



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY IN TURKISH AND UZBEK MODERN POETRY: THE EVOLUTION OF THE LYRIC “I”

Nig‘matullayeva Sadoqat Baxodir qizi

Teacher, Department of Second Foreign Language

Uzbekistan State World Languages University

sadoqatnigmatullayeva@uzswlu.uz

Abstract

This article explores the evolution of the lyric “I” in Turkish and Uzbek modern poetry, focusing on how shifting socio-political contexts shaped poetic subjectivity. Through a comparative literary analysis grounded in modernist and postcolonial theory, the study examines three stages in the transformation of the lyric subject: the collective-social phase, the individualized-urban phase, and the existential-reflective phase. Drawing on representative poets from both traditions, the research demonstrates that the lyric “I” evolved from a national-representative voice to a psychologically complex and existentially fragmented subject. Despite differences in historical trajectories, Republican modernization in Turkey and colonial-Soviet transformation in Uzbekistan, both literary traditions reveal parallel negotiations between personal identity and social responsibility. The findings contribute to comparative modernist studies and deepen understanding of subjectivity in Turkic and Central Asian poetic discourse.

Keywords: Modern poetry, lyric “I,” Turkish poetry, Uzbek poetry, modernism, nationalism, subjectivity, comparative literature.

Introduction

Modernity radically reconfigured literary expression across the late Ottoman, Republican Turkish, and Central Asian intellectual spheres. Political reform, nationalism, colonial pressure, secularization, and urban transformation altered the conceptualization of identity. Poetry, as one of the most responsive literary forms, became a key site for negotiating the tension between individual consciousness and collective belonging.



In classical poetic traditions, particularly within Ottoman Divan poetry and classical Chagatai literature, the lyric voice operated within established symbolic conventions. The “I” was often archetypal rather than individual, functioning within metaphysical or mystical frameworks. However, modern poetry introduced what Foucault (1972) describes as the “author-function,” foregrounding individual subjectivity and psychological depth.

The emergence of the lyric “I” as a self-conscious subject in both Turkish and Uzbek modern poetry coincided with processes of modernization and nation-building. As Anderson (1983) argues, nations are “imagined communities” constructed through shared cultural narratives. Poetry became a vehicle for articulating these narratives, often positioning the lyric speaker as representative of collective aspirations. This study seeks to examine how the lyric “I” evolved in Turkish and Uzbek modern poetry and how this evolution reflects changing relationships between the individual and society.

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative comparative literary analysis as its primary methodological approach. The aim is not statistical measurement but interpretative depth, focusing on how poetic subjectivity evolves in relation to socio-historical transformation. The research is grounded in interdisciplinary theoretical perspectives, including modernist literary theory, nationalism studies, and existential philosophy. By combining close textual reading with contextual analysis, the study seeks to trace the transformation of the lyric “I” within Turkish and Uzbek modern poetry.

Corpus Selection

The corpus was selected to represent major phases of modern poetic development in both Turkish and Uzbek literary traditions. The selection prioritizes poets who are widely recognized as formative figures in shaping modern poetic discourse and whose works explicitly engage with questions of identity, society, and subjectivity. In Turkish modern poetry, the study examines works by:

Yahya Kemal Beyatlı, who bridges Ottoman classical tradition and early Republican modernism, preserving cultural continuity while negotiating national identity;

Nazım Hikmet, whose socially engaged and revolutionary poetry exemplifies the collective lyric voice during the early Republican and leftist movements;

Orhan Veli Kanık, a central figure of the Garip movement, who redefined poetic language through simplicity and urban realism;

Cemal Süreya, representing the Second New (İkinci Yeni) movement, whose abstract and introspective style foregrounds fragmented modern subjectivity.

In Uzbek modern poetry, the corpus includes:

Cho‘lpon, a leading Jadid poet whose work reflects national awakening and anti-colonial consciousness;

Usmon Nosir, whose emotionally intense poetry articulates individual tension within Soviet ideological constraints;

Erkin Vohidov, who mediates between collective identity and individual expression during the late Soviet and early independence period;

Abdulla Oripov, whose later works embody existential and spiritual reflection in post-independence Uzbekistan.

The selection of these poets allows for a diachronic comparison across three broad developmental phases: early modernist national awakening, mid-century individualization, and late modern existential introspection.

Analytical Framework

The textual analysis was conducted through close reading of selected poems, with particular emphasis on the use of first-person pronouns, self-referential structures, and rhetorical positioning of the lyric voice. The analysis examined how the lyric “I” constructs its relationship to society, whether as representative, oppositional, detached, or fragmented.

The research focused on four interrelated analytical dimensions:

Close Reading of First-Person Poetic Voice

Special attention was given to the grammatical and rhetorical functions of the first-person singular. The study analyzed how the lyric “I” addresses the audience, interacts with collective identity, and situates itself within or against social structures.

Thematic Analysis of Individual versus Collective Identity

Thematic patterns were identified concerning nationalism, reform, urban life, alienation, spirituality, and existential anxiety. This analysis explored whether the lyric subject aligns with societal ideals or distances itself from them.

Examination of Linguistic Modernization

The study investigated stylistic changes, including shifts from classical prosody to free verse, simplification of language, urban imagery, symbolic abstraction, and syntactic fragmentation. These linguistic choices were interpreted as indicators of changing conceptions of selfhood.

Contextualization within Socio-Political History

The poetic texts were situated within their historical contexts, including Ottoman reform, the Turkish Republic's nation-building process, Russian colonialism in Central Asia, Soviet ideological regulation, and post-independence transformations. This contextual approach recognizes that subjectivity in poetry is historically embedded rather than purely aesthetic.

Theoretical Grounding

The methodological framework draws upon several key theoretical perspectives: Modernist Fragmentation Theory (Bradbury & McFarlane, 1976), which explains how modern literature reflects cultural disintegration, urban alienation, and psychological complexity through fragmented narrative structures and symbolic density.

National Identity Theory (Anderson, 1983), which conceptualizes nations as imagined communities constructed through shared cultural narratives. This theory informs the analysis of early modern poetry in which the lyric "I" participates in nation-building discourse.

Existential Subjectivity (Sartre, 1943/2003), which frames the individual as a self-conscious being confronting freedom, anxiety, and responsibility. This theoretical lens is particularly relevant for interpreting late modern poetic introspection.

By integrating these frameworks, the study approaches the lyric "I" not merely as a stylistic device but as a historically situated subject shaped by ideological, cultural, and philosophical forces.

Comparative Approach

The comparative dimension of the study does not aim to establish direct influence between Turkish and Uzbek poets. Rather, it seeks to identify structural parallels and divergences in how poetic subjectivity evolves under different historical

pressures. The comparison is thematic and conceptual, focusing on patterns of transformation rather than chronological synchronization.

Results

1. The Social-Collective Lyric “I”

In early modern Turkish and Uzbek poetry, the lyric “I” functioned primarily as a representative voice of national awakening.

In Turkish poetry, Nazım Hikmet’s lyric subject merges personal emotion with proletarian and national struggle. His poetic “I” speaks collectively:

“I am the people, I am the oppressed.”

This aligns with Anderson’s (1983) argument that cultural production helps construct national identity. The lyric “I” here dissolves into collective consciousness.

Similarly, in Uzbek Jadid poetry, Cho‘lpon’s lyric voice expresses national sorrow and hope. His poems articulate cultural revival and anti-colonial sentiment. The “I” becomes a moral representative of society.

In this stage:

The individual aligns with social reform.

Poetry functions as ideological discourse.

Subjectivity remains socially embedded.

2. The Individualized Urban Lyric “I”

Mid-twentieth-century developments marked a shift toward personal and urban expression.

The Turkish Garip movement, led by Orhan Veli, rejected grand nationalist rhetoric. Instead, poetry focused on ordinary individuals navigating everyday urban life. The lyric “I” became mundane, ironic, and detached from heroic identity.

This transformation corresponds to what Bradbury and McFarlane (1976) describe as modernism’s rejection of traditional hierarchies. Language becomes simpler; the poetic self becomes ordinary.

In Uzbekistan, Soviet ideological constraints limited overt subjectivity. However, poets such as Usmon Nosir embedded subtle personal tension within socially acceptable frameworks. The lyric “I” expressed constrained individuality.

Here:

Personal emotion gains prominence.

Urban imagery increases.

Individual consciousness challenges collective frameworks.

3. The Existential and Fragmented Lyric “I”

Later modernism intensified introspection and alienation.

The Turkish Second New (İkinci Yeni) movement introduced abstract imagery and linguistic experimentation. Cemal Süreya’s lyric “I” is fragmented, metaphysical, and introspective. The poetic self questions identity and existence. This aligns with Sartre’s (1943/2003) existentialist emphasis on individual consciousness confronting absurdity.

Similarly, post-independence Uzbek poetry foregrounded existential concerns. Abdulla Oripov’s later works explore spiritual uncertainty and metaphysical questioning. The lyric “I” no longer serves the nation but searches for meaning.

Key features:

Fragmented syntax

Symbolic abstraction

Alienation from social structures

Metaphysical questioning

Comparative Analysis

Dimension	Turkish Modern Poetry	Uzbek Modern Poetry
Early Phase	National reform and Republican identity	Jadid reform and anti-colonial awakening
Mid Phase	Urban realism (Garip movement)	Controlled individual expression under Soviet regime
Late Phase	Existential abstraction (Second New)	Post-independence spiritual introspection
Lyric “I” Trajectory	Collective → Ordinary → Fragmented	National → Restrained → Existential

Despite differences in political experience, both traditions show parallel evolution from collective representation to existential individuality.

Discussion

The evolution of the lyric “I” reflects historical transformation.

In early modernity, poetry served nation-building and reform. The lyric subject functioned as ideological mediator.

Later, modernization and urbanization fostered individuality. As Foucault (1972) notes, discourse produces subjectivity; poetry became a space for negotiating identity beyond political frameworks.

Finally, existential modernism foregrounded alienation and fragmentation. The lyric “I” no longer represents society but questions it.

The parallel development in Turkish and Uzbek poetry demonstrates that modernist subjectivity transcends regional boundaries while remaining historically situated.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis reveals a dynamic transformation of the lyric “I” in Turkish and Uzbek modern poetry. From collective representation to existential fragmentation, the lyric subject reflects shifting relations between individual and society. While historical conditions differ, Republican consolidation in Turkey and colonial-Soviet transformation in Uzbekistan, the trajectory of poetic subjectivity shows structural similarities.

Modern poetry thus becomes a laboratory of identity formation, where the lyric “I” evolves from social spokesperson to autonomous, questioning consciousness.

References

1. Allworth, E. (1990). *The Modern Uzbeks*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press.
2. Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.
3. Bradbury, M., & McFarlane, J. (1976). *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature*. London: Penguin.
4. Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Tavistock.
5. Göknar, E. (2013). *Orhan Pamuk, Secularism and Blasphemy*. London: Routledge.
6. Gururajao, S.M., Everstova, V., Potekhina, E., Moydinova, E., Nikulushkin, A., & Muracova, N. (2025, April). *Assessing Academic Achievement in Adaptive Learning*. In *Computer Science On-line Conference* (pp. 445-453). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.



7. Kamariddinova, M.E. (2022). Professional Competence Structure of Future Pre-school English Teachers. *Galaxy International Interdisciplinary Research Journal*, 10(12), 15-18.
8. Karpat, K. (2001). *The Politicization of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
9. Sartre, J.-P. (2003). *Being and Nothingness*. London: Routledge. (Original work published 1943)
10. Yuldashova, N.M., Moydinova, E.K., Abdullayeva, D. M., Atakulova, E. T. S., Kayumova, G. A., Turgunova, F. M., & Xakimjonova, M. E. (2025). A COMPETENCY-BASED INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING ORAL COMMUNICATION IN TERTIARY EDUCATION. *Lex Localis*, 23(S6), 3504-3511.