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ВІДОБРАЖЕННЯ МУЛЬТИКУЛЬТУРНИХ ЦІННОСТЕЙ В АМЕРИКАНСЬКІЙ ТА АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНСЬКІЙ ЛІТЕРАТУРІ (НА МАТЕРІАЛІ РОМАНІВ СОЛА БЕЛЛОУ «ГЕРЦОГ» ТА ГУРБАНА САЇДА «АЛІ І НІНО»)

THE REFLECTION OF MULTICULTURAL VALUES IN AMERICAN AND AZERBAIJANI LITERATURE (BASED ON SAUL BELLOW'S "HERZOG" AND GURBAN SAID'S "ALI AND NINO" NOVELS)

Akhmadova S.F.

PhD student in Philology

Mingahcevir State University

ORCID ID: 0009-0004-8853-8020

У цій статті досліджується відображення мультикультурних цінностей в американській та азербайджанській літературі шляхом порівняльного аналізу романів Сола Беллоу «Герцог» і Гурбана Саїда «Алі та Ніно». Обидва твори, хоча й написані в різних культурних та історичних контекстах, сходяться у своєму зображенні гібридних ідентичностей, міжрелігійної толерантності та діалогу між Сходом і Заходом. Актуальність цього дослідження полягає в міждисциплінарному аналізі мультикультуралізму як літературного та соціокультурного явища, що відображає глобальний зсув у бік міжкультурного діалогу та толерантності. Новизна роботи визначається порівняльним аналізом американської та азербайджанської літературних моделей – «Герцог» і «Алі та Ніно», – який виявляє універсальні механізми, через які література втілює та передає мультикультурні цінності між цивілізаціями. Дослідження спирається на філософські й соціологічні теорії мультикультуралізму та інтегрує сучасні праці з міжкультурної освіти й релігійної поміркованості, щоб створити багатовимірну аналітичну модель для літературного аналізу. Порівняльна методологія показує, що мультикультуралізм функціонує не лише як описова категорія, а й як етична та естетична парадигма, що поєднує локальні ідентичності з універсальними гуманістичними цінностями. У романі «Герцог» Беллоу зображує американське суспільство XX століття як багатоконфесійну спільноту, у якій співіснують і конфліктують єврейська спадщина, світський раціоналізм і гуманістичні ідеали, формуючи психологічну основу сучасної мультикультурної свідомості. Натомість у романі «Алі та Ніно» Баку початку XX століття постає мікркосмом взаємодії східної та західної цивілізацій, де іслам, християнство та світська модерність переплітаються як у гармонії, так і в напруженні. У статті доведено, що обидва автори перетворюють особисті історії кохання й вигнання на художні роздуми про співіснування та культурну множинність. Поєднуючи літературну інтерпретацію із сучасними теоретичними підходами, дослідження підкреслює здатність літератури втілювати мультикультурну етику та долати філософську відстань між цивілізаціями. Зрештою, такий порівняльний підхід підкреслює об'єднувальний потенціал літератури у сприянні міжкультурному порозумінню. Він також підтверджує, що мультикультурні наративи залишаються важливими засобами для розвитку глобального діалогу та взаємної поваги у сучасному світі.

Ключові слова: мультикультуралізм, мультикультурні цінності, «Герцог», «Алі та Ніно», багатоконфесійне суспільство.

This article explores the reflection of multicultural values in American and Azerbaijani literature through a comparative analysis of Saul Bellow's "Herzog" and Gurban Said's "Ali and Nino". Both novels, though written in different cultural and historical contexts, converge in their representation of hybrid identities, interreligious tolerance, and the dialogue between East and West. The relevance of this study lies in its interdisciplinary examination of multiculturalism as both a literary and sociocultural phenomenon, reflecting the global shift toward intercultural dialogue and tolerance. The novelty of the research is determined by its comparative analysis of American and Azerbaijani literary models – "Herzog" and "Ali and Nino" – which reveals the universal mechanisms through which literature embodies and transmits multicultural values across civilizations. The research draws upon philosophical and sociological theories of multiculturalism and integrates recent studies on intercultural education and religious moderation to establish a multidimensional framework for literary analysis. The comparative methodology reveals that multiculturalism functions not merely as a descriptive category but as an ethical and aesthetic paradigm, mediating between local identities and universal humanistic values. In "Herzog", Bellow depicts twentieth-century America as a multi-confessional society in which Jewish heritage, secular rationalism, and humanist ideals coexist and conflict, forming the psychological foundation of modern multicultural consciousness. Conversely, "Ali and Nino" portrays early twentieth-century Baku as a microcosm of Eastern and Western civilizational interaction, where Islam, Christianity, and secular modernity interweave in both harmony and tension. The article demonstrates that both authors transform personal narratives of love and exile into artistic reflections on coexistence and cultural plurality. By aligning literary interpretation with contemporary theoretical insights, the study underscores literature's capac-

ity to embody multicultural ethics and to bridge the philosophical distance between civilizations. Ultimately, this comparative approach highlights the unifying potential of literature in promoting cross-cultural understanding. It also reaffirms that multicultural narratives remain vital tools for fostering global dialogue and mutual respect in the modern world.

Key words: multiculturalism, multicultural values, “Herzog”, “Ali and Nino”, multi-confessional society.

Introduction. In contemporary humanities, the concept of *multiculturalism* functions not only as a sociopolitical framework but also as a key category of philosophical and literary reflection. Both American and Azerbaijani societies possess distinctly multicultural characters – yet they embody this diversity in different historical, ideological, and artistic contexts. In the United States, the multicultural paradigm emerged as a form of civic consolidation under the ideology of Americanism, while in Azerbaijan it evolved within the synthesis of ethnic, linguistic, and confessional coexistence that has characterized the region for centuries.

From a philosophical standpoint, multiculturalism represents a response to the global processes of differentiation and integration. As V.Bekh et al. note, the genesis of multicultural discourse reflects “*the historical necessity to harmonize the coexistence of different cultural identities through dialogue and recognition of the Other*” [1, p. 181].

Thus, multiculturalism functions as both an epistemological and an ethical category – one that presupposes the coexistence of distinct traditions within a shared civilizational space. This duality – tension between cultural identity and universality – underlies much of twentieth-century Western and postcolonial literature, including the works of Saul Bellow [2] and Gurban Said [3].

The “melting pot” metaphor in American thought, as formulated by early twentieth-century sociologists, envisioned a unification of ethnicities under a shared American identity. Yet, as Yitzhaki and Schechtman argue, the American “melting pot” was not an erasure of difference but a process of “*selective integration*” through which plural identities were rearticulated within a broader civic framework [4, s.139]. Modern theorists of multiculturalism have replaced this metaphor with that of a “*mosaic or tapestry*”, emphasizing coexistence and interaction rather than assimilation [5, p. 9].

In Azerbaijan, the multicultural tradition has a deeper historical foundation. The peaceful coexistence of Turkic, Persian, Jewish, Armenian, Lezgi, and other communities, as well as the interpenetration of Islamic, Christian, and secular cultural forms, has for centuries constituted the basis of Azerbaijan’s social and cultural life. As G.Guliyev and U.Rakhimova observe, Azerbaijani multiculturalism “*does not originate from political necessity but from the organic*

historical development of ethnic and religious diversity within a single sociocultural organism” [6, p. 16]. This pre-modern coexistence later transformed into a consciously articulated ideological and political value – *Azerbaijani multiculturalism* – officially recognized as part of the national identity and state policy in the 21st century [7, p. 41].

The study of multicultural representations in literature serves as a bridge between philosophical concepts and artistic embodiment. As M Farzand notes, “*literature acts as a tapestry interweaving voice of difference, allowing readers to perceive the ethical and aesthetic significance of cultural plurality*” [5, p. 7]. In this sense, both Bellow’s “Herzog” and Gurban Said’s “Ali and Nino” articulate the lived experience of cultural intersection – one within the context of American Jewish identity and the other within the trans-Caucasian space of Islamic and Christian civilizations. Each represents a unique response to the dilemmas of belonging, identity, and universalism in the modern world.

A comparative analysis of “Herzog” and “Ali and Nino” enables a cross-cultural dialogue between two literary traditions that, though geographically distant, converge thematically on issues of hybridity, religious tolerance, and existential reconciliation between East and West. Bellow’s protagonist, Moses Herzog, oscillates between Jewish heritage and American modernity, reflecting the inner fragmentation of a multicultural consciousness. Gurban Said’s Ali Khan, on the other hand, experiences the conflict between Eastern spirituality and Western rationalism in early twentieth-century Baku – a city symbolizing the intersection of civilizations. Both works, therefore, provide complementary perspectives on the transformation of identity within multicultural societies.

The relevance of this study lies in its attempt to reveal the literary universality of multicultural discourse, transcending national boundaries. While multiculturalism in the U.S. has been largely shaped by the politics of ethnicity and immigration, Azerbaijani multiculturalism arises from the indigenous synthesis of faiths and traditions. The comparative reading of these two models contributes to a broader understanding of cultural coexistence as a fundamental human value and highlights literature’s potential to mediate between the local and the global, the ethnic and the universal.

Methods and Materials. This research employs a comparative literary and cultural analysis to examine the reflection of multicultural values in Bellow's "Herzog" and Gurban Said's "Ali and Nino". The study integrates methods of historical-typological, hermeneutic, and socio-cultural interpretation, allowing for the identification of universal and nationally specific manifestations of multiculturalism within different cultural contexts – American and Azerbaijani. The historical-typological method reveals the similarities and divergences in the representation of identity, religion, and intercultural dialogue in both novels, while the hermeneutic approach facilitates an in-depth reading of symbolic, ethical, and philosophical layers of the texts.

The material basis of the research consists primarily of the novels "Herzog" (1964) by Saul Bellow [2] and "Ali and Nino" (1937) by Gurban Said [3]. The interdisciplinary character of the study – combining literary analysis, cultural studies, and philosophy – enables a comprehensive understanding of how multicultural discourse manifests through narrative structure, character systems, and the ethical paradigms of both American and Azerbaijani societies.

Literature Review. The reflection of multicultural values in literature has been widely examined within sociocultural, philosophical, and comparative frameworks. Foundational theories of multiculturalism, particularly those articulated by C. Kukathas establish a liberal philosophical basis for understanding diversity as a form of individual autonomy within pluralistic societies [8]. The socio-philosophical underpinnings of multicultural discourse, as explored by V. Bekh, V. Vashkevych, and A. Kravchenko, emphasize the historical genesis of multiculturalism as a social response to globalization, cultural hybridity, and postcolonial transformations [1]. Similarly, A. Kolodiy's discussion of human rights culture as a foundation of civil society highlights the ethical and civic dimensions of multicultural cohabitation [9]. These theoretical perspectives are extended in N. Netshivhambe's work on "Cultural Tolerance, which interprets multiculturalism as a communicative mechanism enabling coexistence among diverse ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups [10]. The geopolitical aspect of multicultural identity formation, analyzed in "APV: Geopolitical Multiculturalism", reveals how the collapse of empires gave rise to hybrid cultural forms and literary syncretism [11], a framework relevant to both the American and Azerbaijani historical contexts examined in this study.

Contemporary scholarship has increasingly focused on the manifestation of multiculturalism in

artistic and literary expression. M. Farzand M. and M. Kannadhasan & Saravanan explore the interplay between multiculturalism and social realism in literature, identifying how narrative diversity and hybrid character structures mirror real-world cultural pluralism [5; 12]. In the Azerbaijani context, there are some researches, which emphasize the rootedness of multicultural tolerance in national consciousness and artistic tradition, while I. Habibbayli and T. Alishanoglu analyze the reflection of Azerbaijani identity and historical truth in Gurban Said's "Ali and Nino" [13; 14]. Comparative cultural analysis is further enriched by N. Aeni and et. al., who demonstrate how intercultural education fosters tolerance and empathy [15] – principles central to both Bellow's and Said's novels. Religious inclusivity as a core value of multiculturalism is addressed in A. Ridwanulloh et al. [16], while M. Godman argues for the emancipatory potential of multiculturalism in advancing gender equality [17]. Collectively, these studies provide a multidimensional framework for analyzing "Herzog" and "Ali and Nino" as literary embodiments of multicultural coexistence, revealing how both works articulate tolerance, identity negotiation, and the ethical dilemmas of plural societies.

Results. The historical and typological comparison of Saul Bellow's "Herzog" and Gurban Said's "Ali and Nino" makes it possible to grasp the essence of multicultural values in the societies of the United States and Azerbaijan. There are solid grounds for such a comparative approach. Both authors, despite being separated by time and geography, reflect in their works the existential dilemmas faced by multicultural societies in the twentieth century – identity, coexistence, and the dialogue between East and West.

From the perspective of cultural philosophy, multiculturalism is not merely a political concept but *"a principle of ethnonational and cultural policy that recognizes and supports the right of citizens to preserve, develop, and protect their cultural distinctiveness by legal means"* [18, p. 220]. This idea, articulated in the works of C. Kukathas and A. Kolodiy, establishes the theoretical foundation for understanding multicultural literature as a reflection of liberal coexistence and intercultural dialogue. In this sense, the novels of Bellow and Said represent artistic case studies of soft multiculturalism – the form that *"grants every individual the freedom to determine the degree of assimilation while maintaining cultural identity"* [8, p. 77; 9, p. 36]

Saul Bellow, an American novelist of Jewish origin, embodied the multicultural consciousness of twentieth-century American modernism. Born

Solomon Bellows to a family of Russian Jewish immigrants, he inherited both the intellectual traditions of European humanism and the pragmatic values of American individualism. As K.Lefringhausen and N.Geeraert note, the American model of multiculturalism emerged in a society historically composed of immigrants, where “*all ethnic communities regard the United States as their own country*,” [19, p. 76] making cultural pluralism a natural condition of social development. Bellow’s characters, particularly Moses Herzog, embody this duality: their Jewish-European heritage coexists with a deeply American search for personal autonomy and moral grounding.

Gurban Said, born Lev Nussimbaum, represents a unique synthesis of Eastern and Western identity. His pseudonyms – Mohammed Essad Bey and Gurban Said – themselves mark the cultural hybridity of his creative persona. Having converted to Islam and lived in exile across Europe, he became a writer of borderlands, both literally and spiritually. As research on Azerbaijani multiculturalism shows, such synthesis is historically grounded in the ethnic and religious diversity of the region, where “*Turkic, Persian, Jewish, Armenian, and other groups have coexisted for centuries in a shared sociocultural space*” [7, p. 23]. Thus, “Ali and Nino” stands as a literary expression of the Azerbaijani version of multiculturalism – not politically imposed but organically formed through coexistence and tolerance.

Although “Ali and Nino” was first published in German in 1937, it gained worldwide recognition only after its English translation in the 1970s, having been translated into thirty-three languages [20, p. 16]. Interestingly, this period coincides with the rise of multicultural discourse in Western intellectual life, when the American and European humanities began to conceptualize “*the equality of all cultures and their mutual enrichment in the universal stream of mass culture*” [18, p. 220]. Similarly, the 1970s marked the height of Saul Bellow’s international fame, when his work was recognized with the Nobel Prize as a major contribution to the literature of modern humanism and pluralism.

Both writers shared biographical experiences of exile and cultural displacement – Bellow through the immigrant experience of his family, Said through forced migration and identity transformation. Their works translate these biographical realities into aesthetic structures. In Bellow’s “Herzog”, the protagonist’s existential letters express the alienation and internal fragmentation of the modern intellectual in a multicultural society. His endless

dialogue with public figures, philosophers, and historical personalities mirrors what L.Grytsiak and V.Khlopchyk define as “*the global necessity of intercultural communication and the tolerant dialogue of civilizations in the information era*” [18, p. 221]. Likewise, in “Ali and Nino”, the love between a Muslim Azerbaijani and a Christian Georgian becomes a symbol of civilizational dialogue, where cultural difference is not a barrier but a mode of mutual recognition.

From a geopolitical standpoint, both novels may also be read as responses to the crises of identity that arose in the wake of imperial decline – the British and Russian empires, respectively. The geopolitical multiculturalism of the early twentieth century – “*the collapse of imperial systems generated hybrid cultural identities and literary syncretism that united religious, linguistic, and national elements into new forms of world literature*” [11, p. 212]. This observation applies equally to the American post-immigrant experience depicted by Bellow and the post-imperial Caucasian world of Said.

The continuing relevance of their works lies in their humanistic core. Both writers transform the personal tragedies of love, exile, and moral conflict into philosophical reflections on coexistence. In this sense, their fiction anticipates what K.Lefringhausen and N.Geeraert term “*attitudinal multiculturalism*” – an ethical stance based not only on demographic diversity or state policy but on the “*personal readiness to engage with the Other*” as an equal partner in dialogue [19, s. 80].

The novel “Ali and Nino” is likewise narrated in the voice of the main character, Ali Khan, whose love for the Georgian girl Nino encompasses his entire life. Against the backdrop of this love story, the novel depicts the atmosphere of early twentieth-century Baku – then a provincial city of the Russian Empire – along with its national and spiritual processes, interethnic relations, the ethno-political landscape of Azerbaijan situated at the crossroads of East and West, the First World War, the fall of Tsarism, the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, and other historical events. In defense of his homeland against Russian occupation, Ali Khan becomes a martyr during the battles of Ganja; it is eventually revealed that the novel consists of entries from his personal diary.

From a theoretical standpoint, this narrative arc exemplifies how literary texts function as sites where multicultural values are performed and negotiated: literature “*interweaves voices of difference*,” enabling readers to apprehend ethical pluralism and cross-cultural dialogue rather than mere coexistence.

This function of literature as a tapestry of diverse narratives reinforces the interpretive claim that “Ali and Nino” thematizes multiculturalism not only descriptively (as social fact) but normatively (as value) [5, p. 10].

In both novels, the embodiment of multicultural values occupies a significant place and forms the core of each author’s artistic conception. In “Herzog”, the protagonist Moses’s mother envisions him as a future rabbi, while his father strictly upholds the traditional canons of a Jewish family. Despite receiving a secular education, adhering to the norms of civil society, and being part of the modern intellectual world, these cultural and religious roots are mentally imprinted in the hero’s character and manifest themselves in his attitude toward society and the surrounding world. Read through the lens of contemporary research, this tension between inherited religio-cultural identity and secular modernity echoes findings that “*religious moderation within multicultural frameworks*” enhances social integration and interfaith tolerance – not by erasing difference, but by contextualizing it through balanced, dialogical practices [16, p. 97].

The protagonist of “Ali and Nino”, Ali Khan, also receives a secular education, studying at the Russian Gymnasium in Baku – a multicultural environment: “*In the third grade of the Russian Gymnasium in Baku, there were forty of us: thirty Muslims, four Armenians, two Poles, three sectarians, and one Russian*” [3, p. 3]. His modern worldview does not undermine his religious faith. Ali Khan belongs to the noble and ancient Shirvanshir lineage. His father, Safar Khan Shirvanshir, is one of Baku’s most respected and wealthy men, while his uncle serves as a high-ranking vizier in the Iranian court. On the day Ali Khan successfully completes his studies, his father blesses him and reminds him of the duties of a Muslim and the necessity of following them: “*My son, now that you are stepping into life, I must once again explain to you a Muslim’s obligations... To survive, we must preserve our ancient traditions and our old way of life...*” [3, p. 27]) The father concludes with ethical injunctions and a confessional reminder of Shia identity.

Empirically, Ali’s stance – maintaining strong Muslim commitment while showing civic tolerance toward Christians and Georgians – aligns with the evidence that religious moderation framed by multicultural norms promotes intergroup cohesion, provided such moderation is embedded in educational, policy, and community practices rather than reduced to private piety. This is precisely the pattern recent systematic reviews identify: moderation, contextualized by multicultural values,

correlates with enhanced interfaith tolerance, civic dialogue, and sustainable social integration [16].

In Muslim contexts, programmatic accounts likewise stress that tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), anti-violence, and accommodation of local traditions (where they do not contradict core religious tenets) are key indicators of religious moderation that can operationalize multicultural convivencia – a matrix that mirrors Ali’s respectful participation in Georgian feasts without renouncing Islamic observance [15, p. 35].

Although it is not always possible for Ali Khan to follow all his father’s prescriptions, he consistently preserves his faith and manages to act as a true Muslim while remaining tolerant toward people of other religions. His love for the Georgian girl Nino and his intention to marry her do not compel him, like Sheikh Sanan, to wear a cross around his neck. When visiting Nino’s homeland in Georgia, he shows great respect for Georgian customs and traditions, and even partakes in wine during feasts – a symbol of Georgian hospitality. Yet, while traveling in Iran, he participates in a morning ritual, becomes deeply moved during a shabihgardani ceremony, and joins those who flagellate themselves in mourning. The comparative policy literature reminds us, however, that multicultural environments also face real frictions; precisely for this reason, robust frameworks of cultural tolerance and rights-based guarantees are needed to prevent social polarization and to translate coexistence into equitable participation [10, p. 15].

The characters’ respectful attitude toward religious beliefs is also reflected in their relationships with the women they love. In “Herzog”, Moses patiently accepts his Jewish-born wife Madeleine’s intention, in middle age, to convert to Catholicism. When she says, “*We’ll be married in church... Our children will be baptized and raised in the Church,*” Moses silently nods [2, p. 178]. Although her plan ultimately fails, this scene reveals the hero’s religious tolerance – his readiness to prioritize love and life over doctrinal differences. Contemporary feminist-multicultural debates caution against assuming an inherent conflict between cultural recognition and women’s rights; on the contrary, recent arguments show that multicultural frameworks can advance women’s agency when properly institutionalized, shifting the debate beyond zero-sum framings and toward comparative assessments of feminist merits across political models. This perspective supports readings of “Herzog” and “Ali and Nino” where women’s choices and dignity are negotiated within, not despite, culturally plural settings [17, p. 8].

In the novel “Ali and Nino”, the difference in

religion seems to create a deeper chasm between the lovers. Nino worries that “*if I marry a Muslim, my father and mother will die of grief,*” that Ali’s father will “*demand my conversion to Islam,*” and that “*the Tsar will exile them to Siberia for abandoning Christianity*” [3, p. 56]. Yet none of this happens. On the contrary, Ali’s devout father neither demands conversion nor objects to the union – he even accepts the idea that “*the world has changed, and young men now propose to girls themselves*” [3, p. 105]. Ali Khan’s friend, Seyid Mustafa, a representative of the Shia branch of Islam, confirms that the religion contains no prohibition against such a marriage. Ali Khan’s own view of marriage is even more tolerant, modern, and progressive: “*No, Nino, it won’t be as bad as that... for our honeymoon we’ll go to Paris and Berlin...*” [3, p. 56]. Thus, despite all obstacles, Ali and Nino’s marriage takes place. Their love-based family, and the daughter born of their happy union, symbolize the overcoming of interethnic and interreligious barriers – a literary concretization of what recent moderation-within-multiculturalism studies identify as the pathway from *plural difference* to *civic togetherness* [15; 16].

In “Herzog”, Saul Bellow presents American society as a profoundly multireligious and multi-confessional environment, where diverse ideological, spiritual, and cultural traditions intersect. His protagonist encounters Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Jews, Muslims, and members of distinct sects – suffragists, Baptists, and Mishnagdim – all engaged in debates that reflect the pluralistic tensions of modernity. Such literary pluralism exemplifies what scholars describe as the epistemological turn of multiculturalism, which perceives diversity not merely as a sociological fact but as an ontological condition of human coexistence, demanding a continuous dialogic negotiation among worldviews [1, p. 182].

According to recent philosophical analyses, multicultural discourse constitutes a response to the crisis of universalist ideologies and the emergence of “*polylogical societies,*” [1] where differences are no longer dissolved by assimilation but coexist as mutually recognized identities. Bellow’s novel becomes a paradigmatic literary reflection of this paradigm: Moses Herzog’s internal monologues dramatize the struggle for moral equilibrium amid cultural fragmentation – a theme consistent with modern theories of “*civic multiculturalism,*” [1] which prioritize ethical reciprocity over cultural homogeneity.

At the same time, “Herzog” foregrounds the principle of religious moderation as a mechanism of

social cohesion. Contemporary research confirms that moderation, when embedded within multicultural values, enhances interfaith dialogue and civic integration while counteracting polarization and extremism [16].

Bellow’s protagonist personifies this moderation: though rooted in Jewish tradition, he evaluates others not by creed or origin but by their commitment to the humanistic ideal of American identity – reflecting the “soft multiculturalism” model that balances cultural particularity with shared ethical citizenship.

Bellow’s biography reinforces this perspective. As a Jewish-Canadian immigrant who confronted antisemitism at the University of Chicago and later turned to sociology and anthropology at Northwestern University, Bellow internalized the contradictions of assimilation, displacement, and belonging. His work thus mirrors what the “Systematic Literature Review on Religious Moderation” identifies as the “*psychological adaptation of individuals in plural societies*” [8], where identity evolves through intercultural empathy and negotiation rather than withdrawal or fanaticism.

Similarly, the multicultural Baku of Gurban Said’s “Ali and Nino” dramatizes coexistence under the Russian Empire, where Muslims, Christians, Jews, Persians, and Armenians form a mosaic of intersecting worlds. From a literary-sociological perspective, this depiction resonates with findings from M.Kannadhasan & V.Saravanan’s research, which emphasizes how “*fiction functions as a mirror of multicultural realities by translating socio-political pluralism into aesthetic form*” [12, p. 34]. Said’s portrayal of Baku thus embodies the concept of *lived multiculturalism* – a dynamic process of negotiation between imperial power, local faith, and cosmopolitan modernity.

Ali Khan Shirvanshir’s social milieu – his father Safar Khan, uncle Assad ad-Dowleh, and the Baha’i philanthropist Agha Musa Nagi – represents the interpenetration of religion, class, and ethnicity that defined the early twentieth-century Caucasus. Through this prism, “Ali and Nino” aligns with what educational theorists’ term intercultural competence, i.e., the ability to sustain respect and reciprocity across cultural divides.

Recent studies of multicultural education stress that such competence forms the foundation for “value-based coexistence” in plural societies [11; 14; 18]. Equally important is Said’s juxtaposition of the imperial center (the Russian Gymnasium) and the peripheral local culture, revealing what M. Muruganandham and R. Rajesh call the *psychology of hybridity* – the dual consciousness experienced by

colonial subjects who inhabit both traditional and modern value systems [21]. This hybridity mirrors the “dialogue of civilizations” [22, p. 152] model articulated in modern multicultural theory, which seeks harmony not through uniformity but through ethical pluralism – a principle that underpins both Ali Khan’s Islamic tolerance and Bellow’s humanistic skepticism.

In both novels, therefore, multiculturalism transcends descriptive ethnography and emerges as a philosophical and ethical paradigm – one that unites East and West, religion and secularism, tradition and modernity in the shared pursuit of human understanding.

Conclusion. The comparative analysis of Saul Bellow’s “Herzog” and Gurban Said’s “Ali and Nino” demonstrates that both works function as profound literary explorations of multicultural coexistence and the negotiation of cultural identity within distinct yet parallel sociohistorical frameworks. In Bellow’s depiction of American modernity, multiculturalism emerges as a lived condition of intellectual and moral tension – a continuous dialogue between inherited Jewish tradition and the universalizing ethos of American humanism. Through the fragmented consciousness of Moses Herzog, Bellow translates the philosophical dilemmas of assimilation, alienation, and pluralism into an introspective narrative of self-reconciliation. Likewise, in Ali and Nino, Said transforms the love story between a

Muslim Azerbaijani and a Christian Georgian into an allegory of civilizational dialogue, in which Eastern spirituality and Western rationalism encounter one another within the multicultural space of early twentieth-century Baku. Both authors, therefore, present the coexistence of diverse faiths, languages, and worldviews not as an ideological abstraction but as an existential experience rooted in human emotion and moral choice.

The findings of this study affirm that literature serves as a vital mediator of multicultural values, bridging philosophical principles and social realities. As shown through the works of both writers, multiculturalism operates simultaneously as an ethical orientation, a mode of identity formation, and a strategy of human survival in times of historical transition. Bellow’s “soft multiculturalism,” grounded in liberal individualism, and Said’s organically formed Azerbaijani model of tolerance exemplify two complementary approaches to the same universal problem – the reconciliation of difference through empathy and recognition. Their novels illustrate that true multiculturalism extends beyond political or institutional frameworks; it manifests as an inner moral disposition toward coexistence, moderation, and respect for the Other. In this sense, “Herzog” and “Ali and Nino” transcend their national literatures to become enduring testimonies to the humanistic power of intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

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