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**ABSTRACT**

of the dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER  
IN ROBERT HEINLEIN'S OEUVRE**

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Field of science: Philology

Applicant: **Gunel Akif Alasgarova**

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The work was performed at the Department of the English Language and Literature at Baku Engineering University.

Scientific supervisor: Doctor of Philological Sciences, Professor  
**Aynur Zakir Sabitova**

Official opponents: Doctor of Philological Sciences,  
Associate Professor  
**Nigar Valish Isgandarova**

Doctor of Philosophy in Philology  
**Arif Alim Asadov**

Doctor of Philosophy in Philology  
**Leyla Elshad Gojayeva**

Dissertation Council ED 2.12 of Supreme Attestation Commission under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan operating at Azerbaijan University of Languages.

Chairman of the  
Dissertation council

Doctor of Philological Sciences,  
Professor

**Azad Yahya Mammadov**

Scientific secretary of the  
Dissertation council:

Doctor of Philosophy in Philology,  
Associate Professor

**Irada Nadir Sardarova**

Chairman of the  
scientific seminar:

Doctor of Philological Sciences,  
Professor

**Shahin Hamid Khalilli**



## THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

**The urgency of the theme and the degree of research.** In the mid-20th century, one of the significant movements in American literary criticism, characterized by the occurrence of events at unexpected moments and situations while embodying a symbiotic relationship with science, was science fiction. In science fiction, the issues presented often transcend the boundaries of a single nation or state, taking on a global, universal character. This contributed to the emergence of new perspectives and differences within literary criticism. Science fiction, consistently associated with science, invention, and innovation, earned the status of “literature of ideas”<sup>1</sup>.

In the 20th century, the leading countries in science fiction were the United Kingdom, the United States, and Russia. The advancement of science and technology, particularly in space exploration, provided a wealth of ideas for writers exploring this genre<sup>2</sup>. The literature of the United States, benefiting from a high level of scientific and technological progress, advanced across many standards and now occupies a leading position in the field<sup>3</sup>. For these reasons, American literature has become one of the most translated and studied fields in Azerbaijani literary translation and criticism over the past two decades. Scholars, experts, and young researchers have analyzed the history, constraints, prospects, various movements, and renowned American literature writers, particularly from a socio-humanitarian perspective.<sup>4</sup>

This dissertation focuses on the artistic and aesthetic legacy of Robert Heinlein, a genius of speculative science fiction who successfully established a new American science fiction school. The study explores Heinlein’s portrayal of superhuman characters and the theme of the “future” generation, highlighting the dissertation’s

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<sup>1</sup> Glencoe literature, the reader’s choice. Unit six, Science Fiction and Fantasy. / – United States of America, – 2000. – 997 p

<sup>2</sup> D’Ammassa, D. Encyclopedia of science fiction. /D.D’Ammassa. – New York, – 2005. – 538 p.

<sup>3</sup> Roberts, A. The History of Science Fiction. / A.Roberts. – New York, – 2006. – 195 p.

<sup>4</sup> Quliyev, Q. XX əsr Amerikan ədəbiyyatşünaslığında aparıcı cərəyanlar. / Q.Quliyev. – Bakı: Azərbaycan Universiteti, – 2011. – 208 s.

relevance by systematically examining his ideas. So that, Heinlein's biography, his contributions to American society in the 20th century, and his novels for young readers provide a rich field of inquiry, particularly regarding his depiction of superhuman figures.

A world-renowned American writer, Robert Heinlein was highly prolific, creating a gallery of complex characters across 42 books<sup>5</sup>. His works vividly reflect the contemporary state and developmental trajectories of 20th-century science fiction. The relevance of this research lies in uncovering the specific features of Heinlein's creativity and the necessity of a systematic analysis of the superhuman and future generation figures in his works. Examining Heinlein's treatment of the "spaceman" concept introduces a new perspective on science fiction. Analyzing Heinlein's works as an integral part of the global literary processes of the 20th century, particularly concerning superhuman characters in Azerbaijani literary criticism, makes this topic both significant and timely.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, one of the leading and boldest concepts in Western ideology, deeply influential in literary and artistic thought, was Friedrich Nietzsche's "Übermensch"<sup>6</sup> concept. This dissertation thoroughly examines this concept and draws comparisons with the creative works of the main protagonist. In literary criticism, philosophical foundations are considered crucial for studying the idea of the "superhuman," and a series of such characters have been developed. Writers such as W.Stapledon, T.Sturgeon, P.G.Wylie, S.Lem, F.Pohl, A.V.Vogt, V.S.Vinge, and others endowed their "superhuman" characters in science fiction with extraordinary abilities and paranormal powers. These literary heroes, superior in speed, strength, and intellect, are consistently depicted in struggle. One of the significant factors contributing to the relevance of this dissertation is the lack of systematic research on the selected works of these authors to date.

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<sup>5</sup> The Heinlein archives: [Electronic resource] - 2024. URL: <http://www.heinleinarchives.net/upload/index.php>

<sup>6</sup> Young, J. Friedrich Nietzsche: a philosophical biography. / J.Young. – New York: Cambridge University Press, – 2010. xvi, – 649 p.

The themes of superhuman, artificial human, transhuman, posthuman, and robotic human appear in the works of nearly every science fiction writer<sup>7</sup>. The “superhuman” character is a frequently addressed yet challenging subject in science fiction. Therefore, investigating the origins of superhuman figures and studying their influence on the tradition of scientific ideas in science fiction is essential in this dissertation. Exploring the superhuman figure, specifically in Robert Heinlein’s works, addresses a significant theoretical gap in literary scholarship.

During the 20th century, the literary and artistic legacy of Robert Heinlein, one of the leading figures who helped define the “shape” of science fiction, remained untranslated and overshadowed in the former USSR, including Azerbaijan, due to his anti-communist views. Only after the 1970s the readers began to engage with his creative works, which were rapidly translated and absorbed. From the 1980s onward, Heinlein’s novels became the subject of academic study in former Soviet countries, viewed from a broader, universal perspective. Heinlein’s legacy did not escape the attention of Russian literary scholars, with significant research being conducted by figures such as A.Balabukha<sup>8</sup>, A.Ermolayev<sup>9</sup>, and others. A fuller portrait of Heinlein’s works, of course, can be seen in studies conducted by his compatriots. In American literary scholarship, large-scale research on Heinlein’s work has been conducted by W.Patterson<sup>10</sup>, J.Gifford<sup>11</sup>, N.Schulman<sup>12</sup>, L.Stover<sup>13</sup>, C.H.Gilliland, J.H.Seltzer, S.Robinson<sup>14</sup>, J.Haldeman, A.Panshin<sup>15</sup>, G.D.Nordley, F.Mendlesohn<sup>16</sup>, and others.

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<sup>7</sup> Шичанина, Ю. Феномен сверхчеловека в духовной культуре XX века: /Автореферат дисс.канд. философских наук/ – Ростов-на-Дону, – 1998.

<sup>8</sup> Балабуха, А. Роберт Энон Хайнлайн. Адмирал звездных морей: [Электронный ресурс] / URL: <https://web.archive.org/web/20120613224008/http://olmer.ru/heinlein/index.shtml>

<sup>9</sup> Ермолаев, А.И. Главный миф о Хайнлайне // К 100-летию Роберта Хайнлайна // FANтастика, – август 2007. № 6, – 128 с.

<sup>10</sup> Patterson, W.H.Jr.: In dialogue with his century, Vol. 1: Learning curve 1907-1948. Paperback, – June 21, – 2011.

<sup>11</sup> Gifford, J.D. Robert A.Heinlein: A reader's companion. / J.D.Gifford, J.Gifford. May 8, 2000. – 304 p.

<sup>12</sup> Schulman, J.N. The Robert Heinlein interview and other Heinleiniana. Pulpless.com; 1st edition, – January 31, 1990. – 204 p.

The Azerbaijani readership is not well-acquainted with the life, philosophy, and creative output of Robert Heinlein, one of the “Big Three” authors of science fiction’s “Golden Age.” In fact, “The Anthology of World Science Fiction Literature, Volume I”<sup>17</sup> and “The Anthology of World Science Fiction Literature, Volume II”<sup>18</sup> were only published in 2013-2014. Heinlein’s only novel “The Star Beast,” was translated from Russia in these anthologies. In the context of 20th-century Azerbaijani literary criticism, not only are there no empirical articles, but even basic research on Heinlein is absent. This study represents the first serious academic initiative in studying Heinlein’s legacy.

R.Soltanova<sup>19</sup>, G.Ahmadova<sup>20</sup>, R.Omarov<sup>21</sup>, and K.Abdullayeva<sup>22</sup>, D.Samadova<sup>23</sup> have already introduced the science fiction genre in their dissertations. In general, the science fiction genre of the 20th century, its different types and problems both in the

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<sup>13</sup> Stover, E.L. Robert A. Heinlein, Twayne’s United States authors series. Twayne pub; First edition. December, –1987.–147 p.

<sup>14</sup> Robinson, S. Rah, Rah, R. A. AH! / S.Robinson. – New York: Ace, – 1980.

<sup>15</sup> Panshin, A. Heinlein in Dimension/Advent Publishers, – June 28th, 1968. – 214 p.

<sup>16</sup> Mendlesohn, F. The pleasant profession of Robert A. Heinlein. / F.Mendlesohn. – Unbound, – 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Orucov, H. Dünya elmi-fantastik ədəbiyyatı antologiyası / H.Orucov, N.Orucova. – Bakı: – I c., – 2013. – 400 s.

<sup>18</sup> Orucov, H. Dünya elmi-fantastik ədəbiyyatı antologiyası / H.Orucov, N.Orucova. – Bakı: – II c., – 2014. – 400 s.

<sup>19</sup> Soltanova, R. Azərbaycan ədəbiyyatında elmi-fantastik janr: / filologiya üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. avtoreferatı / – Bakı, 2010. – 27 s.

<sup>20</sup> Əhmədova, G. Azərbaycan ədəbiyyatında elmi-fantastik janrın ənənələri: / filologiya üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. avtoreferatı / – Bakı, 2014. – 26 s

<sup>21</sup> Ömərov, R.A. XX əsr ABŞ və Azərbaycan ədəbiyyatında elmi-fantastik janr (Ayzek Azimov və Emin Mahmudovun yaradıcılığı əsasında): / filologiya üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. avtoreferatı / – Bakı, 2003. – 22 s..

<sup>22</sup> Abdullayeva, X.V. İngilis – Azərbaycan Elmi Fantastika Ədəbiyyatının İnkişaf Təmayülləri (Herbert Uels və Azərbaycan elmi fantastikası): / filologiya üzrə fəlsəfə doktoru dis. avtoreferatı / – Bakı, 2022. – 32 s.

<sup>23</sup> Səmədova, D. Elmi fantastik ədəbiyyatın tədqiqi tarixinə bir nəzər // – Bakı: Elm və təhsil, Filologiya məsələləri, – 2017. № 1, – s.267-272.

USA and Azerbaijan, has been studied by N.Sadigova<sup>24</sup>, J.Ahmadov, Z.Agayev<sup>25</sup>, A.Eminov<sup>26</sup>, and others.

**The object and subject of the research.** The object of the study is Robert Heinlein's works, specifically his novels “Beyond This Horizon,” “Stranger in a Strange Land,” and “Friday.” The research subject is the nature, impact, and complications of Heinlein’s unique superhuman characters.

**The aims and duties of the research work.** The primary aim of the prepared dissertation is to examine the literary and artistic works of Robert Heinlein and to convey his contributions to literary scholarship through his depiction of “superhuman” characters to the Azerbaijani audience. Additionally, the main objective of this research is to explore the various stages and unique evolution of science fiction in 20th-century American literature, investigate the origins of the superhuman archetype, analyze its depiction in Heinlein’s novels, and compare the findings with similar and contrasting elements in Azerbaijani literature. Achieving this goal will involve the completion of the following academic tasks:

- Presenting key aspects of Robert Anson Heinlein’s biography and tracing the main stages of his literary career and philosophical development;

- Investigating the emergence of the “Golden Age” of science fiction in the United States, its rise to prominence, and the conditions that shaped it, as well as analyzing how this period was gradually succeeded by movements such as the “New Wave,” soft science fiction, speculative fiction, fantasy, and cyberpunk, along with an examination of the works of authors from this era;

- Conducting a dissertation-level analysis of the superhuman concept in Heinlein’s novels *Stranger in a Strange Land*, *Friday*, and *Beyond This Horizon*;

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<sup>24</sup> Садыхова, Н. Современная американская научная фантастика. Проблемы метода и жанра: (На материале творчества А.Азимова, Р.Брэдбери, К.Саймака): /автореферат дисс.канд. филол.наук/ – Баку, 1987. – 25 с.

<sup>25</sup> Ağayev, Z. *Azərbaycan-Amerika ədəbi əlaqələri: / filologiya üzrə elmlər doktoru dis./* – Bakı, 1997. –377 s.

<sup>26</sup> Eminov, A. *Elmi-fantastika bədii janrdır // Azərbaycan gəncləri qəzeti.* –1988, 2 aprel.

- Scientifically identifying the ideological stance of the central characters – future youth – featured in more than 12 of Heinlein’s novels written for juvenile readers;

- Tracing the history of the superhuman archetype in philosophy, literature, and science fiction, investigating the influence of Friedrich Nietzsche’s concept of the “Übermensch” in science fiction, and scientifically analyzing the “superhuman” concept and its distinct characteristics;

- Analyzing the superhuman archetypes in Azerbaijani prose, with a particular focus on illuminating the depictions of superhuman, ideal human, and superior human characters in works written within the science fiction genre.

**The research methods.** In the dissertation, a descriptive-analytical and structuralism method has been employed to explore the key structures within the text, including language, narrative forms, and cultural/literary codes. Additionally, a historical-comparative and philosophical-psychological research approach has been applied. The study primarily draws on the works of scholars, journalists, and literary critics from the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Azerbaijan while also considering the socio-cultural context of 20th-century American society. To analyze Robert Heinlein’s works, his literary legacy has been examined in comparison with American and global literature, with new perspectives and ideas on the superhuman archetype from relevant scholarly and theoretical works being considered in this research.

**The main provisions of the defense:**

1) Even in the early stages of his career, Robert Heinlein addressed the central theme of human experience, a core subject in literature and art, from his unique perspective. He developed the concept of the superhuman, which resolves the major issues faced by individuals in the 20th century. This concept finds its full artistic and comprehensive expression in his novels *Stranger in a Strange Land*, *Friday*, and *Beyond This Horizon*;

2) Heinlein’s work is closely linked to the “Golden Age” of science fiction and played a defining role in shaping the boundaries



of the genre, not only in America but globally throughout the 20th century;

3) In the realm of children's science fiction literature, Heinlein created exemplary works, crafting a series of twelve adventure-filled, foresight-rich stories featuring "future generation" characters that are perfectly suited to the cognitive development of young readers;

4) In world literary studies, the typology of the superhuman protagonist is identified in the context of their aesthetic, intellectual, and physical evolution, moving from philosophy toward science fiction;

5) In Azerbaijani literary criticism, superhuman characters are often portrayed as "perfect humans." However, in science fiction, superhuman protagonists are presented in simpler forms, primarily in short stories.

**The scientific novelty of research work.** This dissertation represents the first systematic examination of its topic within Azerbaijani literary criticism. While the historical evolution, developmental trajectories, and overarching trends in American literature have been explored to some extent, the science fiction genre – particularly the last century of its development, as well as the life, philosophy, and unique contributions of Robert Heinlein – remains largely underrepresented in Azerbaijani scholarship. Heinlein, whose work has provided unparalleled contributions to world literature and established him as a cultural phenomenon, offers a rich field for analysis, especially regarding his distinctive portrayals of superhuman and future-generation characters. These portrayals, which remain largely unexamined in Azerbaijani academia, call for in-depth investigation. The primary scientific innovation of this dissertation lies in its typological analysis of superhuman characters in science fiction, which is particularly pertinent given the contemporary focus on themes of human transcendence in the 21st century. A systematic examination of Heinlein's oeuvre is essential to realize this objective.

Heinlein's extensive works, characterized by intricate plots and innovative concepts, are central to world science fiction literature. The superhuman character archetype, especially relevant in his work,

continues to be a significant focus within the genre. Heinlein's protagonists often embody extraordinary abilities, and this theme, along with the analysis of such character archetypes, has yet to be substantively addressed within Azerbaijani literary studies. A further innovation of this dissertation is its comprehensive and literary analysis of the superhuman character within both world and Azerbaijani literary frameworks, marking a pioneering endeavor in this area.

Although more than half a century has passed since Heinlein's major works were written, they continue to resonate with readers and maintain their relevance due in part to the capacity of each new generation to interpret his texts through varied lenses shaped by temporal and cultural contexts. Additionally, examining Heinlein's superhuman characters through the lens of the future human concept is of special significance for both literary criticism and interdisciplinary studies, as it intersects with broader cultural and philosophical inquiries. This multidisciplinary approach defines the scholarly innovation of the dissertation, setting it apart from existing research.

### **The theoretical and practical significance of the research.**

This research holds significant theoretical importance as it addresses the fundamental issue of the superhuman figure in literature and science fiction. The theoretical and practical relevance of the dissertation stems primarily from the contemporary significance of the topic, its systematic investigation for the first time, and its potential to serve as a foundation for future studies on Robert Heinlein's works within Azerbaijani literary studies. The findings of this research can be utilized by scholars studying Heinlein's life, works, and philosophy, particularly in analyzing human and superhuman characters and understanding science fiction and fantasy genres. Additionally, the research could support future works and publications in this field.

This dissertation also holds practical value. It can be used in lectures and seminars at undergraduate and graduate levels in Azerbaijani universities and other educational institutions, covering Azerbaijani, English, American, and world literature. The materials

of the dissertation could contribute to the development of textbooks on contemporary Azerbaijani literature and serve as resources for university lectures on science fiction literature within the country. Furthermore, the work could be published as a standalone book, contributing to science fiction enthusiasts in the republic.

**Approbation and application.** Theses and articles on the primary research work and its theoretical and practical results have been published in national and international scientific journals and presented at international scientific conferences. The research has been brought to the attention of the scientific and literary community and received with interest.

**Name of the organization where the dissertation has been performed.** The research work was prepared, discussed, and recommended for the defense at the English Language and Literature Department of Baku Engineering University.

**The total volume of the dissertation with a sign including a separate volume of the structural units of the dissertation.** The dissertation includes an introduction, three chapters, a conclusion, and a list of sources used. The introduction of the dissertation consists of 9 pages, 17467 characters, Chapter I – 40 pages, 78119 characters, Chapter II – 40 pages, 78493 characters, Chapter III – 25 pages, 48176 characters, Conclusion – 5 pages, 10189 characters. The total volume of the dissertation, excluding the list of used literature consists 232444 characters.

## THE MAIN CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH

The **Introduction** presents the significance of the theme and the degree of research; the object and subject of the research work; the purpose and objective; the hypothesis, background of the thesis and its novelty; the methodology, theoretical and practical significance of the work; the structure of the dissertation; and the approval of the work.

The first chapter of the dissertation, titled “**Robert Heinlein and the “Golden Age” of Science Fiction,**” consists of two paragraphs. The first paragraph, entitled “*Robert Heinlein’s Life,*

*Works, and Philosophy,*” provides an overview of the author’s life journey, biography, and personal qualities.

Robert Anson Heinlein (1907–1988), a distinguished master of science fiction, holds an exceptional place in the history of world literature. Known as the “Dean of Science Fiction” in American literary circles, Heinlein left an indelible mark through his novels and was a tireless advocate of space exploration. As a prominent figure in 20th-century American literature, he enriched the global literary canon with numerous valuable works of science fiction<sup>27</sup>.

This paragraph seeks to answer the question: “*What perspectives, struggles, and philosophies made Robert Heinlein a world-renowned writer?*” In American science fiction literature, Heinlein is regarded as a monumental and dynamic figure who embodies profound value and is celebrated as a genre genius. His readers approach his works as “handbooks for the future” and view them as reservoirs of wisdom. Intellectuals of Western literature in the 1940s–1960s reached a consensus that the emergence of Heinlein in American literature had a significant impact on shaping the future development of the literary landscape of the new continent.

Researchers of Robert Heinlein’s work generally divide his creative output into three periods: the Early Period (1939–1959), the Mature Period (1961–1973), and the Later Years (1980–1987). Also, Robert Heinlein’s works can be categorized into three distinct groups based on specific connections: “Future History,” “Lazarus Long,” and “Heinlein’s Juveniles.”

Heinlein consistently addressed various social themes in his science fiction stories: the importance of personal freedom and self-confidence, the obligations of individuals within society, the influence of organized religion on culture and government, society’s tendency to suppress outsiders, the image of humanity’s future, and the concept of returning to one’s origins, world, or past. What distinguishes Heinlein’s contribution to literature is his emphasis on philosophical speculation. Central to his renowned works are

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<sup>27</sup> Ələsgərova, G.A. “Yad ölkədə yad adam” romanında fəvqəlxilasedici obrazı // Gənc Tədqiqatçıların III Beynəlxalq Elmi Konfransı. – Bakı: Azərbaycan, – 29-30, – 2019, II c. – s.1353-1356.

liberation, freedom, and individualism themes. Five of his novels focus on rebellion against tyranny, more than ten revolve around the struggle for independence, and nearly all contain declarations related to liberty<sup>28</sup>. Heinlein believed that any sect, denomination, or religion gaining political power would attempt to turn its ideology into law and even repress the youth to achieve this goal. An analysis of his works reveals that Heinlein envisioned the future world through his uniquely capable protagonists and valued family, morality, education, and principles. Heinlein's ideal hero is an intellectually gifted, isolated "deep thinker" with profound insight.

In addressing the question posed in the initial paragraph, we can conclude that Heinlein's literary journey traversed multiple stages and crossroads, consistently challenging readers to rethink their perceptions of his works and values. Until the 1960s, the writer emphasized themes centered on "American liberalism, democracy, statehood, and aspirations," highlighting the importance of extending these values across the galaxy. However, in his later creative years, Heinlein shifted his focus, raising critiques against "the American family, the Methodist church, the ideal state, and American values"<sup>29</sup>.

While the protagonist of *Citizen of the Galaxy* (1957) embodied the ideal "true American" who, despite hardships, sought to spread American ideals across the universe, Heinlein's characters in the 1970s and 1980s evolved into genuine "citizens of the galaxy." In his final works, the portrayal of the United States diminished to that of a fragmented island within a vast universe. During this period, Heinlein moved away from the notion of the "superiority of the average American," instead focusing on themes such as family, redemption, and philanthropy.

The second paragraph of the first chapter is "*The Place of Robert Heinlein in the Century of Sci-Fi*". Starting from the last decade of the nineteenth century, the different modes of America's science fiction genre are analyzed, which has become a spiritual food

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<sup>28</sup> Powell, J. Robert A. Heinlein's Soaring Spirit of Liberty: [Electronic resource]. URL: <https://fee.org/articles/robert-a-heinleins-soaring-spirit-of-liberty/>

<sup>29</sup> Mendlesohn, F. The pleasant profession of Robert A. Heinlein. / F.Mendlesohn. – Unbound, – 2019.

for readers. These include its “Golden Age,” “New Wave,” “Soft S.F.,” Space Opera, and Cyberpunk. Robert Heinlein’s sophisticated and innovative contributions are studied. The question posed in this paragraph is: “*How can Robert Heinlein’s role in American science fiction literature be evaluated?*”

In the 20th century, the most significant contributions to the science fiction genre came from American authors, representatives of a technologically advanced nation. Many U.S. writers who devoted their careers to science fiction have left a lasting impact on literary history. Renowned authors such as R.Heinlein, L.D.Rey, T.Sturgeon, I.Asimov and R.Bradbury explored philosophical and aesthetic issues concerning humanity’s developmental trajectory and addressed the consequences of technological advancement in their works<sup>30</sup>.

Science fiction’s “Golden Age” left an indelible mark on literary history. From 1938 to 1946, this era primarily thrived in magazines, with many works from this period published in book form in later years. The readership of these magazines was predominantly male, fostering a sense of camaraderie among readers. This genre and era not only influenced literature but also had a significant impact on science, the military, information technology, and cinema. Many authors rose to prominence during the Golden Age through magazine publications. Notable figures familiar to Azerbaijani readers include I.Asimov, P.Anderson, R.Bradbury, A.C.Clarke, and J.Christopher. A few years later, Asimov, along with Robert Heinlein and British author Arthur C. Clarke, became known as the “Big Three” of science fiction. Fellow writers like Asimov, Bradbury, and Dick followed Heinlein’s work closely, frequently naming their favorite works and sharing their reflections on his influence. Ray Bradbury even openly expressed his gratitude to Heinlein, acknowledging his impact on his career and achievements.

According to Panshin, who studied Heinlein’s legacy, countless science fiction works published over the past 40 years have been shaped directly or indirectly by Heinlein’s influence. Heinlein’s

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<sup>30</sup> Wagner, L.M. A history of American literature-1950 to the Present - Science Fiction and Alternative Worlds, – 2013. –374 p.

writings masterfully explored various themes, such as human evolution, time travel, longevity and transplantation, revolutions in space, freedom, alien uprisings, and the concept of an ideal society. For example, in *Methuselah's Children*, Heinlein challenges the notion that long life equates to wisdom, talent, and competence, exposing this idea as flawed.

Agreeing with the perspective of critic James Gifford, we would like to emphasize that although many of the aforementioned writers may have surpassed Heinlein in productivity, very few can claim to match the breadth and originality of his style. From the pre-Golden Age to the present, science fiction writers have enthusiastically recognized Heinlein as a career trailblazer, shaping their stylistic and narrative approaches.

The second chapter of this dissertation is titled **“Robert Heinlein’s Distinct Perspective on Humanity.”** The first paragraph, *“Interpretation of Superhuman Figures in Robert Heinlein’s Novels,”* identifies numerous extraordinary characters in Heinlein’s 48-year literary career that have left a lasting mark on readers’ minds and played a significant role in literary history.

Heinlein’s characters vary widely in their traits and dispositions. From rebellious youth to elderly patriots, each character is intricately crafted, vividly portraying their thoughts and emotions through the author’s unique language. Heinlein skillfully bridges the past with the distant future, presenting both prehistoric figures and futuristic space travelers to his readers with equal mastery. *“Throughout his works, the author places more emphasis on the inner processes – emotions, thoughts, and beliefs – of Earth’s inhabitants than on the extraordinary events that unfold within the narratives”*<sup>31</sup>.

Heinlein’s portrayal of superhuman heroes diverges from other literary traditions, such as the “mad genius Frankenstein” archetype, Darwin’s “fittest species,” or Nietzsche’s “will to power.” None of Heinlein’s superhuman characters seek to dominate the world

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<sup>31</sup> Ələsgərova, G.A. Dünya ədəbiyyatşünaslığında fəvqəlinsan qaynaqları // Gənc Tədqiqatçıların I Beynəlxalq Elmi Konfransı. – Bakı: Azərbaycan, – 05-06 may, – 2017, 2-ci cild, – s. 827-828.

through their extraordinary abilities. This distinction sets Heinlein apart from other science fiction writers focusing on superhuman figures and from Nietzschean theory. In Heinlein's science fiction, the exceptional skills of superhuman characters serve primarily as situational advantages, enabling them to assist others rather than assert dominance. Heinlein propels society centuries into the future through these superhuman figures, presenting them not merely as protectors or saviors but as equals fighting alongside ordinary humans.

In his science fiction, Heinlein demonstrates a belief in every individual's rich inner world and moral potential, suggesting that people can become valuable contributors to society once they achieve self-awareness in a nurturing environment. According to Heinlein, human kindness, compassion, and selflessness can fundamentally transform the world. However, he contrasts this ideal with the flawed, corrupt society he often depicts, one that falls short of the ideal of service and responsibility<sup>32</sup>. In some works, he outlines the duties of exceptionally talented individuals to society, while in others, he explores the idea that revolutions can elevate society's most capable individuals to leadership positions. At times, Heinlein questions the very fabric of society, casting doubt on the validity of societal norms and the concept of reality itself.

In certain works, Heinlein introduces extraordinary individuals capable of confronting global threats such as world wars, nuclear catastrophes, the sun's extinction, or alien invasions. Departing from the conventional "average American" archetype typical of his time, Heinlein envisions characters who survive dystopian futures and ensure the continuation of the human race. Purposefully, he emphasizes the need for extraordinary abilities to guarantee human survival and future life on other planets. He aspires to create characters who are physically superior and psychologically and spiritually elevated. By crafting such "superhuman" figures, Heinlein

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<sup>32</sup> Guthrie, P.M. Robert A. Heinlein: A Philosophical Novelist: /A Master of Arts thesis was presented to the Department of English Western Kentucky University/ – Bowling Green, Kentucky faculty, – 1985. – 95 p.



critiques ordinary life's trivial and vulgar aspects, urging individuals to rise above mediocrity and unlock their full potential.

The following reasons can be identified for Robert Heinlein's creation of superhuman characters in several of his major novels:

First, like many other science fiction writers of the first half of the 20th century, Heinlein was critical of humanity's current state, expressing a desire for a "fully developed" human figure. In several of his works, Heinlein conveys dissatisfaction with humanity's existing condition, hoping for human beings to transcend their present state – not necessarily physically, but intellectually. This reflects his skepticism toward the status quo and his aspiration for a more elevated human nature.

Then, as a science fiction writer, Heinlein also believed in the possibility of life on other planets and stars, warning that Earth's inhabitants could face unpredictable dangers at any moment. Heinlein considered it essential for humans to develop extraordinary abilities to survive these threats. Departing from the idea of the "ordinary person," he set out to create superhuman characters capable of meeting such challenges.

Additionally, Heinlein argued that Earth might become uninhabitable in the future, making it inevitable for beings with extraordinary survival skills to emerge. In his later works, particularly in *Friday*, he showcased his mastery by opposing the shallow portrayal of superheroes popularized by contemporary comics. Through this novel, Heinlein demonstrated how a superhuman character should be developed and presented to readers. Moreover, he suggested that such characters evoke positive and uplifting emotions in readers.

Another significant factor in Heinlein's focus on superhuman figures lies in the technological and scientific advancements of the time. Space exploration and related inventions implied that survival in the future would require more than the capabilities of ordinary humans – it would demand superhuman qualities. Heinlein skillfully integrated this theme into his narratives, emphasizing that technological progress would necessitate extraordinary beings for future challenges.

The primary reason for Robert Heinlein’s engagement with the concept of the superhuman lies in his effort to define the place and role of modern scientific advancements within the framework of eternal and universal values. Drawing from universal principles, Heinlein sought to avoid stereotypes of racism and discrimination, aiming instead to construct a vision of a free and open world. As a staunch libertarian, he endeavored to promote personal freedom and autonomy<sup>33</sup>.

In several of his novels, Heinlein introduces various forms of superhuman figures – artificial humans, superior beings, posthumans, and long-lived individuals. Examples include *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1962), *Friday* (1982), *Beyond This Horizon* (1948), *Time Enough for Love* (1973), *Methuselah’s Children* (1958), *Gulf* (1949), and *Jerry Was a Man* (1947).

Heinlein addressed numerous taboo subjects of his time, presenting readers with innovative ideas. In *Beyond This Horizon*, he explores the concept of a “designed family” created by grafting ideal genes. In *Stranger in a Strange Land*, he introduces a messianic figure endowed with Martian powers. In *Methuselah’s Children*, Heinlein depicts individuals who remain youthful despite being several centuries old, and in *Jerry Was a Man*, he portrays genetically modified chimpanzees who acquire civil rights. In *Friday*, he introduces an artificial woman, bringing new themes and concepts to science fiction.

Heinlein speculated on several fundamental philosophical questions in his science fiction. First, he examined family as a key element in strengthening and improving humanity, emphasizing that family values are paramount. Second, he expressed a strong interest in the aesthetics of life, frequently questioning religion – particularly Christianity – and moral values. While family values remain central in his works, Heinlein calls for replacing outdated traditions with intellectual values. Finally, Heinlein’s ideal hero lives for the expansion of both intellect and life experiences. According to

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<sup>33</sup> Mises, D. Was Robert A. Heinlein a Libertarian? [Electronic resource]- June 2, 2010. URL: <https://mises.org/mises-daily/was-robert-heinlein-libertarian>

Heinlein, survival always demands superior intelligence, whether for individuals or governments.

From this perspective, studying Heinlein's legacy remains relevant today, particularly in understanding how classic science fiction traditions respond to a rapidly changing world. Identifying another science fiction writer capable of constructing superhumans, posthumans, and idealized future beings with the same mastery as Heinlein is exceedingly difficult.

In the second paragraph, "*The Power of Youth in Heinlein's Juvenile Works,*" the focus shifts to the novels Heinlein dedicated to young readers. These works have captivated students worldwide and served as the inspiration for films and animated adaptations. The recurring theme across these stories is the perseverance, resilience, and heroic missions of young protagonists confronting various extreme situations. Heinlein's juvenile works are filled with fantastical scenarios, written in simple language, and characterized by rapidly unfolding events and clear narrative styles. As with his other works, the theme of freedom manifests in different forms throughout these stories.

Heinlein's portrayal of interactions between youth and extraterrestrials – such as dialogues with Martians – features richly imaginative rituals and astrological differences, which capture young readers' fascination. In novels like *Red Planet*, *Have Space Suit – Will Travel*, and *Podkayne of Mars*, Heinlein masterfully depicts non-humanoid beings helping human children, healing their wounds, and supporting them. His depictions of alien civilizations emphasize fairness and progress across all domains, envisioning extraterrestrials as sources of goodness, not threats. By presenting the virtuous traits of distant galactic civilizations, Heinlein offers these beings as models for the inhabitants of Earth.

While these works were intended for a teenage audience, a broader readership has also enthusiastically received them. Heinlein greatly respected teenagers who read and showed interest in books, releasing new, more complex, and uplifting novels each year to inspire them. In his works, he expressed confidence that young people would manage the world more effectively and represent it

more nobly in the future. Heinlein believed that the near future would be shaped by a generation of well-educated individuals caring for their country, people, and the world. Schoolchildren, skillfully utilizing scientific innovations, will surpass the achievements of their parents and lead Earth toward peace, prosperity, integration, and progress. Through his stories, Heinlein expresses his conviction that the next generation will build a society that values justice, healthy competition, science, environmental conservation, and human morality.

Heinlein's young protagonists are often brilliant and possess extraordinary abilities, navigating through adult society. Typically, these characters encounter conflicts and challenges involving jealous peers, misunderstanding parents, or strict teachers, but they eventually achieve various positive outcomes. Heinlein argued that young readers, unlike adults, can quickly grasp complex and challenging topics. His juvenile novels are enriched with profound ideas, equally appealing to adult readers. In some works, such as *Starship Troopers*, *Red Planet*, and *Podkayne of Mars*, Heinlein even touched on provocative themes, further increasing the appeal of these stories.

These books have had a profound impact on an entire generation of readers. Like the works of great children's writers such as Jules Verne, Walter Scott, Rudyard Kipling, and Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, Heinlein's contributions have played a significant role in shaping young people's moral and aesthetic worldview. His science fiction expanded the intellectual horizons of young readers, inspiring them to envision limitless possibilities for the future. Heinlein believed that the future generations depicted in his works would one day explore the stars and beyond, carrying their honesty, insatiable curiosity, courage, and nobility with them. Although Heinlein did not have children, anyone who grew up with his books could proudly consider themselves "a child of Heinlein."

Chapter III, titled "**The Superhuman in World Literature**," has two paragraphs. The first paragraph, "*The Concept of the Superhuman in Science Fiction Literature*," examines the themes of the superhuman, overman, superior human, and perfect human.

These themes are explored from various perspectives across different periods. But what is the “superhuman”? How can this concept be understood? How does a superhuman differ from an ordinary human? And how has the superhuman figure been constructed in literature, particularly in the science fiction genre?

A superhuman surpasses the mental and physiological abilities of an average human, representing a being of superior quality. In ancient times, sages and rulers were elevated to the status of superhumans. During the Middle Ages, individuals who defied the laws of nature and societal rules were depicted as geniuses and intellectuals in the role of the overman. A common feature among these literary portrayals is that such superhuman characters are inherently superior – they are not trained or educated to possess extraordinary abilities but are born with them and retain these qualities throughout their lives.

While the superhuman figure has been a recurring topic in literature, the concept was revitalized by the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900). Nietzsche’s masterpiece *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883–1885), written in four parts over two years, addresses many philosophical ideas.

In the 20th century, following Nietzsche, the debate over the nature of humanity remained a central theme in global literature. During this period, there was renewed interest in the individual, focusing on what humans can endure and achieve under extreme conditions. English literature, in particular, began to explore human identity from new perspectives, for example, Jack London’s works, *The Sea-Wolf* and *Martin Eden*, critique Nietzsche’s ideas of the overman and radical individualism. London argued that such characters are selfish, arrogant, and socially useless. George Bernard Shaw’s 1903 play “*Man and Superman*” is another example, portraying a protagonist who considers himself superior to ordinary people due to revolutionary change. Similarly, James Joyce explores the superhuman theme in the first chapter of *Ulysses* (1922).

While Nietzsche’s philosophy shaped the first quarter of the 20th century with its human-centered postulates, the focus on superhumanity declined in Europe in the second half of the century,

becoming outdated. However, the concept gained renewed traction in the United States, manifesting in various forms and becoming a prominent idea.

The portrayal of Nietzsche's superhuman evolved over time, assuming different forms and meanings in literature, particularly in science fiction. Writers endowed their characters with extraordinary abilities, presenting new ideas to readers. These superhuman figures were depicted with physical traits such as the ability to fly, endure extreme depths, or wield incredible strength. The development of genetic modification, cybernetic implants, nanotechnology, and human evolution in the distant future became recurring themes in science fiction novels. With scientific and technological progress, the concept of the superhuman has gained greater relevance, leading to the emergence of diverse superhero figures in modern literature.

As noted, superhuman narratives depict characters who possess extraordinary qualities beyond the limits of ordinary human nature.<sup>34</sup> Alongside Robert Heinlein, other science fiction writers, including Olaf Stapledon (United Kingdom), Theodore Sturgeon (USA), Philip Wylie (USA), A.E. van Vogt (Canada-USA), and Stanisław Lem (Poland), have explored this theme, producing remarkable literary works.

The final paragraph, titled "*The Perfect Human Figure in Azerbaijani Literary Heritage*," analyzes the representation of superhuman figures in Azerbaijani literature, particularly their emergence in science fiction during the 20th century. A survey of Azerbaijani literary studies reveals that protagonists depicted as superhumans, perfect humans, over humans, or posthumans are relatively rare. As Azerbaijan is a Muslim-majority country, the concept of the superhuman is often expressed through the figure of the perfect human. In these depictions, writers focus less on physical strength or appearance and more on the protagonist's inner, moral, and intellectual development.

Starting in the 1950s, Azerbaijan experienced a period of significant social, political, literary, and cultural awakening, marked

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<sup>34</sup> Scott, J. UbiComp: Becoming Superhuman. / J.Scott. Intel Research Cambridge, – 2005. – 3 p.

by innovation and progress. The literary works of this era reflect the societal, political, and cultural events of the time. In the second quarter of the 20th century, interest in science fiction with complex narratives grew within Azerbaijani literature. The development of modern cinema further confirmed and expanded the significance of science fiction.

Among the talented fiction writers who thrived in the field of science fiction are Namiq Abdullayev, Allahverdi Eminov, Qabil Ahmadov, Emin Mahmudov, Ibrahim Huseynov, Elmira Zamanova – the only female writer in the genre – and younger authors such as Lala Hasanova and Vusal Nuru. Readers navigate the “ocean” of these writers’ works, always guided by the winds of inspiration.

Emin Mahmudov’s stories have captivated readers of all ages. Notable works include *Phenomenon*, *The Formula of Impossibility*, *Symphony*, and *Medicine from a Cloud*. One of his most famous stories, *Phenomenon* (1964), centers around a university student with extraordinary abilities. After suffering severe memory loss due to a car accident, Nilufar, the protagonist, acquires phenomenal memory abilities through experimental medical intervention. She effortlessly learns multiple languages and absorbs vast amounts of information – articles, books, and reports – with the efficiency of a computer.

Similarly, Namiq Abdullayev explores extraordinary abilities in his story *The Magic Boy*, where a young boy possesses superhuman powers. A scientist creates a boy who can run at lightning speed, defeat tigers, and score more than 17 goals in a single football match, illustrating the impact of scientific and technological progress. Although the themes of posthumanism and superhumanity are rare in Azerbaijani literature, the existing examples highlight the rich and intriguing potential of these topics in the national literary tradition.

The research has led to the following **conclusions**:

1. Robert Heinlein was among the first authors to be published in prestigious journals during the 1940s. He became recognized as one of the “Big Three” writers of the “Golden Age of Science Fiction” and was the author of several best-selling science fiction novels. His early works reflected themes of Americanism, anti-

communism, and militarism, resonating with the socio-political environment of post-World War II America. However, from the 1960s onward, his writings shifted toward themes such as secularism, individual freedom (from both state and religion), and personal autonomy, aligning with the broader countercultural movements of the time.

2. Heinlein's profound interest in science and technology, combined with his liberal views, was a guiding motif in nearly all of his works, closely tying him to the tradition of speculative science fiction. His novels explored themes such as free society, sexual freedom, and free-market principles, attracting both praise and criticism and placing him at the center of literary and political debates. His work echoes existentialist thought, focusing on the struggle for individual freedom, autonomy, and meaning. Heinlein's portrayal of superhuman characters also reflects a desire to transcend human limitations, serving as a precursor to contemporary transhumanist and posthumanist discourse.<sup>35</sup>

3. Heinlein played a vital role in the development of the "Golden Age" (1938–1950), particularly under the editorship of John W. Campbell, which resulted in the publication of several globally recognized works and the establishment of a new school within speculative fiction. Writers such as Ray Bradbury, David Gerrold, and Gregory Benford acknowledged Heinlein's influence on their creativity. As science fiction evolved, the "Golden Age" gave way to movements such as the "New Wave" (1955–1970), fantasy, and cyberpunk. Heinlein's legacy not only shaped the trajectory of the genre but also influenced philosophical questions explored in cyberpunk and critiques of society found in postmodern science fiction<sup>36</sup>.

4. Inspired by the fusion of science and technology, Heinlein often portrayed superhuman characters who thrived in dystopian

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<sup>35</sup> Ələsgərova, G.A. ABŞ-da elmi-fantastik janrın "dekanı" R. Haynlaynın yaradıcılığı haqqında. // – Bakı: Bakı Slavyan Universiteti, Tağıyev Oxuları, – 2016. II cild, – s. 171-175..

<sup>36</sup> Ələsgərova, G.A. Elmi-fantastikanın Amerikada yüz illik dövr analizi // – Bakı: Azərbaycan Milli Elmlər Akademiyası, M.Füzuli adına Əlyazmalar İnstitutu, Filologiya məsələləri, – 2016. №10, – s. 300-305.



futures, reflecting a broader trend in 20th-century science fiction where technology was both a salvation and a threat to humanity. His works – *Stranger in a Strange Land*, *Friday*, and *Beyond This Horizon* – depict superhuman characters as embodiments of intelligence, freedom, and self-governance. These characters align with Nietzsche’s concept of the *Übermensch*, though Heinlein’s interpretation emphasizes liberty, equality, and fraternity over power and dominance. The philosophical core of his work resonates with existentialism, highlighting the individual’s quest for freedom and meaning within an increasingly mechanized and bureaucratic world<sup>37</sup>.

5. Heinlein’s superhuman figures serve as metaphors for societal critique, challenging authoritarian structures, government control, and religious dogma. His later works advocate for radical individualism, presenting characters as agents of liberation from traditional social constraints. This thematic shift reflects the broader societal movements of the 1960s and 1970s, where countercultural ideologies prioritized personal freedom over structured authority<sup>38</sup>.

6. Heinlein’s portrayal of the superhuman diverges from traditional interpretations, particularly Nietzsche’s concept of the *Übermensch*. While Nietzsche’s idea focuses on transcending morality through power, Heinlein’s superhuman characters emphasize liberty, equality, and fraternity, aligning more with democratic ideals. This focus on equality is particularly evident in his later works, where the superhuman is not merely superior to others but symbolizes collective societal progress. Heinlein’s philosophy situates his works within a broader literary discourse on utopian and dystopian futures, where the superhuman figure functions as a means to explore the transcendence of human limitations.

7. Heinlein’s depiction of young protagonists reflects his deep belief in the capacity of youth to bear the burdens of an increasingly

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<sup>37</sup> Ələsgərova, G.A. ABŞ-da elmi-fantastik janrın “dekani” R. Haynlaynın yaradıcılığı haqqında // – Bakı: Bakı Slavyan Universiteti, Tağıyev Oxuları, – 2016. II cild, – s.171-175.

<sup>38</sup> Alasgarova, G.A. Analyze of superhuman in Robert Heinlein novels // Scientific Discussion, – 2016. 2(2), – p. 31-34.

complex world. These characters, marked by intellectual maturity and resilience, often find themselves at the center of existential dilemmas, navigating the tensions between societal expectations and personal freedom. His young adult literature, filled with coming-of-age narratives, aligns psychologically and sociologically with the process of identity formation, particularly in how individuals respond to the demands of freedom and autonomy<sup>39</sup>.

8. Superhuman characters are rare in Azerbaijani literary scholarship but are present in classical works such as Kitabi-Dede Qorqud and Khamsa. Like Heinlein's works, these characters often embody human perfection and represent higher values. Later, Azerbaijani writers, including I.Huseynov, R.Rza, and S.Vurgun, incorporated speculative elements and portrayals of idealized humans, contributing to the broader tradition of speculative literature. This comparative analysis underscores the universality of the superhuman concept across different literary traditions as writers explore the tension between individual excellence and societal constraints. Noteworthy examples of superhuman protagonists also appear in the works of E.Mahmudov and N.Abdullayev<sup>40</sup>.

*The main contents and scientific provisions of the dissertation are reflected in the following articles and the theses by the author:*

1. Life and work of Robert Heinlein, Dean of the science fiction genre in the United States // – Baku: Azerbaijan University of Languages, Language and Literature, – 2016. № 4, – p.166-173;
2. Works of R.Heinlein, “Dean” of the science fiction genre in the United States // Baku: Baku Slavic University, Taghiyev Readings, – 2016. Vol.II, – p.171-175;

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<sup>39</sup> Ələsgərova, G.A. Robert Haynlaynın yeniyetmə əsərlərində gələcək nəsəl obrazı // Journal of Qafqaz University: Philology and Pedagogy, – 2016. 4(2), – s.179-187.

<sup>40</sup> Alasgarova, G.A. Why has sci-fi literature lost its popularity in Azerbaijan after 1990? // – Москва, Россия, Вестник Российского Университета Дружбы Народов. Серия: Литературоведение. Журналистика, – 2020. Том 25 № 1, – p.68-82.

3. Analysis of science-fiction genre, which is the most advanced type of fiction // – Baku: Baku Slavic University, Actual Problems of Studying Humanities, – 2016. № 4, – p.132-136;
4. Analysis of Golden Age of Science Fiction in America // – Baku: ANAS, Institute of Manuscripts named after M.Fuzuli, Philological issues, – 2016. №.10, – p.300-305;
5. Analyze of Superhuman in Robert Heinlein novels // – Praha, Czech Republic, Scientific discussion, – 2016. #2 (2), – p.31-34. ISSN: 3041-4245, <http://scientific-discussion.com/en/scientific-discussion/>;
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7. Supernatural Characters in American Science Fiction Novels // – Vienna, Austria: European Journal of Literature and Linguistics, – 2017. Issue 1, – p.52-55.
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9. Why has SCI-FI Literature Lost its Popularity in Azerbaijan after 1990? // – Москва, Россия: Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Литературоведение. Журналистика, – 2020. Том 25, № 1, – с.68-82. ISSN 2312-9220 (Print), ISSN 2312-9247 (Online), РИИЦ, ВАК
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11. Interaction and development of “Big Three” writers of the science fiction genre in the Azerbaijani literature // “Actual Problems of Teaching Foreign Languages” Republican Scientific-Practical Conference. – Baku: Azerbaijan, – 5-6 May, – 2016. – p.444-446;

12. As a multiculturalism-dialogue between civilizations in the works of science fiction writer Robert Heinlein // Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan, XX Republican Scientific Conference of Doctoral Students and Young Researchers, – Baku: Azerbaijan State University of Oil and Industry, – May 24-25, – 2016, II Vol., – p.552-554;
13. Extraordinary superhumans in the world literature // I International Scientific Conference of Young Researchers dedicated to the 94th anniversary of national leader Heydar Aliyev, – Baku: Azerbaijan, – 05-06 May, – 2017, 2 Volume, – p.827-828;
14. General overview on the work of Robert Heinlein // I International Scientific Conference of Young Researchers dedicated to the 94th anniversary of national leader Heydar Aliyev, – Baku: Azerbaijan, – 05-06 May, – 2017, 2 Volume, – p.849-850;
15. The image of the Superman in the novel “Stranger in a Strange Land” // III International Scientific Conference of Young Researchers, – Baku: Azerbaijan, – 29-30 April, – 2019, 2 Volume, – p.1353-1356;
16. Azerbaijan XXI century science fiction novels // Ankara II. International Scientific Research Congress, – Ankara: Turkey, – 6-8 March, – 2020, – p.447-449. ISBN-978-625-7914-23-9, <https://www.ankarakongresi.org/>.





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Address: AZ 1014, Baku, Rashid Behbudov Street, 134.

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