

GLOBALIZATION AND THE CRISIS OF MODERN IDENTITY: THE CONFRONTATION OF 'I' AND 'OTHER' IN THE 21ST-CENTURY AZERBAIJANI NOVEL

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Abstract

This article analyzes the transformation of identity in the context of globalization, using the 21st-century Azerbaijani novel as a case study. Global processes lead to the fragmentation of the individual, the erosion of traditional foundations, and the intensification of internal contradictions between the established image of the self and the culturally constructed image of the other. The study draws on the theoretical approaches of Z. Bauman, A. Giddens, W. Beck, E. Levinas, E. Said, and C. Todorov, allowing us to consider the crisis of subjectivity as a key feature of modernity. Using the works of Kamal Abdullah, Elchin Huseynbegli, and Akshin Yenisey as examples, the author identifies artistic mechanisms that model the internal state of a protagonist immersed in the tension between global pressure and cultural memory. Particular attention is paid to the role of language, myth, tradition, and historical experience as tools for the restoration of a holistic subject. It is shown that the contemporary novel is becoming a space for symbolic resistance to the fragmentation of the individual and, simultaneously, a laboratory for a new self-understanding. As a result, it is concluded that in the Azerbaijani prose of the 21st century, a fundamentally new model of identity is being formed, based on a dynamic the interaction of local and global meanings, allowing a person to maintain internal stability in an era of cultural turbulence.

Keywords: globalization, identity, contemporary novel, cultural memory.

Introduction: In the context of rapidly deepening globalization, the problem of transforming personal and collective identity is acquiring particular theoretical and practical significance. Modern humanity faces expanding cultural boundaries, accelerating information flows, and increasing social mobility, leading to the erosion of established notions of one's self and its place in the world. Therefore, the question of how identity is formed, destroyed, and reconstructed in a global space is becoming one of the key challenges for humanities in the early 21st century.

In Azerbaijani literature, the confrontation between "I" and "other" has deep historical roots. For centuries, artistic consciousness has sought to comprehend the problem of preserving one's identity in the face of external cultural influences, as well as the question of the individual's spiritual resilience in the face of change. However, in the modern era, this confrontation has become more complex: the global cultural environment, urbanization, technological transformations, and information pressures are creating new models of human perception and inner world. In the 21st-century Azerbaijani novel, these processes become particularly tangible—the protagonist finds himself in a space where his individuality is subject to destruction, fragmentation, and constant revision.

The modern novel acts as a kind of psychological laboratory, simulating the tension between the individual's inner world and the external factors of the global environment. Motifs such as the loss of stable values, existential emptiness, alienation, identity crisis, and the desire to find support in tradition, memory, and cultural codes emerge here.

The aim of this study is to identify how the crisis of modern identity is artistically represented in the 21st-century Azerbaijani novel and what literary strategies

are used to depict the confrontation between the self and the other. The analysis focuses on processes of self-identification, alienation, cultural disunity, and attempts to reconstruct a coherent image of the individual.

The objectives of the study include:

1. definition of the theoretical framework of the phenomenon of identity in the era of globalization;
2. analysis of artistic mechanisms demonstrating the destruction and reconstruction of the subject;
3. study of the image of the "other" as a cultural and psychological construct;
4. identification of the specifics of Azerbaijani literary discourse in modern socio-cultural conditions.

The concept of identity in the era of globalization: theoretical and methodological foundations.

The contemporary global era is characterized by the familiar structures of human identity being fundamentally re-evaluated and often destroyed. The intensity of transnational communications, the speed of information circulation, the unification of cultural practices, and increasing mobility create a unique form of human existence, in which the stability of the self is constantly under pressure from external forces. Zygmunt Bauman defines modernity as "liquid" not only in a social but also in an anthropological sense: people are losing their previous foundations, ceasing to perceive themselves as fixed entities, and are forced to continually adapt to new models of life [1, pp. 27–29]. In such a world, the individual functions as an open system, permeated by a variety of cultural signals, which inevitably leads to a sense of fragmentation and internal instability.

Anthony Giddens emphasizes that the modern subject is forced to "reflexively design" themselves and their biography, as old forms of collective belonging no

longer provide support and predictability upon which to rely [2, pp. 45–48]. Under conditions of globalization, individuals cease to be heirs to stable traditions: they become the architects of their own existence, constructing their identity on the basis of the clash of local experience with global demands. This tension forms the core of the contemporary "crisis of the subject."

The problem of the "other" occupies a special place in these transformations. Emmanuel Levinas argued that the other is the primary philosophical category, defining the very foundations of human existence [5, pp. 122–125]. However, in a globalized world, the "other" ceases to be a concrete individual and becomes an abstract symbol of everything external: Western culture, information technology, the market economy, and virtual communities. Edward Said demonstrated that the "other" is often constructed not as a real subject, but as a projection of fear, anxiety, and the desire for self-determination [4, pp. 9–12]. In this sense, global modernity radicalizes the image of the "other": it becomes not simply an opponent or neighbor in cultural space, but an invisible force capable of destroying the customary order of the individual.

For cultures with a deep historical experience of resisting external influences and rich traditions of collective memory, this situation creates additional complications. Azerbaijani cultural tradition has always placed exceptional importance on the individual's connection to historical memory, tribal affiliation, linguistic space, and communal solidarity. These elements served not only as components of cultural heritage but also as psychological mechanisms for protecting the individual from external pressure. However, globalization is disrupting the stability of these mechanisms: traditional forms of self-identification are beginning to give way to hybrid models in which local elements are blended with global ones, and national cultural codes with universal and standardized structures [10, pp. 67–71].

The postmodern subject, emerging from these clashes, lives in a situation of constant choice between multiple identities. Ulrich Beck points out that modern man is forced to "invent his own self" because he does not receive one ready-made from society or culture [3, pp. 103–106]. This creates a state of internal tension, as identity construction requires continuous reflection, which can lead to emotional burnout, instability, and a sense of personal inferiority. In such a context, the image of the "self" becomes unstable, and the image of the "other" is too powerful to be neutral or indifferent.

Literature—especially the novel—is sensitive to such anthropological shifts. The 21st-century Azerbaijani novel is becoming a space that reflects the dramatic state of the individual, immersed in global processes. The protagonist of a contemporary work, whether it be Kamal Abdullah, Elchin Huseynbegli, or Akshin Yenisey, exists in a state of existential rupture: they feel cut off from traditional sources of meaning, yet are unable to fully integrate into a global space that promises freedom but, in return, brings the collapse of old values. A constant dialogue arises in their consciousness between "self" and "other," between their own cultural heritage

and contemporary models of thinking, which are simultaneously attractive and destructive [7, pp. 50–54; 8, pp. 21–24; 9, pp. 13–16].

This dialogue is rarely harmonious. Rather, it is a conflict—quiet, internal, and painful. The hero strives for self-affirmation, but finds his sense of self undermined by the volatility of the external world; he seeks support in his own memory, but discovers that it, too, is subject to erosion under the influence of global cultural standardization. Thus, a new model of crisis is formed: the person becomes alienated not only from the world, but also from himself.

It is within this line of tension that a new Azerbaijani literary subject is born—an individual forced to endlessly develop their own identity, balancing global processes with the desire for internal integrity. Globalization in this case is not simply an external factor, but a profound cultural driver that destroys old foundations and forces the individual to re-construct their place in the world. Therefore, artistic analysis of this transformation becomes one of the most important ways to understand contemporary human experience.

Globalization and the crisis of the modern self in the 21st-century Azerbaijani novel.

The contemporary Azerbaijani novel of the 21st century has become a space in which globalization manifests itself not only as an external social reality but also as an internal dramaturgy of human existence. By addressing the psychological state of the protagonist, writers capture not so much the external signs of global change as the deep processes occurring within the individual confronted with a new type of world—accelerated, technologized, and fragmented. In this world, the individual finds themselves alone with the feeling of losing their stable footing, and it is this feeling that becomes the central motif of contemporary prose.

The city—primarily Baku—is transformed into a symbol of a new era: it emerges as a space saturated with information, noise, rapid movement, and cultural heterogeneity. It is precisely in the urban environment that the identity crisis manifests itself most acutely, as it is here that the processes of globalization become most visible. The protagonist of the Azerbaijani novel loses touch with the traditional space of family relationships, clan structures, and collective memory, confronting instead homelessness, loneliness, and inner emptiness. This is particularly noticeable in the works of Elchin Huseynbegli, where the motif of urban alienation becomes one of the leading artistic strategies. The author demonstrates that modern man, surrounded by a multitude of people, experiences profound loneliness, as he finds no emotional and spiritual space for dialogue [8, pp. 34–38]. The city seems to blur the boundaries of the individual, transforming it into an element of flux.

At the same time, the theme of the existential search for self is gaining momentum in contemporary prose. The hero of the 21st-century novel is often presented through internal monologue, streams of consciousness, and fragmented memories. This technique allows the writer to convey the state of psychological disorientation characteristic of humanity in the global age. In the works of Yenisei Akshin, we see a hero in a

state of constant doubt: he is unsure of his role, unsure of his past, and, most importantly, unsure of his own value in a world where traditional reference points have disappeared [9, pp. 14–19]. This sense of instability creates the figure of a "split personality," attempting to reassemble himself from the disparate elements of experience.

But globalization not only blurs the hero's inner world; it also creates a new figure of the "other" who permeates the consciousness of modern man. The "other" can take various forms—Western culture, digital technology, social media, the global consumer model, virtual communities. In Kamal Abdullah's works, this theme receives a philosophical interpretation: the "other" is not only a real character or external influence, but also a metaphysical dimension reflecting the profound duality of human existence [7, pp. 61–64]. The hero senses the presence of the "other" within himself—as an imposed ideal, a cultural template, a structured set of norms to which he is forced to conform, sometimes even contrary to his inner nature.

The information age exacerbates this condition: access to global culture, media platforms, and virtual social networks creates an unprecedented level of pressure on the individual. The 21st-century hero finds himself caught in a web of comparisons, imitations, and expectations that shape the image of the "other" as the culturally dominant subject. This leads to the individual beginning to perceive themselves through the prism of someone else's norm, evaluating their life not based on their own values, but on globally imposed notions of success, freedom, beauty, or professional fulfillment. This condition is described by Bauman as "institutionalized insecurity" of the individual [1, pp. 56–58], and it is clearly felt in contemporary Azerbaijani prose.

However, in the Azerbaijani novel, the identity crisis is not limited to the destruction of the traditional world. On the contrary, many authors view this situation as an opportunity to uncover internal conflicts previously concealed beneath the monolithic mask of collective identity. Through confrontation with the "other," the protagonist discovers their own fragmentation and understands that their inner problem is not an external threat, but a lack of internal support and deep self-understanding. The writers employ techniques of text fragmentation, interweaving temporal layers, and nonlinear narrative, which allow them to reflect the instability and illogicality of human experience in the face of global change.

The theme of language and memory plays a significant role here. The protagonist of the contemporary novel often feels a loss of connection with his native language, traditional forms of expression, and the cultural codes that have for centuries ensured the integrity of Azerbaijani identity. Language becomes an arena for struggle between personal experience and external models of thought. The loss of a deep sense of belonging to a linguistic tradition becomes one of the central symptoms of internal catastrophe, as a person who loses control of language loses the ability to form their own self. This problem manifests itself in the works of Yenisei, where the protagonist feels that the words with which he describes the world come not from his inner

experience, but from an external discourse imposed by modernity [9, pp. 23–26].

Yet, at the same time, a desire to overcome this crisis is noticeable in contemporary prose. The hero begins to realize that genuine interaction with the "other" is only possible when they acquire the capacity for dialogue, for a meaningful perception of external influences, without destroying their own essence. It is at this point that hope for the restoration of integrity emerges—not through a return to an archaic model of identity, but through the conscious integration of tradition into the modern structure of consciousness. Literature demonstrates that the path to integrity lies not through the rejection of globalization, but through the creation of an internal space in which local and global meanings can coexist without destroying each other.

Thus, in the 21st-century Azerbaijani novel, globalization becomes not just a backdrop but a key anthropological factor shaping the protagonist's inner dynamics. Urban space, the information environment, elements of cultural hybridity, and the sense of the presence of the "other" create a complex system of pressures on the individual. However, it is precisely through this tension that a new type of hero is born—one who is forced to seek new forms of self-identification, engage in dialogue with a rapidly changing world, and simultaneously strive to preserve their own integrity by bridging the gap between self and other. This process reflects profound changes in the structure of modern consciousness and demonstrates the ability of Azerbaijani literature to respond to the challenges of the global era.

National-cultural identity and the model of "return to oneself" in contemporary Azerbaijani prose.

In the context of global modernity, where identity is subject to multifaceted pressures, the 21st-century Azerbaijani novel turns to the theme of national cultural heritage as an important resource for reconstructing the human self. It is precisely in the juxtaposition of the dynamics of global processes and the deep structures of collective memory that a model of a resilient subject, capable of resisting fragmentation and internal disintegration, is formed. One of the key mechanisms of this reconstruction is an appeal to historical, cultural, and mythological layers, which act as an alternative support for the hero, tired of the chaos of the modern world. Researchers note that in the era of globalization, tradition ceases to be a static structure—it becomes an instrument of cultural self-defense and self-awareness [10, pp. 115–118].

A modern hero, experiencing an identity crisis, intuitively strives to reconnect with these deep layers. He searches cultural memory for answers to questions that cannot be resolved using rational categories or contemporary social models. This tendency is particularly noticeable in the works of Kamal Abdullah, where the mythopoetic layer acts as a parallel reality, allowing the hero to restore his shattered integrity. The text of "Yarymchyk əlyazma" is constructed in such a way that the past, myth, history, and modernity form a single narrative fabric, destroying linear time and creating a new type of artistic reality, in which the hero can enter into a dialogue not only with his own time but also with

the cultural memory of his people [7, pp. 79–84]. In this dialogue, he discovers the possibility of harmonizing the internal conflict arising between global pressures and local roots.

National memory in Azerbaijani novels appears not as an archaic space, but as a contemporary tool for self-understanding. It allows the protagonist to realize that their individuality is not dissolved in global cultural flows, but, on the contrary, can find stability if it draws on centuries-old meanings, symbols, and cultural practices. Language, folklore, rituals, and traditional behavior patterns become not only objects of nostalgia but also tools for critical analysis of modernity. In Huseynbegli's works, memory functions as a subtle emotional structure through which the protagonist perceives himself and the world; it maintains their inner balance in a situation where the external environment demands constant adaptation [8, pp. 55–59].

Language is particularly important as a fundamental element of cultural identity. In the context of globalization, language is threatened by standardization, the loss of unique meanings, and gradual erosion. Contemporary writers emphasize that the loss of the living sense of one's native language leads to the loss of the ability to express one's own experience in its authenticity. In his novels, Akshin Yenisei demonstrates that modern language is contaminated by external clichés that displace individual intonations and personal experiences [9, pp. 32–36]. The hero attempts to regain the ability to speak in words that belong to his own world, not those of imposed global discursiveness. In this sense, the struggle for language becomes a struggle for selfhood.

Along with language, the appeal to folkloric and mythological structures plays a crucial role. These elements of tradition act not as decorative motifs, but as genuine cognitive frameworks through which a person can understand their inner nature. Mythological narratives help us see universal models of human existence that exist beyond time, thus serving as a counterbalance to the chaos of modern life. In the 21st-century Azerbaijani novel, myth is used to demonstrate the multilayered nature of the individual: the hero simultaneously belongs to the present, the past, and the metaphysical space where collective wisdom is born. Through this multilayered nature, he gains the opportunity to transcend the crisis.

The motif of return acquires a special artistic expressiveness. This motif does not simply signify a retreat into the archaic; on the contrary, it is an attempt to find within one's own tradition meanings that can be integrated into contemporary consciousness. The hero does not seek to become part of the past; he strives to reinterpret it so that it can help him build the future. In this way, tradition becomes a dynamic resource rather than a static legacy. Researchers note that successful identity reconstruction is only possible when a person is able to connect cultural memory with the intellectual and emotional demands of the modern individual [10, pp. 122–124].

By turning to his national and cultural roots, the hero of the Azerbaijani novel finds an alternative to global fragmentation: he discovers the model of the

"collected" subject. This subject is built not on the rejection of globalization, but on its critical rethinking. He embraces the complexity of the modern world without dissolving into it. He uses tradition to find inner support, but does not hide in the past. He engages in dialogue with the "other" as a necessary element of his own being, but does not allow the "other" to destroy his essence. Thus, national and cultural memory becomes a space where the subject can be reborn.

It is this model of identity that is becoming the key feature of the 21st-century Azerbaijani novel. Literature is once again fulfilling the function it has fulfilled for centuries: it creates a space for reflection, therapy, and inner transformation. Its structure evokes the image of a person capable of overcoming global pressure by turning to deep cultural roots. Through tradition, language, memory, and myth, the modern hero gains the ability not only to endure but also to achieve integrity, uniting the local and the global, the personal and the collective, the internal and the external.

Conclusion:

The contemporary Azerbaijani novel of the 21st century demonstrates that the identity crisis caused by global processes is not merely a literary theme or a cultural anxiety; it represents a fundamental test of human existence. Caught between the pressure of the global "other" and the erosion of one's own roots, the individual experiences a state of disintegration, anxiety, and internal fragmentation. However, it is precisely in this state that the profound human capacity for self-assembly manifests itself, for recreating oneself from fragments of tradition, memory, language, and cultural codes that have endured for centuries.

The Azerbaijani novel becomes a space where this struggle finds artistic expression. Globalization emerges not as an unambiguously destructive force, but as a mirror in which the modern hero for the first time sees the scale of his inner emptiness and, simultaneously, the potential for his spiritual rebirth. In a tense dialogue between self and other, between the speed of modernity and the depth of cultural memory, a new image of the human being is born—incomplete but searching, unstable but honest with himself.

It is precisely this honesty that makes the possibility of overcoming the crisis a reality: the hero realizes that integrity is not an inherited given, but a process that requires effort, choice, and inner maturity. National culture and memory are not opposed to the global world, but become anchors that allow the individual to navigate the chaos of modernity without losing themselves. This is the central artistic and philosophical insight of 21st-century Azerbaijani prose: preserving inner light is possible only when a person is able to combine two energies—the ancient and the modern, the static and the fluid, the local and the universal.

And therefore the final idea of this article is extremely simple and at the same time multilayered:

In the era of globalization, the salvation of the individual lies not in escaping from "the other," but in the ability to hear one's own voice among the thousands of imposed voices of the world.

And the modern Azerbaijani novel shows that this voice - fragile but unbroken - is still sounds.

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