista, Influencia cultural.

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of literature and the promotion of societal change, certain individuals emerge as trailblazers, challenging prevailing norms, interrogating conventions, and advocating for the rights of marginalized communities. Among these luminaries stands Jalil Mammadguluzadeh, a prominent Azerbaijani writer of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Jalil Mammadguluzadeh stands as a pivotal figure in Azerbaijani literature renowned as one of the architects of critical realism within Azerbaijani literary tradition (Barmanbay, 2020). Notably, he carved a niche as an Azerbaijani satirist, writer, pedagogue and the visionary behind the influential satirical periodical, *Molla Nasraddin* (Jamalov, 2020a). His imprint on political satire and literature reverberates across Azerbaijan and its neighboring regions, shaping the cultural landscape profoundly (Roma, 2020). Moreover, Mammadguluzadeh's legacy extends beyond literary realms; he is hailed as one of the earliest champions of women's rights in Azerbaijan (Suleymanova, 2022).

The breadth of Mammadguluzadeh's literary output is staggering. His notable works span a spectrum from the establishment and editorship of *Molla Nasraddin* to theatrical productions like "The Disguised Bridegroom" and "The Cloth Peddler." Additionally, his literary repertoire includes novels such as "The Adventures of a Shabby Gentleman" and "The Educated Fisherman." The reach of his literary influence is far-reaching, evident in translations of his works into diverse languages. Notably, Mammadguluzadeh's pivotal role in shaping Azerbaijani literature is underscored by his establishment of the "Sharqi-Rus" newspaper, despite its short life, and *Molla Nasraddin* magazine which were significant publications in the annals of Azerbaijani enlightenment. His impact on Azerbaijani literature and the dissemination of progressive thought during that epoch was profound, cementing Mammadguluzadeh's status as one of the most prominent intellectuals of his time (Jamalov, 2020b, 2020c).

Nevertheless, while widely acknowledged for his literary prowess, Mammadguluzadeh's role as a feminist defender in the East remains a lesser-explored aspect of his legacy. This article endeavors to illuminate this often-overlooked facet of his work by examining Mammadguluzadeh as a pioneering figure in Eastern feminist discourse. During an era when feminist movements in the Western world were gaining momentum and challenging entrenched gender norms, Mammadguluzadeh embarked on a journey to disrupt the prevailing order within the distinctive socio-cultural milieu of Azerbaijan. His writings, characterized by their intellectual depth and progressive viewpoints, articulated an audacious and early iteration of feminism. Then,

this article not only seeks to uncover the feminist themes within Mammadguluzadeh's oeuvre but also to juxtapose and analyze his ideas vis-à-vis the Western feminist movement of the same period.

By delving into the literary and historical archives of Mammadguluzadeh's works and the broader feminist discourse of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, we endeavor to unearth the nuances and reverberations of his feminist thought in the Eastern context while acknowledging the interconnectedness of the global feminist milieu. This exploration prompts a reassessment of the history of feminism, acknowledging the multiplicity and diverse array of voices that contributed to this enduring social movement. We aim to untangle the intricate interplay between local influences and global currents, ultimately honoring the legacy of a writer who, in his own distinct manner, championed the cause of gender equality and women's rights.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study primarily hinges on a comparative analysis of Mammadguluzadeh's literary corpus and Western feminist discourse, supplemented by historical research techniques to contextualize his works within the socio-cultural milieu of his era. The cornerstone of this investigation comprises Jalil Mammadguluzadeh's own writings, encompassing essays, articles, and treatises addressing gender-related subjects, women's rights, and associated themes. Furthermore, an array of pertinent historical documents, texts, and contemporary feminist literature from Western contexts were meticulously scrutinized for comparative purposes.

The research methodology encompassed various procedural steps: 1) extensive literature review aimed at identifying Mammadguluzadeh's writings pertinent to gender issues, women's rights, gender parity, and feminism, 2) compiling a curated selection of Western feminist literature spanning diverse epochs and ideological spectra.

The Comparative Analysis involved:

- An exhaustive textual scrutiny of Mammadguluzadeh's oeuvre to discern and elucidate feminist themes, ideologies, and arguments and a succinct comparative evaluation of Mammadguluzadeh's feminist perspectives vis-à-vis Western feminist literature, accentuating salient concepts and arguments.
- Historical contextualization to elucidate Mammadguluzadeh's work within the socio-cultural fabric of his epoch.
- Cross-referencing and inter-rater reliability checks to ensure precision and impartiality in data interpretation.

By embracing this comprehensive research paradigm and leveraging a spectrum of sources, this study endeavors to furnish a nuanced comprehension of Jalil Mammadguluzadeh's contributions to feminist ideology in the East, while delineating parallels and disparities between his work and Western feminist endeavors.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overview of the significance of J. Mammadguluzadeh's contributions to gender issues in the East

After Mirza Fatali Akhuzadeh, Jalil Mammadguluzadeh successfully continued to highlight the fate of women, their role in society, rights, ideas of equality with men, and especially, the subjugation of women under the influence of religious superstitions in fiction. The activity works and oeuvre of Mirza Jalil is very valuable in terms of gender studies because he laid the foundation of the first gender ideology not only in Azerbaijan but also in the East. Mammadguluzadeh's literary works, such as his renowned satirical magazine "Molla Nasreddin," which was published in 1906 and featured sharp critiques of the status quo, particularly concerning women's rights. Mammadguluzadeh used humor and satire to question the prevailing stereotypes and restrictions placed on women, advocating for their education, emancipation, and participation in public life. The main goal of "The Molla Nasreddin" magazine, edited by him, was the education of not only men but also women, against ignorance, a call for education, protest against early marriage and exploitation of women, sexual issues, criticism of polygamy, etc. Even before Simon de Beauvoir's work "The Second Sex" (1949) was written, Mollanasreddinists in Azerbaijan tried to explain that women are not a secondary existence and an unconscious mass, but the main center of power involved in the formation of society. In their opinion, the fact that women live a life without rights, ignorant and humble, and are condemned to a dark and closed world under the veil, may cause great damage to the development of the Muslim world. That's why J. Mammadguluzadeh supported the idea of giving full freedom to women for the future of society, to have well-educated children, and to develop and raise the right generation. He also emphasized that if they give the opportunity and a normal atmosphere for women, they will not lag behind men in both economic and social fields. He sharply criticized the conditions, system, and regulations that put women under the veil, condemning them to a dark world while they live, preventing their development by burdening them with housework and child-rearing, and keeping them away from education, public affairs, and public life. J. Mammadguluzadeh wrote

about the problems and fate of Eastern women in his article "My Old Troubles" as follows:

"Throughout my entire life, I used my pen mostly to highlight the issue of the Eastern woman. For this reason, I can understand the pain of Eastern women better than anyone else. What is their grief? To liberate the Eastern woman from what? To liberate from the sharia's lasso, from the chains of Muslimism, from the prison of harems, from the oppression of the black veil, and after liberating, to educate the Eastern woman, to show her the true path, to inform her of her duties, to explain the conditions of femininity... until the miserable Eastern woman opens her eyes and says, I have the right to live in this world as well! Because I am already a free Eastern woman" (Mammadguluzadeh, 2004, p. 199).

Identification of recurring gender views in his writing

In his work throughout his characters, J. Mammadguluzadeh criticized the fact that women's rights were fully in the hands of men, and beating, insulting, and in some cases, even killing them were the responsibility of men. For example, in his play "Stories of Danabash Village", Zeynab is not submissive, she is a smart, strong, and determined woman and can distinguish what is right for her. However, in the example of the male character Khudayar Bey, we can see the attitude of men and society towards women, which is not much different from the attitude towards an object or an animal. Khudayar's goal is to take possession of the wealth left by Zeinab's husband by marrying her. Khudayar Bey says to Zeynab's son Veligulu: "Do you think that mother will replace your father? No, never. Your mother is a woman, but your father was a man. Damn on the best woman! It isn't possible that the woman has religion, faith, or belief. What does a woman know about the religion?" (Mammadguluzadeh, 2004, p. 29).

Other female characters in the work, like Fizzle, Sharaf, Ziba, etc. are forced to accept life living without their own rights which the society considers appropriate to them. They become victims of ignorance who cannot fight for their own destiny. In addition, J. Mammadguluzade sometimes tried to draw attention to women's problems in society by depicting comical characters of women. For example, the characters of Halima and Parinisa in the work "Pirverdi's Rooster" are comic female images that cause bitter laughs. Whenever Aunt Halima bakes bread, she sends her husband Kasim to fetch her sister from another village to help. Getting tired of this situation, Kasim leaves home and with the advice of his friend, he makes *siğə*¹

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Religious marriage registration, non-official marriage

to Parinisa and brings her home. Although the ignorance of both women and having no rights are depicted ridiculously in their relationships and fights, it shows the reader the bitter truth.

Similar bitter laughter can be found in the works "The Fresh News", "Russian Girl" and "Two Husbands". This is a laugh that can shake the entire society, and the intellectuals, and make people wake up because this thought-provoking laugh proves that gender relations were not properly established for that period and that women's rights were trampled upon. For example, in the work "The Fresh News", Aunt Tukezban's daughter-in-law loses her chicken and looks around Aunt Fatma's yard to search for it. Seeing this, Charchi Zalkha immediately tells Khansanam that Aunt Tukezban's daughter-in-law is chasing Aunt Fatma's son. Khansanam tells Sharabani, Sharabani tells Asmar, Asmar tells Gulsum, Gulsum tells Sakina, Sakina tells Nurjahan, Nurjahan tells Parijana, etc. By gossiping, within an hour it spreads throughout the village that Aunt Tukazban's daughter-in-law's husband caught her together with Aunt Fatma's son. So, the husband beat her so much that she is lying in bed covered in blankets. When the rumor spreads and at last comes to the mother-in-law and husband, they really kick the innocent daughter-in-law till the morning. After two days, it turns out that in fact there was nothing. Despite this, the daughter-in-law is still criticized that she should not have looked around the neighboring yard. The comic female characters in this work are ignorant women who are the guardians of the patriarchal tradition of society. They are ignorant because they are subservient, uneducated, superstitious, and defenseless. The character of Aunt Tukezban's daughter-in-law is the prototype of most Azerbaijani women in that period, who were defenseless and didn't have any rights.

In the work "Russian Girl", Mashadi Ghulam Huseyn, who is old, ugly, and has lost most of his front teeth, takes great pride in kissing a 16-year-old Russian girl on Easter and proudly tells his friend about it. In the work "Two Husbands", Haji Ramazan and Sharabani do not get on well. Although Haji Ramazan divorced his wife three times and sent her to her father's house, he loves her and remarries her each time. However, according to Shariat², if a husband divorced his wife for the third time, he could not marry her again. A woman must marry another man, get a divorce, and then marry her previous husband. For this reason, Haji Ramazan decides to make *siğə* (religious

marriage) between his wife and his old poor fellow who is a bath attendant and carries dung, Kabla Imamali, so that later, they have to break their religious marriage and he will marry her. But the situation changes, and Imamali asks for money for divorce. Here, we see what. The woman has no right to organize her own life. No one even asks her, if she wants to marry, to divorce, and to remarry. She has no chance to make a decision. In this work, as in others, the society is governed by Sharia laws without any basis, the mullahs have the main governing power. A woman does not even have the right to express a normal attitude, it is as if a woman is a tool or a thing in the hands of men for buying and selling, bargaining. She is sent as an item from one house to another. J. Mammadguluzadeh writes: "It is known that such stories have always been shared among pious and radical Muslims, and no one would have been surprised or objected to this in the past" (Mammadguluzadeh, 2004, p. 313).

Highlighting the satirical approach used to criticize societal norms.

Economic dependence, illiteracy, and radical religiosity are the main factors limiting women's rights. Women whose husbands take another woman as a wife (polygamy was accepted by Shariat) cannot divorce or protest because she has no profession, education, occupation, money, work, or property. She depends on the man. A woman knows that if she returns to her father's home, her father, brother, and uncle will not accept her, so she tolerates her husband marrying other women, insulting her, beating her, tormenting her: "*Khudayar Bey is a man. It is obvious that a man is stronger than his wife*" (Mammadguluzadeh, 2004, p. 83).

In fact, here, they are men who are dishonest using religion for their own benefit who turn religion into a power of influence and abuse it. Attempts to covet his brother's wife as soon as he dies and marry his best friend's wife as soon as he dies, are successful in this society because the person who performs imam marriage (*siğə*), the police, and the decision makers are all men, and their interest is to preserve this kind of ignorant tradition to maintain their advantages and power. In this regard, J. Mammadguluzadeh opposes false and illiterate religious people in his article entitled "Hijab issue and our response", protesting for discrediting Islam and conducting false propaganda: "*We use the beautiful Shariat as an excuse and use the poor common people as a tool for our prejudice and hatred*". Mirza Jalil, notes that there is no related verse in the Koran that considers woman haram who goes out uncovered. That's why he thought that it was a way of keeping the power over women using religion to condemn them to wear a black headscarf as a prison life, a life of conviction.

² Islamic canonical law based on the teaching of the Koran and prescribing both religious and secular duties and sometimes retributive penalties for lawbreaking.

This is a tool used by the false mullahs to keep the ignorant population under obedience and to regulate family and household issues, and marital relations, and it is not a moral or cultural code. According to such social norms, the father makes the decisive decision about the fate of a daughter before her birth. For example, Mr. Khudayar says: *“If the news is about my daughter has been born, let’s immediately make the sigha to your son!”*

In his 1909 work “The Deads”, J. Mammadguluzadeh fights the ignorance of the society, early marriage of girls, and lack of rights throughout the character of Iskandar. In the work “The Deads”, gender problems, the division of gender roles in the early stages, and women’s disenfranchisement are clearly exposed. Since birth, girls are prepared only for marriage, family, housekeeping, and child care. None of the beauty that occurs in nature is for girls. Iskander also knows that his younger sister Nazli will get married at an early age due to the influence of her parents. He is unable to resist the mullahs’ fanaticism, ignorance of society, and the exploitation of girls from an early age which happens around him, so he drinks all day to get drunk:

“Oh, my beautiful sister Nazli, you are sitting at home from morning to evening, taking lessons in cooking “bozbash”³ from your mother. Come here, look at the yard, the Sun has risen, if you cannot see that Sun, why do we need its light? Outside, the grass has grown and the trees have blossomed, but what are those flowers and grasses for without you?” (Mammadguluzadeh, 2004, p. 387).

When his mother found out that he was trying to spread propaganda with his sister, she got angry and scolded Iskandar that girls can’t go outside and behave like boys. Despite this, Iskandar tries to open his sister’s eyes, to keep her away from early marriage, and to oppose her wearing a black veil: *“What is there to hide, what to cover, what to be ashamed of? That’s enough. Stop it! Thank God, you don’t have any defect on your tulip cheek, on your eyebrow, on your chin, and lips!”* Parents who consider their daughters to be stupid and unnecessary beings, describing it as a meritorious deed, line up to get their 9-year-old daughters to be *siġa* (religious ceremony to take as a wife) by Sheikh Nasrullah, who presented himself with false religious rituals.

Advocacy for women’s education and empowerment

His writings have had a profound impact on the women’s rights movement in the East and continue to be influential in contemporary discussions on feminism in the region. From the perspective of gender studies, works such as “Doomsday” and “Eydi-Ramazan,” penned by J. Mammadguluzadeh following the October Revolution of 1917, hold significant importance. The aftermath of the October Revolution brought to the forefront the issue of equal rights for Azerbaijani women alongside men. Mammadguluzadeh depicts the evolution of the revolution and the societal attitudes, particularly the dominance of men across all spheres, in his work “Doomsday.” In a society governed by Sharia law, public speaking in front of non-mahram men is deemed a grave transgression. According to prevailing beliefs, an unveiled woman is considered accursed, immoral, and wicked. Drawing upon religious authority and Islamic doctrine, they assert that everyone possesses the right to control such women: *“It is decreed concerning women who have lost grace, that wherever they are found, they should be killed”* (Mammadguluzadeh, 2004, p. 317).

Following the October Revolution, enlightened and intelligent women of society discarded their headscarves, fearlessly addressed men, demanded their rights, and vocalized their grievances. They cast aside their veils, lamenting their confinement behind curtains, their lives akin to that of prisoners in harems, subjected to serving men and enduring their suffering and oppression. They questioned the restrictions imposed upon them, living under the veil and enduring a life of captivity. The clerics who enforced veiling and obedience fail to recognize the wrongdoing of promiscuous men who gaze upon their brother’s wife, a friend’s wife, or close relatives while condemning women to concealment.

In his work, J. Mammadguluzadeh not only analyzes female characters but also delves into the portrayal of male characters, illustrating their efforts to preserve the prevailing system dominated by them. Men become apprehensive about the burgeoning agency of women who aspire to attain equal status in the economic and social realms. They ponder over the potential consequences if women were to discard their headscarves, engage in public speaking, and participate in the workforce. Questions arise regarding who will lead prayers, who will be obedient, and who will shoulder the responsibilities of household chores if women are emancipated from traditional roles.

In the work “Eydi-Ramazan” (1927), the topic of the “Eastern Woman” is extensively explored. The Eastern woman is characterized by her intellect, conduct, acumen, and acknowledgment of her rights. She prioritizes education and endeavors to enlighten society. Educated

Eastern women advocate for the education of youth, setting aside religious dogma, superstition, and Sharia laws. They aspire to roles as educators and healthcare professionals, establish publications such as “The Eastern Woman” in newspapers and magazines, and actively engage in literature and science. However, these advancements are met with disdain from the ignorant and conservative clerics:

“But where are our educated and enlightened women? Where are our intelligent Muslim women, who identify themselves as ‘The Eastern Women’ and dare to engage with non-mahram men and deliver speeches before them? Why don’t our teachers attend mosques? They probably don’t even observe fasting. Because what can a fasting individual contribute in a reading room? What role does a fasting Muslim play in literary gatherings? What can the devout do in intellectual forums? And what about the thousands of unfortunate Muslims who identify themselves as ‘The Eastern Women’ and continue to publish newspapers and magazines? If they are fasting, how can they discuss matters of importance with non-mahram men?” (Mammadguluzadeh, 2004, p. 352).

Comparisons with gender issues in Western literary contexts

J. Mammadguluzadeh, alongside other Azerbaijani intellectuals such as Huseyn Minasov and Mammad Agha Shahtakhtli, contended that genuine progress could not be achieved unless Azerbaijani women, constituting half of Azerbaijani society, were liberated from the shackles of feudal-religious ideology and the subservient life of a meek slave. They argued that if women were not empowered as individuals within society, the children they raised would be hindered from contributing to societal development. In her 1949 work, “The Second Sex,” S. Beauvoir draws parallels between the dynamics of male-female relationships and those of whites and blacks, as well as Jews, labeling women as the weaker party and men as the stronger counterpart.

Similar situations depicted in dystopian novels such as “The Handmaid’s Tale” (1985) and its sequel “The Testaments” (2019) by Margaret Atwood, renowned for her feminist fiction, echo themes found in her other works like “The Edible Woman” (1969) and “Life Before Man” (1979). In “The Handmaid’s Tale,” women are deprived of the right to speak and are mandated to wear headscarves, ensuring their vision is restricted. They live in a society where speaking out against men results in severe punishment and torture, including mutilation. Atwood critiques the sexual exploitation of women and their marginalization from societal development and leadership roles. Women in Atwood’s portrayal are reduced to mere vessels for reproduction, devoid of agency: *“We are two-legged wombs, that’s all: sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices”* (Atwood, 1985).

The dystopian society depicted in Atwood’s novels is governed by strict regulations and religious rules, manipulated by men to maintain control over women. Polygamy is normalized, allowing men to take multiple wives and subject them to childbirth and domestic duties. Women have no recourse to object to their husbands’ extramarital relationships, as these unions are sanctioned by religious rituals and societal norms. Male characters in Atwood’s narratives often support each other, perpetuating the patriarchal system and reinforcing the subjugation of women.

In her novel “The Testaments,” Margaret Atwood delineates the differential upbringing of boys and girls from childhood, highlighting the strict gender roles imposed upon them. Girls are restricted from engaging in behaviors deemed appropriate only for boys, and by the age of 9-10, they can be considered for marriage. Atwood illustrates how women are indoctrinated from a young age to submit to men: “We were precious flowers that had to be kept safely inside glass houses, or else we would be ambushed” (Atwood, 2019, p. 17). Girls are even instructed to dress modestly to avoid arousing male lust, perpetuating the notion that women are responsible for men’s actions, including rape.

Throughout their education, girls are taught that their cognitive abilities are inferior to those of men, reinforcing the idea that women are created for men’s benefit. Conversely, boys are imbued with a sense of innate superiority and entitlement: “Only boys could taste that freedom, only they could swoop and soar; only they could be airborne” (Atwood, 2019, p. 23). This unequal treatment perpetuates a power dynamic where men hold sway over women. The themes of early marriage, sexual and physical exploitation of women, polygamy, and the objectification of women as property without rights, depicted in Atwood’s dystopian novels of 1985 and 2019, mirror the realities of the period in which Jalil Mammadguluzadeh lived and wrote his works in 1905, 1906, and 1909. Mammadguluzadeh’s writings reflect similar societal norms and gender dynamics prevalent during his era.

Similar ideas can indeed be found in Virginia Woolf’s work “A Room of One’s Own,” written in 1929. In this seminal essay, Woolf draws parallels between the relationship of men and women and that of the rich and the poor. Even before Woolf,

M.A. Shakhtakhtli, as early as the late 19th century, expressed similar sentiments regarding the abnormal treatment of women in the East, highlighting how men's attitudes towards women are exploited to maintain dominance and tyranny over the weak and powerless (Solovyov, 1895).

While it is true that women in the Western world during that period faced limitations on their rights and economic dependency, the situation of Eastern women was arguably even more dire. Apart from being relegated to the status of rights-less slaves to men, Eastern women were also secluded and veiled, rendering them ignorant of the world outside and the places they inhabited. This confinement not only took a toll on their physical health but also left them mentally debilitated, reducing them to mere household commodities.

Then, according to the above, our research endeavors have focused on delineating the core feminist themes within Jalil Mammadguluzadeh's writings, notably encompassing discussions on women's rights, gender equality, and the critique of traditional gender roles prevalent in Azerbaijani society. Furthermore, we have meticulously analyzed the alignment and disparities between Mammadguluzadeh's ideologies and those of Western feminism, aiming to elucidate the broader context of his contributions. We have presented compelling evidence showcasing Mammadguluzadeh's pivotal role in shaping early feminist discourse in the East, underscoring his significance as a trailblazer in advocating for gender equity and women's empowerment within Azerbaijani society. To finalize the discussion, our essential results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Jalil Mammadguluzadeh's Gender Concerns and Western Feminism.

Aspect	Jalil Mammadguluzadeh's Writings	Western Feminism Literature
Period and Location	Late 19th - Early 20th century, Azerbaijan	Varied Western countries and periods
Key Works	"My Old Troubles", "Hijab issue and our response", "The Deads", "Doomsday", "Eydi-Ramazan" "Stories of Dabash Village" "The Fresh News", "Russian Girl", "Two Husbands" "The Eastern Woman"	Simon de Beouvard's "The Second Sex" Margaret Atwood's "The Handmaid's Tale", Margaret Atwood's "The Testaments" Virginia Woolf's "A Room of One's Own"
Feminist Themes	Gender issues in literature, women's rights, gender equality, social problems, and other related themes	Gender issues in Western literature, social problems, and other related themes in Western feminism
Approach and Ideology	Mammadguluzadeh's feminist ideology	Dominant ideologies in Western feminism
Notable Figures Influenced	Mirza Fatali Akhundzadeh, Huseyn Minasov, Mammad Agha Shahtakhtli The October Revolution in 1917	Simon de Beouvard Margaret Atwood Virginia Woolf
Socio-Cultural Context	Azerbaijani and regional context	Societal influences in Western feminism
Legacy and Impact	Mammadguluzadeh's legacy endures in the Eastern world, inspiring future generations to continue the fight for gender equality and social justice	The critique of traditional gender roles, aligning with the core themes of the Western feminist movement made a global impact on Eastern writers

Source. Own elaboration.

CONCLUSIONS

The life and works of Jalil Mammadguluzadeh stand as a testament to his extraordinary role as the first feminist writer in the East. Born in a time and place where gender inequality was deeply entrenched, Mammadguluzadeh dared to challenge the status quo through his incisive and humorous writings. His satirical magazine, "Molla Nasraddin," remains an invaluable record of his dedication to advocating for women's rights, gender equality, and social progress. As we reflect on Mammadguluzadeh's life and work, we are reminded that the struggle for gender equality knows no geographical or cultural boundaries. Mammadguluzadeh's commitment to women's rights transcended the barriers of his time, and his contributions continue to resonate with those who seek to challenge injustice and promote equality. He not only

earned a place in the annals of feminist literature but also in the hearts of those who believe in a world where gender should never be a barrier to one's dreams and aspirations. Thus, Mammadguluzadeh's legacy endures in the Eastern world, inspiring future generations to continue the fight for gender equality and social justice. His courageous and innovative approach to confronting traditional gender roles through humor and wit remains a source of inspiration for contemporary feminist discourse in the region.

Our comparative analysis reveals that while Mammadguluzadeh's feminist ideas were unique to the socio-cultural landscape of Azerbaijan, they shared several commonalities with Western feminist ideologies. His works advocated for women's rights, gender equality, and the critique of traditional gender roles, aligning with the core themes of the Western feminist movement. However, it is essential to acknowledge the distinct historical context within which Mammadguluzadeh operated. His writings, set against the backdrop of a changing Azerbaijani society and the broader Islamic world, reflected the specific challenges and opportunities faced by women in the East during his time. His approach to feminism, though resonating with Western ideas, was deeply intertwined with the cultural fabric of Azerbaijan.

Finally, Mammadguluzadeh's contributions to feminist thought in the East are significant. He laid the foundation for gender discourse and advocated for women's rights in a region where such discussions were limited. His work paved the way for future Azerbaijani feminist writers and activists. For this, Jalil Mammadguluzadeh occupies a unique position as an early feminist writer in the East, contributing to gender discourse and the feminist movement in a distinctive socio-cultural context. His legacy, as explored in this study, underscores the importance of recognizing the diverse voices and pathways that shaped the global feminist movement. Further research on Mammadguluzadeh's works and their influence on the evolving feminist landscape in the East is warranted. This exploration serves as a reminder of the importance of a nuanced understanding of feminism, acknowledging its rich and multifaceted history in different parts of the world.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article originated as a part of a Post post-doctoral program at the National Museum of Azerbaijan Literature named after Nizami Ganjavi and the Azerbaijan University of Languages.

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