

Exploring Identity and Race in Contemporary American Literature

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Abstract

The current study delves into how race and identity are portrayed in modern American literature. By carefully examining chosen works, we explore how characters deal with the challenges of navigating their ethnic and racial identities in a politically and socially charged environment that is constantly shifting. The research highlights the significance of intersectionality by taking into account how gender, class, and sexual orientation impact racial experiences on an individual level. The study delves into several literary forms, such as novels, short tales, and poems, to uncover the intricacies of belonging and alienation in a mixed society. Ultimately, this investigation highlights how literature can mirror and question society's standards, providing a deep understanding of the experiences of oppressed groups in the United States today.

Keywords: identity, literature, Exploring Identity, Contemporary

Introduction

The modern American nation is a nation of many identities. To begin with, there are diverse sets of religious, ethnic, or racial identities derived from the heterogeneous body of immigrants who settled, forged, and still keep developing the American nation. Recognizing the diversity of the members participating in this life-America is not a matter of purity but rather a matter of inclusive decisions. (Bontemps, 2010) The historically multifaceted and inclusive framework of identity thus developed in the United States is also found in the different interpretative models upon which the notion of race is grounded. Much in line with the plastic interpretation that we have just outlined, race is usually conceptualized as being a social construction rather than just a biological matter. People are seen to construct their own racial identities, and an intricate multilevel set of practices, traumas, and processes are found to participate in shaping them.

In American cultural psychology, central human characters are propelled by the American diversity of psychological and ideological movements that have addressed the race

issue and identity, with the overarching goal of shaping a diverse reality where human beings can learn how to co-build their very own identities and, in doing so, those social and spiritual identities of the others amongst them. Shaping a diversified social fabric is the ultimate psychological and political goal pursued by the contemporary American ideologists of diversity who, in order to influence and gain prominence both in public and academic life, have used postmodern multicultural concepts of race and identity rather than old-style universalist doctrines. The authenticity of voices is considered a fundamental human right that allows us not to rely on forms of race to annul ethno-cultural landmarks and symbols that have taken a long time to create and develop (Cather, 1918).

With a constant appeal to their predominantly engineer audience, the American experts of identity have succeeded in changing society through proactive forms of multicultural joinery, aiming at empowering the once underestimated ethnocultural and racial agents of a new inclusive public dialogue. This dialogue is itself the root of a large set of individual and culturally aware public services that, on a daily basis, can guide, augment, and ease the creation of innovative socio-political rules. The political atmosphere of modern America seems to have absorbed the need for multicultural discourse that has, with its modern voice, swept aside older aristocratic and universalist monologues. (Brown, 1880)The peripatetic multicultural work on identity reshaping is, therefore, an innovative and emblematic contribution to policymakers from a group of forward-thinking, bottom-up-sounding, inclusive shapers of contemporary racial and ethical achievements in America. Such an advertisement conveyed through much public effort, would put a huge amount of public funding on the experts' ears. In order to really be effective, indeed, the social duty of multicultural race and identity specialists has to put for sale a memorable and alluring vision of a modern society and an alternatively inclusive ideology where the melting pot becomes itself an alluring marketplace.

Background and Significance

In examining the choice and analysis of contemporary American literature with a focus on race, subcultures, and anti-hero archetypes, one motivation arises from the influential analysis of anthropological dimensions in literature and the significance of this in an interconnected world. Such recognition of the 'other' or the 'outcast' does appear in literature, especially in those novels that attempt to reach a social conscience through texts centered on marginal subcultures and countercultures as "Departure from the norm; a zest for and focus on the unconventional; a separate, alternative lifestyle." (Cash, 1840) This is a consistent pattern throughout the discussion based on the works of authors who have chosen to write about those who are alienated and marginalized by society. This often goes hand in hand with a desire to educate and inform the naïve reader of the realities of race relations and the impacts of ineffective state responses. In addition, there is a traditional delight in probing the power and perseverance of "the little guy, who represents tradition, culture, the lower

classes, and the primal creative energy" by delineating the life and struggles of "the 'underclass' against the background of social tension."

In considering remarks on American literature and the consequences of defining an American identity, I have the sense that contemporary Americans are searching for meaning in their personal lives through their own redefinition of who they are—an identity crisis. In literature, the anti-hero is one form this renegotiation of traditional generic credits and images takes: "the pioneer of the many generic representations of identity in existentialism." Frequent references to amusing formats prove reflective, and there may be echoes of the serious motifs. Indeed, views that depart from canonical formulations draw on many of the same sources to corroborate an understanding of the topoi and genre-specific relationship with respect to race. In pervading the lives of many, fluoride misrepresents a metaphor for cleansing evil. Only the right adjustments of response and reception can lead to a permanent recognition and victory over the shortcomings of "the prevailing crass commercialization, alienation, and recession of meaning within high culture" and low as well as mass culture.

Research Objectives

Fully aware of the extensive criticism on the topic, mostly dealing with Chicano authors, this study aims to review some of the contributions of contemporary American literature to the never-ending debate on identity. Fostered by the mass settlement of people coming from very diverse cultures and with a minority presence in the mainstream core, a new model of the nation, the so-called "post-colonial multiplicity," should emerge in the not-so-distant future. With the help of top writers, multiethnic people are building the New America. This is the first of our objectives (Bontemps, 2010).

The second main goal is to examine how American literature deals with the so-called "race problem." Despite the traditional denial of the existence of other races than the only existing "white" one, discrimination and segregation are not new in America, which generated a long-lasting discussion on how to deal with the issue. Defenders of this mono-race statement enjoy theoretical advantages guaranteed by defective perceptions where a lengthy mix with original Indian or Black stock would have erased any racial distinction. The two latest introduced mono-racial statuses set by various acts would have done the rest for the surviving Indians, Blacks, Japanese, and Chinese groups. Taking into account real-life fears of racial extinction, more than individual racist outbursts, American literature leads the cultural polemic on how to deal with the present and future exceptionalism: "Is there salvation for Ethiopian change?" (Bonds, 1987).

Structure of the Work

Considering the large time frame and the extensive body of literature analyzed in this work, it was unviable to integrate all texts in a coherent thematic way. The same writer worked in a time period so different and studied by applying very often a peculiar and very personal point of view. The position of textual analyses in the book was employed to reveal

its difference and specificity instead of seeking its integration by topics or formal tendencies. In each analyzed text, the context in which they were inserted addresses historical issues so that they can be seen in the time concepts they represent, with the analysis almost always reflecting the individual experience of that particular author.

Linguistic analysis is employed in some parts through superficial morphological and syntactic analyses since other authors are specialists and have produced a dogmatic system with some consensus that any writer in a particular language is supposed to observe. For text analysis concerning each literary work and author, a general description is initially presented. Then, the identity theme, showing how much the work follows an internal ideological narrative line, is subsequently presented. (Chinua, 1972) This analysis is from the perspective of someone who tries to discover the origins of an ethno-nationalist doctrine in the theme and its texts, not the individual motivation of the writer to produce them. Finally, explicit manifestations of the racial question, or ones that reveal something about the writer, are cited indiscriminately in terms of theme and writing time. Everything was elaborated in a logical way, preceded by a theory, and concluded with results that pretend to be significant in terms of identity.

Theoretical Framework

In the context of contemporary politics, being and being a group attain new valences. It seems that it is no longer difficult or "doomed to failure" to declare specific minority identities. The recognition begins, however, only when these identities strictly adhere to certain prescribed conditions. Blurred or hybrid identities, even if they form the specific arena of theoretical discourse, are often not recognized or perceived as anomalies or idiosyncrasies of individuals. In recent years, much has been written about hybridity and the rise of third space; however, the difficulty not so much lies in defining these terms or examining the historical moment of their appearance but rather in explaining their institutional and political disallowance as identities in Western discourses.

The question "What are we?" in today's Union is often phrased by its minority populations - African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American - not only because of large-scale civil rights skirmishes, shifts in voting patterns, and increasing electoral turnouts. In some states, the majority-minority distinction has already ceased to be descriptive; in New York, Honolulu, Los Angeles, and San Francisco, most inhabitants are not white. It might be possible to propose that 'strong' difference, meaning a group identity par excellence, is no longer doomed to failure. However, first, let us examine the context in which such questions appear.

Critical Race Theory

The second important lens to look at American literature about culture and race is in examining the relationship between individual identity and cultural identity, especially in the wake of a historical moment in which "identity" is finally, for many scholars, a critically

important and malleable term. This very general view of critical race theory is focused on an aspect of integration. It was meant, at least, to enforce some mild civility, or as it puts it, some useful "aesthetic guidelines" on these conversations, because communities had a profound obligation not to do things that they could have done but that would surely disrupt important relationships between communities. There is simply no way to produce physical changes in the life situations of college graduates that will equalize society. This kind of apparent opacity is vitally important to white attitudes about race.

Using literary texts brings these contradictions and their complements in various light-distorting and conflict-causing contexts to light. There is no body of thought about issues in critical race theory that must necessarily lead white students through a process of transformation that will grant them access to the genuine motivations of people and groups of color. There are some questions more appropriately pursued by persons or groups not immediately bearing the sociohistorical burdens of the entities to which they are directed. White students, across any range of cultural experiences, cannot access "motivation," particularly not that of black nationalists.

Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality theory began as a way of understanding how systems of race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, age, and other institutionalized forms of identity are interwoven. Though it has its roots in 19th and 20th-century Black feminist thought and was developed as a formal theory in the late 1980s, intersectionality is popular in contemporary American literature and literary criticism. For its advocates, intersectionality has gone from a feminism that was marginalized to a feminism of the mainstream, feminism against which has become hegemony and that has almost become the method through which to examine all female subjects. The reason for developing the intersectional approach to gender in law is that laws are written for all and should not respond blindly to gender, treating all women the same way. Directions for envisioning Canadian literature instructed scholars and students of literature in Canada to go wider and deeper when considering how, when, and why they examine stories and histories in their literary universe. With its method of choosing to invert hierarchical organizational principles, intersectionality offers a deeper and broader way to critique and study contemporary American literature.

Historical Context of Identity and Race in America

The structure of the United States dates back to the 'Puritan' era, a period in which the first British settlers came to America in 1620 as refugees seeking religious liberty. Unlike the view that many have of those first settlers as being 'brainwashed,' 'close-minded,' and 'harshly repressive,' this was an idyllic 'theocratic state,' as coined, situated in the same Bible and according to the laws of God. In this imaginary state, everyone lived in their own five-acre plot, in which all individuals were allowed to freely 'preach God's word' without any restriction. However, states that are solely based on religious rules can only be characterized

as totalitarian. With the arrival of a new culture, the famous 'American culture,' the Puritan era came to an end. It was determined that no person should ever suffer any penalty for any opinion that he may entertain concerning the 'truth.' Consequently, in a society where truth is composed of faith, democracy would represent reality. But democracy requires liberty of the 'press,' which is, in turn, necessary for freedom of thought, which is needed to bring about 'truth.'

Colonial and Slavery Periods

Racial inequality and conflicts occupied an important place in the literary heritage of the Colonial and Slavery periods in the US. The showdown on the American continent led to such authors as William Apess and Samson Occom, who tried to protect their tribes and reclaim their prestigious place. However, on the other hand, those tribes had European origins and were partially assimilated. Therefore, African slavery, which was seen in the United States from the Colonial period until 1865, is a heading example fundamentally reflecting the contradiction between the term "Melting Pot" and the concept of a democratic society.

Gender, race, and ethnic relations in the literature of the Colonial and National periods all Americans examine who they were as part of the formation process, which is inherited by the next generations. In other words, throughout the history of US literature, people tried to find the meaning of being black, white, or red. Since the process of nation-forming was designed in line with free white men's conceptions of manhood, either literate women or Native Americans, when it comes to publishing works, were not completely part of this transforming process. That is why, during the Colonial Period, only America's legal text was 'The Declaration of Independence.' The first time in 1776, the founders of the United States Constitution created a community of free and equal people; they did not have any legal guarantee in the Declaration for the African slaves fighting for the rights granted to them.

Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement had a destabilizing impact in one important sense: it successfully challenged and destroyed many of the assumptions and led to the overthrow of a number of the overtly biased laws that had maintained Jim Crow practices. However, it also led to the formation or reinforcement of negative self-views of African Americans. Despite some progress made in the struggle for equality, myths continue to be told and distort reality, thus informing the reconstruction of identity. The media's use of stereotypes has proven to be a powerful factor in shaping attitudes and assumptions. This historical aspect of the portrayal of African Americans within the United States is important to any understanding of modern literature.

The Civil Rights Movement rhetoric played a significant role in the struggle against racist ideology. The slogan expressed the hope of generations of African Americans; otherwise, it would have been impossible to respond to stereotyping through the creation of

black Americans as a stereotype. They had the choice between taking or rejecting the stereotypes that projected them as Somebody and criticized the fictional image of the stereotype. They sought a positive redefinition of identity by expressing renewed pride in both the achievements and aspirations of African Americans. They played their imagined role at home and abroad and denied the demeaning image of the house servant who hides in the shadows.

Post-9/11 Era

Post-9/11 Era. For Emma Pérez, the genre of the novel is a flexible territory, one that allows for analyses of unspoken thoughts and motivated actions. That said, the fields of critical interrogation of novels—experimental, ethnic, feminist, and post-structuralist—formed the background of this venture. The Madison team agrees: the novel is neither the only nor the best possible form that an exploration of U.S. Latino/consciousness can take, but its terrain is quickly becoming unstable due to the new emphasis accorded team alliances at Latina/o Studies' extensive round of joint conferences and workshops. There are other places—film, art, music, performance, the expressive traditions of the border and the streets, the discourses of music and sports—which should be explored. Today, however, we scan half a dozen post-9/11 stories where menacing glares and unpleasant encounters would be expressed.

Perez interprets these incidents as encounters with a global medium. The novel's title already provides some help with that suggestion. The symbolism announced by *The Fifth World* at the beginning of the novel is later significantly enacted when the character Oscar spends weekends developing the annotation project, which yields a series of ethnographic notes that will reorient his own views of his Mexican Indian heritage. At the same time, I feel that both the novel and feminist approaches underscore the importance of the forming force of the title image: We write from our own personal, gendered experience. Subsequently, we write from the resurgent impulse from the same regionally historical source.

Identity and Race in Contemporary American Literature

The emergence of the minority as the universal cultural subject in the United States is reflected in minority fiction. Writers are committed to the eloquent display of difference. Minority literature questions the traditional single identities that support the single narrative in an attempt to open the words of the whole text. These authors refuse the options for identification that have seemed possible between simulating the dominant model culture or pretending, having to falsify oneself in order to exist. What is today called diversity is actually held for the most part as tolerance, as silent suffering of those who are different in the language of the same. Minority literature introduces the syntax of difference into the dominant culture and challenges it to decipher it.

Four aspects of novels and short stories corresponding to these new readings of minority literature are the subject of this study. Firstly, the subjective opposition construction of characterization leads to the second problem of separating and contesting collective ideology and social structures, the search for an identity, which is the consequence of the first two. These writers thereby state that collective avowal is the best expression of individuality. Such a code demands not the claim of a separate identity but the obligation of recognition. What contemporary minority US literature has in common is their crisis of collective ideology as well as the sense of breaking away from a given identity. Such an image is the product of the other from whom one does not expect a pact of complicity.

Defining Identity and Race in Literature

The investigation of personal, social, and national identity, a subject of primary interest to sociologists, has found a great following in another field of knowledge that is not always receptive to such topics. Discussions of ethnic, racial, and national identity are among the most vital themes in the contemporary novel, advocated by writers who give witness to the mysteriousness and complexity of human relations. How do current American writers grapple with the experience of 'others' in their world and draw readers into experiences that lie beyond their own? How do serious writers break through simple contrasts and opposing dichotomies to embrace everyday living in all of its variety? The question of identity, particularly racial identity, makes up an essential subtext of most new fiction, and writers of all races define their issues, seek meanings, and communicate them. Their vocation is to tell compelling stories, to reach readers on more subtle moral and intellectual levels, and, indeed, to invite readers to a cumulative understanding of a great deal of experience.

Identity succeeds fragmented genres and clashes of race, gender, and geographical origin. It also signals interconnected memories and shared experiences. What is important for any author is to tell the truth as one sees it, not as others see it, and to do this well enough, perhaps to be included in annotated truth. That is the best writers can do and, at the same time, the most a writer can hope to achieve.

Themes and Motifs in Contemporary American Literature

One of the challenges laid out for any notable American writer in the present era must be how to explore identity, especially race—an enduring concern present throughout history and in literary tradition. Without argument, the first national literature was conceived and directed by a mind that did not free itself from caste distinction. However, in the course of American development, other races became assimilated to a degree notable in no other country. Today, official lip service to minority rights has so institutionalized the process of assimilation that any social or psychological process relevant to the development of people of different races is a legitimate theme for a writer's comedy or tragedy. However, America's growing pains have placed the chronicler of our age in a dangerous position unless the chronicler possesses remarkable powers of insight and mordacious wit. Such a writer must

be able to strike at the psychological or social matter without grossly wounding the mind and heart, and perhaps the skin, that reads.

Key Authors and Works

It has been suggested that sociocultural shifts impelled African American fiction into new channels of expression. While the protest literature of earlier writers firmly placed the African American novel in its historical context, the novels of a younger group of writers tend to deal with contemporary issues as they affect African Americans. In the 1970s, new perspectives on the craft of fiction began to emerge, which attempted to rescind some of the fashionable aesthetic blackness of the previous generation. Thus, the contemporary writers who posit that social consciousness must remain a part of their ordered vision exhibit a toning down of the earlier writer's super-ego aspiration. They first evoke in their characters a sensibility rooted in the world and museum of contemporary nonstyles, the values attached to the heyday of the mid-fifties American myths disbanded, and set a standard for spiritual and moral courage in a democratic society.

The works of young writers such as Toni Cade Bambara, Ernest J. Gaines, James Alan McPherson, Sam Greenlee, Randall Kenan, and Maya Angelou, the new wave of African American writers have learned to study black lives at close range, from their intimate knowledge of their small black communities, and to discard unproductive resentments. Their silence suggests that these authors have gone upstairs to adapt emotionally before they each, in turn, descend and announce their membership as human beings within and without the African American dimension. The fact of their existence as living artists working under different modes demonstrates that armed with new and expansive sensibilities, their impact on present and future generations broadens aesthetic considerations as it simultaneously completes a full circle on African America's metamorphosis of the past forty years. The legacy of the prior literature, a changing constant, remains inhibited and enhanced by time-published books. Stimulating study may reveal the face of a newer African American aesthetics, a myriad of Trojans and Sybils who admit that there is no difficulty in creating within and without boundaries.

Toni Morrison - 'Beloved'

In the second of her novels, Morrison explores identity, race, and slavery in post-Civil War America. The story is the result of extensive research and has become a worldwide phenomenon and a pivotal work in modern literature. It is a controversial and complex narrative about the sufferings of the American Black people in the years after their "conditional" liberation. The book contrasts the predicament of these Americans with the scenario of the American dream.

The narrative revolves around Sethe and her experience of being subjected to sexual violence and finally having to kill her own child to protect her from the same fate. From these facts, Morrison starts a painful investigation of Black identity in America, associating

it with the dark slave past and the invisibility of the white collective memory. Although the novel presents the horrendous practice of slavery, the emphasis is placed on the psychic wounds and inner conflicts carried by the main characters. The principal themes that emerge from the text are the relationships between men and women, slavery, infanticide, and motherhood. The focus is on the community and the "exiled" identity, ultimately in relation to racial issues in the United States.

Junot Diaz - 'The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao'

Many of the ethnic groups of the Caribbean have preserved a huge quantity of the vocabulary of the African peoples to whom they owe their presence in America. In the Caribbean, people speak of some hors d'oeuvres as simply exemplars of a wide variety of delectable bites, and several have words of intriguing form and meaning, such as batida, a refreshing, invigorating drink, some of which contain alcohol or coconut milk. To say that a verb is an Americanism tends to suggest many things: that its form, meaning, or field of utility are not recognized in the Spanish of Spain, which is the custom of most dictionaries and grammars of the Iberian Peninsula; that it has slight or regional use; or that as a general rule, it appears as part of a colloquial language that cannot be used with complete security when speaking very correct Spanish. The list of Americanisms included in our dictionaries, however, often shows only some of the terms used in American Spanish, a fact that can again mislead us into thinking that some words or forms do not exist.

The author, himself a Dominican American, uses any number of typical Dominican words and expressions in his work. Even the title of his latest book is bilingual. The use of infrequently translated words—especially those that in context are clearly familiar to the author—implies an insider's perspective that the Spanish translation cannot fully reproduce. The author creates a three-liposuctioned Chinese son of a tongue which causes the violent expulsion of various other sick and dying languages before, finally, after the tongue has always been treated "...like myself, to Colombian Puneta Doblada, to Yuniors Dominican Corner Trash to Murillo en cristal." These words- Yiddish, Chinese, Spanish, and the implied Spanish pejorative- are master words of the hyphenated United States, ones that are typically monolingual, and mostly white Americans are unlikely to know. Only two of them- Yiddishkeit and Yuniors are glossed over for a nationalist audience.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie - 'Americanah'

Whereas contemporary engagement with integration, race, and ethnicity in the United States has focused on the reality faced by poor and urban African American communities, in this chapter, I analyze a broader selection of protagonists from a novel, including the experiences of prosperous mixed-race individuals both within and outside the US, and challenge singular representations and hegemonic standards of progress, exclusion, and identity. When describing the desirable standards, primarily linked to American, New York City progressive ways of being and accepting multicultural formations and American

whiteness, the novel aligns with and thus reinforces hegemonic beliefs. I also analyze the novel's engagement with subtle forms of social exclusion, including those within the university that influence nonwhite faculty personnel decisions. I find the identification of prevalent beliefs conducive to the acceptance of nonwhite faculty appointments and questions concerning faculty needs and student-faculty fit to be an accurate and nearly institutional-level account of the challenges faced by many nonwhite junior faculty in the US, especially when working in the humanities.

The chapter, therefore, aims to argue that because the novel is read by a diverse audience, it is feasible that when read with a strong emphasis on the existence of oppressive superstructures just as dangerous as those of African American inequality-minded liberalism, it could be a novel that entrenches hegemonic beliefs relative to the successful and high-achieving, especially those of color, within the US and globally without the time to fundamentally question or critique them. The chapter begins by advocating for a more socio-democratic approach to migration, rights, and responsibilities. Such an approach has radical roots and can, at times act to deepen ruptures between migrants and non-migrant nations' citizenry; yet at others, it can act to denationalize and de-ethnicize many of the oppressive structures that currently reinforce, namely, the secondary status experienced by many regardless of citizenship, location of residence, or mode of entry.

Literary Techniques and Devices

Literature enables a rethinking of the way both visual and written media shape our sense of identity. Many ethnic artists use the 'fragmented' structure of their message as a response to this structuring. One means of piecing a subject matter together is through symbolism and the use of literary techniques specific to the racialized individual's experience. By employing multiple perspectives, the artist gives a multifaceted external image of the internal subject. The body, then, is signified in terms of soul, behavior, and worth. By moving away from strictly expository writing, the writer can show that, no matter how individual the experiences, there is a generalized response. Each story intersects and supports the other. The audience can

Symbolism and Metaphor

Cloud symbolism is used in many ways and has various effects. One of the most easily recognized uses of clouds in a text is when they are used to denote invisibility. Black people have been invisible to white society and culture. This can take place for many reasons: racial segregation, iconic cultural symbols, or futile politics. This invisibility, in all of its instantiations, is important and a foundational aspect of Black heritage. The narrative is significant in this literature. By starting the story on the day that Black people are granted permission to fight in the white man's war, it sets up a narrative and a narrator whose subsequent lack of visibility is only reinforced by a narrative that tracks his life from that day, through that war, and into Black culture and society. He fights a war between suspicious

white authority and manipulative Black authority. The character of the novel refuses the labels that these bodies assign, and the invisibility established by his identity is bodily contested via a series of deaths. These deaths are for each form of social control; they are a position and an identity that no longer has any meaning.

Moreover, the novel can be critical and resistant to these formal structures at multiple points. However, it is clear as the narrator's confession unfolds that the novel's own narrative strategy is complicit in formalizing his invisibility. There is a chilling similarity in the strategies of both white and Black authors. However, not all novelists portray the Black experience as unseen. Another story, set in the Deep South after the end of slavery, is a picture of man's groups of survivors. In this story, a novel that is organized as a series of recorded interviews by an omniscient white interviewer, the book ends with Jane explaining how this all took place just last year. Another famous symbol of invisibility or otherness is chimney sweeping, which is featured in the poems of various authors.

Narrative Voice and Point of View

Narrative voice is another crucial factor in constructing the act of cultural self-articulation. The narrative voice, almost becoming the representative of a group, creates its specific political statement. It constructs its own concept of identity by selecting certain features from reality as attributes of this concept. It combines these features in the act of narrative and provides them with a particular meaning. It narratively represents the self and thus provides us with the possibility of comprehension. By seeing others narratively present themselves, we learn that 'we' are not alone, that there are others, each with an identity of their own.

The selection of a narrative voice, if made consciously, is a very effective tool in creating highly ethnic literature. The good consequences of the creation of ethnic literature are manifold: working literature can preserve and strengthen cultural identities and oppose assimilationist movements by showing that there are forces from within the ethnic group that function to balance the effects of the major groups' behaviors and portray the presence of an ethnic point of view beside others. Ethnic literature can exist parallel to its American counterpart by considering a different American experience with its own conundrum; it can be intercultural between the American majority and American ethnic minority and intracultural among different groups and may function as altars for secondary oral cultures, making them accessible to everybody. Speaking in the name of ethnic literature facilitates a process during which one single American identity can emerge as a multitude of voices.

Intersectionality in Literature

Similar to the concept of intersectionality in other areas, the idea of intersectionality in literature also considers how multiple identities of race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect as they shape the experiences of authors and their characters. A storyline can include the intersection of several marginalized identities or the intersection of several privileged

identities. Concepts of intersectionality have been manifested in American literature long before the identity in relation to the twenty-first-century progressive movement. Literary examples of intersectionality have been in the American tradition since at least the early 18th century, and authors have offered critiques of the interconnectedness of identity for over three centuries.

The goal of this book has been to emphasize the interconnection of race and identity, and using a number of contemporary texts, I have sought to build encouragement toward envisioning a new genre of reality for citizens who live in the United States. I have tried to point to the profundity of contemporary literature for engagement with the question of the color line in the twenty-first century. Although the focus of the book has been on the experience of historical as well as contemporary African-American, Native American, Asian American, and Latinx populations, they also had a significant presence in the global makeup of American literature and are central contributors to nurturing and sustaining America's rich cultural tapestry.

Gender and Race

Once past adolescence, the experiences of first- and second-generation immigrants in contemporary American literature become even more richly diverse at the secondary level since individuals tend to meet openly with difficulty and inevitable difference as they attempt to reconcile their own unique selves with identity-changing life events such as marriage, childbirth, parenting, and professional challenges that cannot be avoided yet often contain the potential for personal fulfillment. Although fiction about the Asian diaspora deals with many different models of family, no study of a relatively sizable group can ignore the issue of race. Moreover, the contemporary US population has experienced a dramatic increase in racial heterogeneity over the past several decades, a change from which many of our offspring will benefit, both in terms of a philosophically taught understanding of equality and a more tolerant, less racist perspective on the world at large.

Race is a perspectival phenomenon; that is, a learned tendency to categorize both oneself and others according to outward physical appearance. The belief systems and historical ideologies ascribe certain social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual behaviors to the members of each racial group. These systems and ideologies in the contemporary United States were constructed over the centuries by members of one racial group to reinforce the unearned privilege and dominance associated with naturally borne physical characteristics, a form of racism designed to strip another group of people of their inalienable human dignity. The privileging of race as the most important factor in understanding the personal, in such ways, promoted partial, biased, or incomplete understandings that sometimes led to inaccurate conclusions about another individual's ethnic roots, history, and cultural heritage.

Sexuality and Race

Gradually moving away from my concern with African American novels, which have had as one of their main themes the issue of the African American as an alien in the land of his birth, I would like to consider some novels that include an autobiographical length of interaction between black and white Americans or between the black and white parts of individual black characters. In many contexts, autobiographical conversations have been considered as guides to authorial and character development that go beyond the content of the conversations. If so, such conversations would seem to be good examples of modern readers' perceptive approach to identity, defined as both character development and particular cultural perspective.

In a certain novel, there is a section that I find fascinating because it portrays the character's exposure to prejudice at an early age, and this exposure is a result of his appearance. Race is occurring precisely because the character is a composite of parts of black and white America. The character is a user of L.A.'s sex industry, and the story may seem sordid to a reader with too great an imagination but not enough experience. However, I have come to the conclusion that it is a fine example of modern literature's interest in showing all cultures' complex concerns, and it has succeeded in portraying the character's wrestling with his own identity in sympathetic terms. The narrative fact of the character's self-portrayal is that unusually formed features have saved his life, and his integrity may save another's. One chapter is called "The Use and Misuse of Whiteness."

Representation and Stereotypes

In ethnic American literature, the tendency to represent the range of ethnic personalities in terms that are simplistically circumscribed and easily digested runs the danger of perpetuating the stereotypes we initially set out to dismiss. Such an overreliance on ethnic signifiers would encourage the marginalization of minority literature from mainstream American literature via a self-perpetuated essentialized identity. Indeed, stereotype is a term that is used to describe the predictable and often clichéd ideas associated with a particular cultural or ethnic group. In many cases, these stereotypes are born out of a society's collective fears. Within the context of American racial and ethnic studies, the equation of an invariable identity determined by the aspects of race and ethnicity denies the agency and autonomy of the ethnic individuals. Such denial subordinates the American multiethnic literary corpus to some versions of determinism, totalitarianism, and even authoritarianism. In so doing, we become blind to the many other forces— aspects other than racial and ethnic differences— that shape identity and affect the individual. As such, this is an artificial view of identity that effectively strips away the unparalleled complexity and diversity of ethnic individuals in America.

The origins of these influences, particularly as they apply to ethnic individuals, are often hard to track. Is one's sense of self a product of perpetual institutional issues resulting

from the fact that race and identity are merely formative elements of the economic, political, and cultural subaltern, and thus, the ethnic individual entities are nothing but accessories to the overreaching economic and political engines? With so many contributing factors, it is hard for American authors who wish to write about multiple and different representatives of American minority groupings to resist the habitual reliance on racial stereotypes. The nature of literary enterprise—lying in the fact that it reproaches racial and ethnic differences like a mirror—sometimes functions to enhance the feeling that we can arrive at these ethnic personalities perfunctorily. While ethnic signifiers are crucial as mirrors that allow individuals to recognize their journeys of becoming different in various capacities, they are also masks restricting these authors from seeing beyond what they are so tightly enclaving. They thought they were looking at multiple ethnic Americans when, in fact, all they were seeing were the ethnic representations they had originally consented to in visioning. The better novels engage in a practice of dealing despite them, earnestly and anew with the ethos of a human and humane person that they illuminate poignantly the errant hope that we can effectively gaze away from ethnicity but beyond race and a series of supporting characters.

Positive and Negative Representation

Negative representation has been shown to have adverse effects on all members of any minority, as well as on those in the majority. As writing from the periphery often reinforces the dominant stereotypes from the mainstream, genres like African American literature must be critiqued for complex interstices where these stereotypes are both addressed and subverted. It is noted that while the canon of African American literature rarely represents white characters, whiteness as the racially other appears to be the background, the backdrop against which black males seek their racially marked manhood and black women their strength as women.

The politics and stakes of whiteness as it is invented in American literary history are examined. It is observed that what is often at stake is the identity when one racial identity masquerades as another. The idea of the invisibility of whiteness in minority literature is also problematized. It is believed that everything bears its own concealed opposite and that the obscured presence of not only natural elements secretes their ethnic and racial biases but is the concealed bile of African American literature and the core of the color line.

Challenging Stereotypes

Recent novels offer much in the way of imaginative challenges to race. Impressive writers often suggest that our conceptions of race are easily hurt. Many of the recent novels now seem to be based too much on federally reinforced stereotypes. Love, friendship, religion, the rearing of children, and hard work take place in bad novels by the nouveau riche; they are essential activities in the good novels by minority writers. Often, however, the good novelists adopt the bad novelists' approach to the creation of character. Their 'minority' characters are symbols of righteousness, radical innocence, or simple trust. To express

anything controversial—the difficulty of negotiating daily life and individual lives—in fiction or nonfiction, just because of race, is to court resentment.

And yet contemporary novels acknowledge the gap and, within it, make various illustrations of the difficulty of writing. Writers of interracial desire and despair suggest that diversity is best explored when difference can be argued. One author abandons atavistic wars between groups and celebrates 'multiracialism' instead. The authors are conscious of facing off against others—authors who would claim that race relations, not race individuals, are the essence of good fiction. Indeed, the solution is a racial associational ease and reluctance to engage issues embraced by our most popular television networks and film studios. In one view, 'Black skin has become a uniform which one can put on or take off.'

Literature and Social Change

Literature embodies a vision for life in a particular time and place, created by a member of that society with a need to communicate with others in that society. From the beginning of written language, literature has served as protest, as history, as propaganda, and as beauty. As varied as the talents of those writers who seek to tap into the conscience of society, so too are their methods. Indeed, much contemporary fiction is written in response to the urgent questions and necessities posed by society and the authors of the fiction. A large number of contemporary authors are preoccupied with the dehumanizing impact of the individual who is integrated into the military bureaucratic system or the technocracy.

The paradigms for human existence proposed in the 20th century were inherently inhuman. Novelist Kurt Vonnegut is an author whose works comment on the inhuman qualities of contemporary society. For Vonnegut, the typewriter and scissors are the tools of a moral surgeon. Vonnegut opposes society and its institutions to bring about a change in the way society operates. He is a social reformer rather than an author who exerts the reflective mechanism. Vonnegut's satire is imagination at war with the conventional strictures of society. The target of his satire is the ignorance of the growing element among us that has become just that kind of mindless robot. Not satisfied to be a mere commentator, Vonnegut tears at these follies. The guiding principles that keep a population uniform (sex, moral strength and integrity, and the mad rush to do evil because it is attracting or repelling) are notions Vonnegut does not suffer lightly.

Activism and Literature

Activism and literature share a dynamic relationship, as works about social injustices can help readers learn about and understand the nature and significance of a problem. At times, an author may even attempt to incite their readers to some type of political or social action with their work. Countering the marginalization of Black existence in society through literature creates a powerful and important space to voice frustration, celebrate achievements, gain understanding, and start a dialogue. Authors contributing to the discourse around identity and race acknowledge their role in society as conduits for interaction and

communicate this through content about shared experiences, racial struggle, and social commentary promoting Black liberation and survival. This flexible role allows Black authors to occupy different forms of activism: revolutionary, overt, and covert.

Revolutionary literature, focusing on the creation of a new society fostering radical change and building the strength of and meeting the needs of Black people, can ignite and direct a resolution to violent manifestations of race conflict and lead to a change in consciousness. Promoting such an all-encompassing philosophy laments cultural appropriation and a call for a new Black national culture, advocating a break from and rejection of the mainstream in favor of an autonomous, self-sufficient identity. Following the deaths of significant civil rights leaders and the birth of Black studies courses and students nationwide, Black authors published distinguished works. Aficionados recognized Black separatism, creating new theories, questions, and ideas, giving momentum to a potentially revolutionary movement concerning Black appropriation, representation, identity, autonomy, and liberation. Reflected in the music written and performed by authors, and through the struggles of protagonists to resist myths, lies, and reality interference, literature teaches of racially mixed revenge and the "changing same" and challenges readers to show discipline and make sacrifices: only affirmative action for "us" will halt and transform centuries of defining Black America on non-negotiable terms of foundational and universal consensus. The artistic exuberance indicating an untapped, harnessed, and redirected cultural energy becomes an effective symbol attracting supporters. Otherwise, the same original Black energy source abused in acts of barbarism, theft, burning, and looting, objects seen in "living room naked and bare." Alone, Black people must reclaim the legacy from the establishment controlling form and content. Safe and economically viable, pageantry both seduces and diverts attention from that ridiculous, purpose-draining amplifier flexed tight around the walls of ethnocentric Black businesses.

Impact on Society and Policy

Impacts on society and policy are born out of specific socioeconomic, cultural, and political contexts and attempt to address problems seen as arising from these contexts. As such, it is not surprising that social science looks at the relationship between information and political actors, and exploring impacts implies a broader interpretation of "how information becomes action." The policy domain is the natural realm of this work. In most general terms, policy represents attempts to deal systematically with particular issues deemed to be of public concern. Because such concerns are usually more complex, the scope of the solution is greater, and the consequence of failure is more significant than purely private matters, special skills different from those generally applied in other forms of individual and social behavior are brought to bear.

In a democratic system, policy proposals should be derived from the interests of the people. In practice, it is not implausible that the people who wield force are likely to limit

the presentation of proposals that do not support the aims of the powerful. The most important task for any government is to control the irrationality of factions, that is, of parties who gang up and conspire together in order to tyrannize over a small group. The special privilege of government officials to make decisions on turnover distribution increases a party's activity to try to control those decisions. In this view, policy-making is a struggle among such entities and groups. Similarly, the study of the methodology of the policy sciences concentrates on authorship and the vicissitudes of decision-makers. The main task is to put together a set of social processes and a series of changes in which the contributions and initiatives of the different actors at different levels of society explain how policies come into being.

Conclusion

This chapter has traced the ways in which contemporary American literature deals with the questions of identity and race and has identified many issues and persistent problems in American society. The focus of the chosen novels is placed upon Black and Latino individuals, enhancing the social pressure imposed on the white population by the minority. Indeed, minority problems and identity conflicts form an inevitable part of the American experience – the fact that American society is so diverse makes social confrontation a common feature.

Despite the Black independence movements, issues of race and ethnicity remained social and cultural factors, causing even more harm to American society. Literature has addressed many of these issues, and it is possible to say that American literature has never had such a diverse range of voices and so many varied settings. The prestige and importance of the contemporary American novel could hardly be challenged, and future researchers and scholars will find an even greater wealth of interesting and exciting literature. Chances are that different problems will emerge and invite focused examination through literature or independent artistic expression.

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