



The peculiarities of American cultural context in XX century

Shokhida AKHMEDOVA¹, Khulkar MUKHAMMEDOVA²

Uzbekistan State World Languages University

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ABSTRACT

The 20th century marked a pivotal era for American literature, witnessing a dynamic interplay of diverse voices, cultural identities, and social concerns. This article explores significant works that capture the essence of American cultural experiences across various periods within the century. Furthermore, it counts the specific outstanding features of American literature about cultural context.

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XX asrda Amerika madaniy kontekstining o'ziga xos xususiyatlari

ANNOTATSIYA

Kalit so'zlar:

amerika adabiyoti,
madaniyati,
konteksti,
o'ziga xosligi,
xilma-xilligi,
jins,
siyosat,
til.

20-asr Amerika adabiyoti uchun hal qiluvchi davr bo'lib, turli xil ovozlari, madaniy o'ziga xosliklar va ijtimoiy tashvishlarning dinamik o'zaro ta'siriga guvoh bo'ldi. Ushbu maqola asrning turli davrlarida Amerika madaniy tajribalarining mohiyatini aks ettiruvchi muhim asarlarni o'rganadi. Bundan tashqari, u Amerika adabiyotining madaniy kontekstiga oid o'ziga xos ajoyib xususiyatlarini tadqiq qiladi.

¹ Master student, Uzbekistan State World Languages University.

² PhD, Associate Professor, Uzbekistan State World Languages University.

Особенности американского культурного контекста XX века

АННОТАЦИЯ

Ключевые слова:

американская литература,
культура,
контекст,
идентичность,
разнообразие,
пол,
политика,
язык.

XX век стал поворотной эпохой для американской литературы, отмеченной динамичным взаимодействием различных голосов, культурной самобытности и социальных проблем. В этой статье рассматриваются важные произведения, отражающие суть американского культурного опыта в различные периоды столетия. Кроме того, она учитывает специфические выдающиеся черты американской литературы в контексте культурного развития.

INTRODUCTION

American literature is a tapestry woven with the threads of diverse cultures, reflecting the nation's complex history and the amalgamation of various traditions, languages, and perspectives. The impact of culture on American literature is profound, shaping not only the stories told but also the way they are narrated, the characters portrayed, and the themes explored (Gunther, 2020).

American literature serves as a mirror reflecting the rich tapestry of the nation's cultural identity. From the Native American oral traditions to the narratives of immigrants seeking the American Dream, each literary work contributes to the mosaic of voices that define the American experience. Authors draw inspiration from their own cultural backgrounds, infusing their works with unique perspectives that broaden the understanding of what it means to be American.

The cultural diversity within the United States has given rise to a multitude of narrative styles and storytelling techniques. The Harlem Renaissance, for example, brought forth a flourishing of African American literature, introducing the world to the vibrant rhythms of jazz-infused prose and the exploration of the African American experience (Hutchinson, 2008). Similarly, Chicano literature and Native American literature offer distinctive narrative styles that mirror the rich heritage of these communities.

American literature often serves as a platform for social commentary and critique, with authors leveraging their cultural backgrounds to address issues such as race, class, gender, and identity. From the works of Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston to the contemporary writings of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Jhumpa Lahiri, literature becomes a powerful tool for understanding and challenging societal norms.

The United States, often described as a "melting pot" or "salad bowl" of cultures, has given rise to a unique literary phenomenon – cultural synthesis and hybridity. Writers like Amy Tan and Junot Díaz blend seamlessly elements from their cultural backgrounds with the American experience, creating narratives that resonate with readers across diverse backgrounds and fostering a sense of shared humanity.

Cultural influences extend beyond narrative styles and character representation, permeating various literary genres and themes. From the Southern Gothic tradition of William Faulkner to the exploration of the immigrant experience in contemporary

literature, culture shapes the landscapes and themes explored in American literary works. The impact of culture on American literature is not a static phenomenon but a dynamic force that continues to shape and redefine the nation's literary landscape. As the United States evolves, so too does its literature, reflecting the ongoing dialogue between cultures and the ever-changing nature of the American experience. Embracing this cultural diversity allows American literature to remain a vibrant and essential tapestry, weaving together the myriad stories that collectively form the narrative of the nation.

Findings. The 20th century witnessed a rich tapestry of American literature that reflected the nation's complex cultural landscape, grappling with issues of identity, social change, and the impact of historical events. Here are some notable works from various periods within the 20th century:

➤ **Early 20th Century – Harlem Renaissance (1920s-1930s):**

Langston Hughes – "The Negro Speaks of Rivers" (1920): A seminal figure of the Harlem Renaissance, Hughes explores African American history and cultural roots in this poem, celebrating the resilience and depth of the African diaspora.

Zora Neale Hurston – "Their Eyes Were Watching God" (1937): This novel, set in the rural South, is a powerful exploration of African American female identity, love, and the quest for self-discovery.

➤ **Mid-20th Century – Post-World War II Era:**

J.D. Salinger – "The Catcher in the Rye" (1951): A classic of American literature, Salinger's novel captures the disillusionment of a post-war generation through the eyes of the iconic character Holden Caulfield.

Toni Morrison – "Beloved" (1987): While Morrison's work spans several decades, "Beloved" is a poignant exploration of the African American experience, addressing themes of slavery, trauma, and the search for identity.

➤ **The Beat Generation and Counterculture (1950s-1960s):**

Allen Ginsberg – "Howl" (1956): Ginsberg's poem became a manifesto for the Beat Generation, challenging societal norms and reflecting the countercultural spirit of the time.

Jack Kerouac – "On the Road" (1957): A defining novel of the Beat Generation, Kerouac's work captures the restlessness and desire for freedom that characterized the post-World War II era.

➤ **Civil Rights Movement and Beyond (1960s-1970s):**

James Baldwin – "The Fire Next Time" (1963): A collection of essays addressing racial and religious issues in America, Baldwin's work remains a powerful examination of the struggle for civil rights.

Maya Angelou – "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" (1969): Angelou's autobiographical work reflects on her childhood and adolescence, exploring themes of race, identity, and resilience.

➤ **Contemporary Voices (Late 20th Century – Present):**

Don DeLillo – "White Noise" (1985): A satirical exploration of consumer culture and media saturation, DeLillo's novel offers a critique of contemporary American society.

Jhumpa Lahiri – "Interpreter of Maladies" (1999): Lahiri's collection of short stories delves into the experiences of Indian immigrants and their American-born children, navigating the complexities of cultural identity.

These works, among many others, showcase the diverse voices and themes that have defined American cultural literature throughout the 20th century. They reflect the ever-evolving nature of American society and its ongoing engagement with questions of identity, justice, and the human experience.

The 20th century marked a pivotal era for American literature, witnessing a dynamic interplay of diverse voices, cultural identities, and social concerns. This literature review explores significant works that capture the essence of American cultural experiences across various periods within the century.

Harlem Renaissance (1920s-1930s):

The Harlem Renaissance stands as a crucial movement that celebrated African American culture and creativity (Yayla, 2016). Langston Hughes' poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," resonates with a profound exploration of African heritage and identity, embodying the spirit of this cultural renaissance. Zora Neale Hurston's "Their Eyes Were Watching God" further contributes to the era, providing an intricate narrative that probes into African American female experiences in the early 20th century.

Post-World War II Era (1940s-1950s):

As the nation grappled with the aftermath of World War II, J.D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye" emerged as a seminal work, capturing the disillusionment and existential angst of the post-war generation (Richard, 2011). Toni Morrison's "Beloved" continued this exploration, weaving a haunting tale of slavery's impact on the individual psyche and familial bonds.

The Beat Generation and Counterculture (1950s-1960s):

Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" and Jack Kerouac's "On the Road" became manifestos for the Beat Generation, reflecting the countercultural movement that rejected societal norms (Raskin, 2004). These works not only chronicled the experiences of a generation but also influenced subsequent cultural and literary movements.

Civil Rights Movement and Beyond (1960s-1970s):

James Baldwin's "The Fire Next Time" remains a literary cornerstone addressing racial and religious issues during the Civil Rights Movement. Meanwhile, Maya Angelou's "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" provides a poignant autobiographical perspective, exploring the challenges of growing up as an African American woman.

Contemporary Voices (1980s-Present):

The late 20th century and beyond witnessed a diverse array of voices tackling contemporary issues. Don DeLillo's "White Noise" satirically critiques consumer culture, offering a lens through which to examine the impact of media saturation on American society. Jhumpa Lahiri's "Interpreter of Maladies" delves into the experiences of Indian immigrants, contributing to a broader understanding of cultural identity in the modern era.

In summary, American literature in the 20th century serves as a dynamic and multifaceted reflection of the nation's cultural evolution. From the Harlem Renaissance to the contemporary voices of the 21st century, these literary works not only capture the diverse cultural experiences within the United States but also contribute to a broader understanding of humanity and its shared struggles. The continuous exploration of identity, social issues, and the human condition within these works solidifies their enduring significance in the cultural and literary landscape.

American literature in the 20th century exhibited distinctive characteristics that reflected the complex cultural landscape of the nation. Several peculiarities emerged about culture during this period, shaping the literary output in unique ways:

- **Cultural Pluralism and Diversity:**

The 20th century witnessed an embrace of cultural pluralism, with American literature reflecting the nation's increasing diversity (Jay, 1991). Works such as those from the Harlem Renaissance celebrated African American culture, while the voices of other ethnic and cultural groups, including Native Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans, gained prominence. This cultural diversity contributed to a rich tapestry of narratives, each offering a unique perspective on the American experience.

- **Shifts in Narrative Perspective:**

A notable peculiarity in 20th-century American literature was the increasing exploration of diverse narrative perspectives. Authors began to experiment with narrative techniques, incorporating multiple viewpoints and non-linear structures. This shift allowed for a more nuanced representation of cultural experiences and challenged traditional literary forms.

- **Exploration of Identity and the American Dream:**

Many works from this period grappled with questions of identity, particularly in the context of the American Dream. As the nation underwent significant social and cultural changes, authors explored the complexities of individual and collective identities. This theme is evident in works like J.D. Salinger's "The Catcher in the Rye" and Arthur Miller's "Death of a Salesman."

- **Engagement with Social and Political Issues:**

The 20th century was marked by transformative social and political movements, including the Civil Rights Movement, feminism, and the Vietnam War. American literature became a powerful platform for engaging with these issues. Writers like James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, and Kurt Vonnegut used their works to address issues of race, gender, war, and social justice, contributing to a broader cultural discourse.

- **Influence of Technology and Mass Media:**

The rapid advancements in technology and the rise of mass media had a profound impact on American culture and, consequently, literature. Authors such as Don DeLillo in "White Noise" and Philip K. Dick in his science fiction explored the dehumanizing effects of technology and the omnipresence of mass media, offering critical perspectives on the changing cultural landscape.

- **Postmodernism and Fragmentation:**

The latter half of the 20th century saw the emergence of postmodernist tendencies in literature. Authors like Thomas Pynchon and Kurt Vonnegut embraced fragmentation, intertextuality, and metafiction, challenging traditional notions of narrative coherence. This reflected the cultural uncertainty and skepticism prevalent during the era.

- **Global Perspectives and Transnational Influences:**

American literature in the 20th century increasingly drew inspiration from global perspectives and transnational influences. Writers like Jhumpa Lahiri and Salman Rushdie, for example, explored themes of immigration and cultural hybridity, reflecting the interconnectedness of cultures in an increasingly globalized world.

Overall, the peculiarities of American literature in the 20th century to culture are characterized by a celebration of diversity, shifts in narrative techniques, exploration of identity, engagement with social and political issues, the influence of technology, postmodern tendencies, and an openness to global perspectives. These features collectively showcase the richness and complexity of the cultural tapestry woven into American literary expressions during this transformative century.

American literature in the 20th century explored a wide range of cultural themes that reflected the transformative and dynamic nature of the nation during this period. Some prominent cultural themes include:

❖ **Identity and the American Dream:**

Many works in the 20th century grappled with the concept of identity, particularly in the context of the American Dream (Barone, 2024). Authors such as F. Scott Fitzgerald ("The Great Gatsby") and Arthur Miller ("Death of a Salesman") examined the pursuit of success and its impact on individual and societal identities.

❖ **Race and Civil Rights:**

The Civil Rights Movement was a pivotal cultural and social force in the mid-20th century (Crowe, 2003). Writers like James Baldwin ("Go Tell It on the Mountain") and Ralph Ellison ("Invisible Man") addressed issues of racial identity, discrimination, and the struggle for civil rights in their works.

❖ **Gender Roles and Feminism:**

The 20th century saw significant changes in gender roles, and literature became a platform for exploring evolving perspectives on femininity and masculinity (Fan, 2017). Works such as Sylvia Plath's "The Bell Jar" and Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" examined the challenges and expectations placed on women during this era.

❖ **War and Its Aftermath:**

Both World Wars and the Vietnam War had a profound impact on American culture. Literary works like Kurt Vonnegut's "Slaughterhouse-Five" and Tim O'Brien's "The Things They Carried" explored the psychological and emotional toll of war, offering reflections on trauma and the human condition.

❖ **Urbanization and Modernity:**

The 20th century witnessed significant urbanization and technological advancements. Writers such as T.S. Eliot ("The Waste Land") and Don DeLillo ("White Noise") captured the disorienting effects of modernity, reflecting on the challenges and opportunities presented by a rapidly changing society.

❖ **Counterculture and Rebellion:**

The Beat Generation and the 1960s counterculture movements challenged mainstream values. Works like Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" and Jack Kerouac's "On the Road" celebrated nonconformity and the rejection of societal norms, embodying the spirit of rebellion that characterized the era.

❖ **Immigration and Cultural Hybridity:**

Immigration became a significant theme as the United States continued to attract people from diverse backgrounds. Authors like Jhumpa Lahiri ("Interpreter of Maladies") and Maxine Hong Kingston ("The Woman Warrior") explored the experiences of immigrants and the complexities of cultural assimilation.

❖ **Postmodernism and Fragmentation:**

Postmodern literature challenged traditional narrative structures. Authors such as Thomas Pynchon ("Gravity's Rainbow") and Kurt Vonnegut ("Slaughterhouse-Five") embraced fragmentation, reflecting the cultural uncertainty and skepticism prevalent during the latter half of the century.

❖ **Environmental Concerns:**

The latter part of the 20th century saw a growing awareness of environmental issues. Writers like Edward Abbey ("Desert Solitaire") and Rachel Carson ("Silent Spring") addressed the impact of human activities on the environment, contributing to a broader cultural conversation about ecological consciousness (Lytle, 2007). These cultural themes collectively demonstrate the richness and diversity of American literature in the 20th century, offering insights into the complex and evolving nature of American society during this transformative period.

CONCLUSION

The influence of culture on American literature is a dynamic force that continues to develop and reinvent the nation's literary landscape. The literature of the United States changes together with it, reflecting the constant conversation between cultures and the ever-changing character of the American experience. Accepting this cultural variety permits American literature to remain a lively and necessary tapestry, weaving together the numerous stories that create the nation's story. White Noise (Don DeLillo), Interpreter of Maladies (Jhumpa Lahiri), and other works highlight the varied perspectives and issues that have distinguished American cultural literature throughout the twentieth century. They represent American society's ever-changing nature and its continuing engagement with issues of identity, justice, and the human experience. American literature in the twentieth century reflects the nation's cultural progress in a dynamic and complex way. These literary works, ranging from the Harlem Renaissance to contemporary voices of the twenty-first century, not only capture the different cultural experiences of the United States, but also contribute to a deeper knowledge of humanity and its shared problems. The works' ongoing investigation of identity, societal challenges, and the human condition cements their continuing relevance in the cultural and literary world.

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