



Dialogue

Chingiz Abdullayev is an Azerbaijani novelist awarded as People's Writer of Azerbaijan, President of PEN-club and senior secretary of the Writers Union of Azerbaijan. Born in Baku, Chingiz Abdullayev grew in a family that is within the Bakuvian intelligentsia and he graduated from the law school of Azerbaijan State University.

His novel "Blue Angels" - the first work of literature of Abdullayev within a suspenseful genre – was kept by the KGB for three years before being published. It was banned by them as they linked their justification to the material in it identified as top secret. The author writes generally in genres of detective, politics and espionage.

Today he has published almost 200 books, written 60 screenplays and about 400 articles. The books of his were translated into 32 languages and were published in Baltic countries, CIS, USA, France, Sweden, Norway, Turkey, Bulgaria, Israel, Romania and Italy with a total circulation of more than 30 million copies. In addition to that 2 TV series and 8 films were shot based on his works.

For our interview we met with Mr. Chingiz Abdullayev at the Writers Union of Azerbaijan in Baku.

Tofiq Husein-zadeh:

You are a person who is in the know of the depths of the detective genre. What, do you think, catches the interest of readers the most in this genre?

Chingiz Abdullayev:

Balzac said that people are really concerned about two questions: of money and of death, and he said this in the middle of the 19th century. May be the detective genre of a concentrated type unpacks these two questions: of death and of money. Perhaps, that's what concerns people at present time as well and may be they want to get some rest escaping problems and, most importantly, to believe that there is justice in life and the guilty are punished, at least in books, since in reality it is not always the case.

Tofiq Husein-zadeh:

Both detective and espionage are among the literary genres of yours.

Chingiz Abdullayev:

Yes, I have espionage fiction, analytical, police work and of political genres. I write in various genres depending on my frame of mind.

Tofiq Husein-zadeh:

Which literary moves would you advise to the young writers that are beginning to write within this genre?

Chingiz Abdullayev:

The most important move is for it to be an interesting read for oneself. If it isn't an interesting read for oneself then nobody is going to read it. You must live inside the work itself together with its heroes. In addition to that today there are millions of various works being published that are then sold online. So how could you create your work of literature so that it is an interesting one?!

Tofiq Husein-zadeh:

Who among the giants of literature that you've met thus far from around the world have left a strong impression on you?

Chingiz Abdullayev:

They were, of course, Ray Bradbury – my favourite writer, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Sergey Mikhalkov, Orhan Pamuk, Camilo José Cela, José de Sousa Saramago – he, for me, is an exemplar on morality. There were many writers with whom I met and it was very interesting to be in a conversation with them.

Tofiq Husein-zadeh:

What would you say about the Azerbaijani intelligentsia, what are the characteristics and distinctive qualities of it?

Chingiz Abdullayev:

Our intelligentsia is more cosmopolitan. If, for example, the Georgian or the Armenian intelligentsia have been tied up only to the nationalist values, which is on one hand a good thing but on the other hand it is a kind of one-sidedness, then the Azerbaijani one has always been multiculturalist, polyphonic, open to the whole world... Our masterpieces were created in the Persian language, later Ismail Bek Kutkashenli created his works in the French language, in the 20th century most of our writers as Imran Kasumov, Ibrahimbekov brothers wrote in Russian and today some of our young writers create works in English. Our intelligentsia is multilateral and regardless of in which language they contemplate, think and create their works Natig Rasulzade, Chingiz Fataliyev, or Chingiz Abdullayev, we would be offended if someone says that we are not Azerbaijani writers similarly to the way if Chingiz Aitmatov would be called a writer who isn't Kyrgyz or Olzhas Suleimanov who isn't a Kazakh writer even though they wrote in Russian too.



Photo courtesy: International University of Sarajevo

Tofiq Husein-zadeh:

Ludwig Wittgenstein said: “the limits of my language are the limits of my world”. How do you think the languages influence the processes related to thinking?

Chingiz Abdullayev:

Anar is an ideal example. He has written all his life in Azerbaijani and in the last few years he began writing in the Russian language. His novel ‘the Sixth Floor of the Five-Floor Building’ was written in Azerbaijani but his book ‘Nighttime Thoughts’ was written in Russian.

Thinking works not in language but through symbols, forms, while language is the instrument and it is very important that the national literature advances which is a major direction however, as Chekhov noted, any clever text is international. It is difficult to translate poets but the writers are understood all over the world because any clever thought

about love, about loyalty, about patriotism, about hatred, they are international, universal. It was even said by a great figure that there is no such thing as national mathematics or biology, that’s impossible. Literature always relies on national roots but real literature always raises international questions, say, the creativity of Shakespeare is understood by everyone because it reviews the questions about the entire humanity or the creativity of Dante, too, is comprehensive for everyone and the problems he worked on are panhuman as well.

So, this is why I think language is, of course, the fundamental means of expression but the 20th century has provided evidence as, for example, among the most famous ones, Brodsky, Nabokov and modern writers who write excellently in two languages. For you to be read, you need to be translated to the main languages of the world but the national language, of course, has to continue advancing.

Photo courtesy: Dayaz



Tofiq Husein-zadeh:

What advice would you give to the world's intelligentsia?

Chingiz Abdullayev:

I don't think I have the right to give advice to the intelligentsia but it is necessary to be active, to open up to the internet space, to publish there and to stand out there, not to be shy, provided that to understand how there might be unprejudiced feedback, there is no oversight on the internet and anyone can write whatever they think and what they would never tell one face to face. This is the world of the 21st century; it's necessary to accept it.

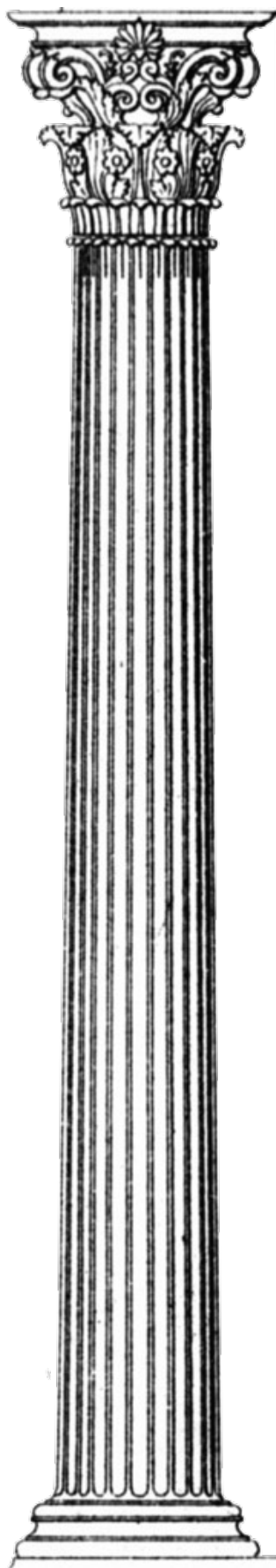
Tofiq Husein-zadeh:

The literary genre of magical realism was interesting in the past whilst today it is even more understood. As you know this genre is more about

realism than about magic because in this genre the focus is on the magic that is in the real world and not in the fantastic one. Do you integrate it in your works? What can you say about magical realism?

Chingiz Abdullayev:

Genres are not always important, what's important is the idea itself and it's a priority for it be read. It is the 21st Century now and who would have thought that the child fantasy of Joanne Rowling about Harry Potter will catch the interest of the whole world or the magical realism of Márquez, in which there almost isn't any direct speech, will conquer the whole world or who would have thought that almost half a century after Tolkien's work 'Lord of the Rings' it will turn into a motion picture creating great interest in it – a great masterpiece and the film on it is no less notable than the book. The same could be said about 'The Game of Thrones'...



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Who would have thought that ‘The Da Vinci Code’ by Dan Brown will spread among millions world over even though the film has incongruities such as when the hero goes out of the Ritz Hotel, sits in a car and drives to Louvre although the distance is a short walk of about 100 steps. Any genre can be interesting depending on the idea of the literary work. Who would have thought that Svetlana Alexievich will receive the Nobel Prize for a book that she made out of interviews.

anything. Every year of yours shortens, if you are thirty, then one year lived is one of thirty, if I am sixty, then my one year is one out of sixty. Appreciate your life, try to understand something in this life, love life, love women, and women should love intelligent men, try to read intelligent books, see beautiful places, and of course, if it is possible try to save your own self, as it is said in the Bible, what is the worth of a human being that conquered the entire world but lost their own soul.



“Literature always relies on national roots but real literature always raises international questions.”



Tofiq Husein-zadeh:

What do you think are main qualities of a writer from the future?

Chingiz Abdullayev:

Diligence - the most important quality - to love to write, he must see this craft like his child, only diligence and once again diligence.

Tofiq Husein-zadeh:

What is your advice to the young generation?

Chingiz Abdullayev:

Learn how to live in the conditions of the modern world, try to be thankful for living, we often don't understand, how fast life goes on, I know many old people who say that life went by like a dream and I didn't even understand

Tofiq Husein-zadeh:

I would like to thank you for participating in this interview.

Chingiz Abdullayev:

Thank you.



*" You must live inside
the work itself
together with its heroes."*

Chingiz Abdullayev