



SELF-IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF CROSS-CULTURAL RELATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN LITERATURE

Tetyana Myronenko, Lesia Dobrovolska,

Mykolaiv V.O. Sukhomlynsky National University, Ukraine

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Self-awareness or self-identity is very important for any society as it determines its capacity to grow and draw up directions for mutual understanding of different groups and individuals. In the era of globalization, when human-beings have opened cross-border links and are becoming more intertwined with each other around the world, process of building self-identity in the multicultural world takes place on many levels: individual, community, country, and the world. Self-identity, self-concept of an individual through the dialogue among cultures is a dynamic social process. It is a potential that individuals can build within themselves as a result of developing interpersonal relations in society and striving consistency.

American Literature from cognitive viewpoint promotes the study of intercultural and multicultural relations within a particular society and is aimed at solving cross-cultural problems. We will use it as a means in this research on shifting self-identity processes towards a successful dialogue among different cultures.

Cognitive Literature is a relatively new discipline in Ukraine. It exists not only to study literary works but more importantly to teach to understand the world and other cultures and to help form an independent creative person, tolerant and open to new ideas in the era of globalization. Formation of a new generation with a critical-creative comprehension, which is the highest level of thinking that, involves “reading beyond the lines” should be a major goal at teaching American literature.

Ukraine as well as the United States of America, is a multicultural country: 103 ethnic groups and nationalities live there. That is why America, a country created by

immigrants, who managed to preserve their national cultures becoming at the same time a part of a “melting pot”, could serve as a great example for Ukraine in the process of building self-identity.

A great number of American writer generations were successful in finding and preserving their ethnic identity and self-identity in their works. Today, when Ukraine is in the process of building its own self-identity and integration into the world global culture, studying American Literature, especially contemporary, as an integral part of American studies at Ukrainian Universities is crucial for this process. It will help a young generation to form their own self-identity as a personality and at the same time to identify themselves as a nation with critical thinking as well as facilitate a dialogue with other nations during the process of integration. Teaching values through contemporary American Literature at any country helps to get acquainted more close with the culture and create a positive image.

The object of Cognitive Literature is aimed at solving cross-cultural problems and promotes the study of intercultural relations through cross-national boundaries and multicultural relations within a particular society. Under these circumstances studying American Literature as an integral part of American Studies at the Ukrainian Universities is crucial for this process.

American Literature in the 80s-90s of the twentieth century is represented by different literary theories like postcolonial, gender, queer, including the “literature of blankness” and by the writers of different ethnic groups who contributed a lot of to American Literature. Unfortunately, in Ukraine there is some lack of information



about the writers of this period and their works. Our main goal is to introduce this rich spectrum of literary works to the Ukrainian students, future generation which will continue to promote the dialogue among cultures. We consider that Cognitive Literature, which is aimed at exploring images, ideas, genres, movements, literary theories, and criticism, would work well as an instrument in examining the plural character of the given period of American Literature.

The problem of identification and self-identification in American Literature is inseparable from the problem of cultural diversity and multiculturalism. American writers of the 80s-90s of the last century raise these questions in their novels and short stories. To prove it the list of writers may be endless: Joyce Carol Oates, Toni Morrison, Bobbie Ann Mason, Anne Tyler, Amy Tan, Jonathan Safran Foer and a lot of other prominent writers.

The problem of self-identity is complex and it is well shown in Joyce Carol Oates novel "We were the Mulvaney's" where she depicts a family and within this one union individuals who try to find themselves in their own way. In the novel it is a small world limited by a family, a small town and a community. The novel tells about a well-to-do farmer Mike, his wife Corinne and their children Mike Jr., Patric, Marianne and Judd. Joyce Carol Oates shows how difficult it may be to find yourself even within one family without saying about the global world but while reading the novel the reader understands and realizes that every human being should aim at it.

The characters are in the development along the whole novel, they try to live in harmony with themselves and the world around them that makes them identify themselves and answer the question what I am. In her short story "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" the central character, Connie, is an American girl, in her adolescent life. She occurs in a situation in which she must make a moral choice and the choice she makes shows her strong identity as

an individual with responsibility before the others. Hermann Severin points out that Joyce Carol Oates novels and short stories: "... deal with basic problems of self-definition, with man's struggle for a stable identity, his longing for values and aims which transcend the banality of his life, his quest for wholeness and consonance with the world; themes which are of critical importance"[7].

African American literature has become a major component and one of the main streams of the literary process in the USA. The African American writers focused on existential themes, which are of great importance and can give an answer to the question of identity of the whole ethnic group and self-identity of a one person. The literary works of Toni Morrison, Ishmael Reed, Gloria Alexs D. Pate have received a huge level of popularity, attention of literary critics and scholarly investigation. Their works are included in the syllabus of the universities.

Undoubtedly, a Nobel Prize winner Toni Morrison is the most distinguished and recognizable among all contemporary African American writers. She managed to move away from overwhelming and dominant context that was white history and moved into another culture of black people. Richard Gray says "Her work can, in fact, be seen as an attempt to write several concentric histories of the American experience from a distinctively African American perspective"[2].

According to Samuel Coale "Toni Morrison almost single-handedly brought African-American literature from its marginal position into the main stream, a process that culminated in the Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved*. Hers is a world that emerges from the anecdotes, superstitions, and folktales of the black oral tradition, an enchanted world in which ghosts and omens are real, and the metaphorical becomes the disturbingly literal"[1].

Toni Morrison's one of the best novels "Beloved" concentrates on the memories of American black history. One of the themes of the novel is a human being, what is a free human being and his past and roots because if



you know your past you can answer the questions concerning your present, future and the identity of your culture can be found.

Comparing the issues of identity and self-identity of the presented novels we can see how different the culture of each nationality is but human and moral subject does not depend on the nationality it deals with the virtues common to everybody.

Correspondingly the study of literary works in a cognitive way where students get acquainted with something not familiar to them, helps to educate a person tolerant to the representatives of another culture, it helps to develop ability to listen, understand, conduct a dialogue, and come from global confrontation to global integration because any society cannot exist without agreement.

From a philological standpoint Cognitive Literature, and American Literature as an integral part of American Studies, appeals to the interest of the English language as a national culture and ways of translation of linguistic phenomena that helps to apply the skills of literary analysis.

The process of cross-cultural relations must be aimed at building a dialogue among cultures and the comparison of different

literatures helps to realize contracts – that is the experience from another view point and from pedagogical standpoint it encourages to understand one's own culture differently in the light of the new ones encounter. During the lessons of American Literature the students should explore and share the ideas of identity and be taught to compare them.

Nevertheless it is still a challenge for Ukrainian students to find a contemporary American novel to read and analyze it from philological and pedagogical points of view.

Summarizing the issues of the discussed problem we must say that the era of globalization which has long started in American Literature has a positive impulse on the development of literature and on the whole literary community when we to teach it from cognitive view point.

The words of Martin Luther King “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly” still have a great significance for everyone and multicultural American Literature as a part of American studies helps to build bridges between different ethnic groups and nations.

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Мироненко Т., Добровольская Л. Ҳозирги америка адабиётидаги маданиятлараро муносабатлар контекстида шахснинг ўз-ўзини идентификациялаш муаммоси. Мақола муаллифлари ҳозирги америка адабиётидаги маданиятлараро муносабатлар контекстида шахснинг ўз-ўзини идентификациялаш муаммосининг ахлоқий ва маънавий нуқтаи назардан таҳлилини амалга оширишган. Муаллифларнинг таъкидлашича, ҳозирги америка адабиётида шахснинг ўз-ўзини идентификациялаш муаммоси маданий ранг-баранглик ва мультимаданийлик масаласи билан чамбарчас боғлиқдир. Шу мақсадда



мақолада ҳозирги Америка таниқли ёзувчилари - Жойс Керол ва Тони Моррисонларнинг бадиий асарлари таҳлил қилинган.

Мироненко Т., Добровольская Л. Проблема самоидентификации в контексте межкультурных отношений в современной американской литературе. Авторы статьи анализируют проблему самоидентификации, исходя из моральной и духовной точки зрения в контексте межкультурных отношений в современной американской литературе. Авторы утверждают, что проблема самоидентификации личности в современной американской литературе неотделима от проблемы культурного разнообразия и мультикультурализма. С этой целью в статье проанализированы художественные произведения известных современных американских писателей - Джойс Керол Оутс и Тони Моррисон.
