

American Ethnic Literature in the Globalizing World : Multiculturalism and Cultural Nationalism

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American ethnic literature today is becoming more important in the curricula of American Studies programs and English departments, because it poses the vital question of American multiculturalism. The multiculturalism within the USA is a dominant social, cultural, and political phenomenon which is likely to define what contemporary American identity is in the globalizing world. It is because the globalization is a true condition for Americans.

The issues of globalization have spread everywhere. In order to prepare for the global world, as a third world example, Korean youths are going to Ivy League colleges in the U.S., Koreans in their twenties are going to America for English language training, Koreans in their thirties are going there to get an MBA degree which can promise a better salary, and Koreans in their forties are immigrating to the U.S. or Canada for themselves and their children. Many Koreans are immigrating or going abroad to study to the centers of globalization in order to prepare for future challenges and opportunities.

However, what is happening in the USA today since September 11, 2001? Newspapers and broadcasting outlets in the US endlessly talk about terrorism and the war against it. Today the American

motto is "We are not against Afghanistan, not against Islam, but against terrorism." There are US national flags hanging out on the doors and windows of the houses, or car windows. Americans expect terrorism to be eradicated in a political and military way. Ironically, however, the US war against terrorism has resulted in another deep probing of the social problem of the ethnic conflict that has frequently been a hot issue in the USA.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer reports on October 21 as follows: "It was recorded in 1994 during one of the many ethnic conflicts of that time. A close-up shot on an international TV news channel showed a very little child crying at the side of a dusty footpath... The infant, its mother, other children and women make up 75 percent of the 20 million to 25 million internally displaced people and more than 12 million refugees across the world. That scene was from yesterday. Today a similar scenario is being replayed as Afghan refugees are running into Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In the coming weeks, about 1.5 million of them - about one-quarter of Washington state's population - will flee in anticipation of military operations..."¹⁾ Moreover, there are some intellectual voices growing that Americans should consider the social, cultural, and political implications of military action. Terrence Cook, a political science professor at Washington State University, said, "Understanding ethnic conflict in general is a good first step. That is certainly the root of things." Among his suggested readings is a book by Benjamin Barber entitled "Jihad vs. McWorld: How Globalism and Tribalism are Reshaping the World." In it, Barber argues that the

1) "Women's needs Integral to U.N. Work in Afghanistan" October 21, 2001, Sunday P-I FOCUS, Pg. E7. *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

forces of the global economy, combined with the rise of splinter groups, are the biggest threats to Christianity.²⁾

So there are more humanistic counter-discourses on the American attack against terrorism, because it can be another political and ethnical attack toward the Moslem and Afghan communities. Americans today are in a state of panic over bio-terrorism through anthrax contamination of the mail, but on the other hand, they are concerned about the ethnic questions under debate of the Afghans and Moslems in the USA who are treated as terrorists.

What comparisons and contrasts may be drawn from the American and the Korean experience? How does globalization affect people in the world socially, culturally and economically? Those of us living in the third world have to confront what globalization is and discover whether it is a different thing from the extension of American power, nationalism and imperialism. It seems to me it is a different and larger thing, and is thus working in some ways to reduce American power. In my view therefore, globalization is not the same as American imperialism or nationalism.

Globalization transcends a narrow nation-based viewpoint that is linked with nationalism through a new theory of "world systems."³⁾

2) Kelly Adams, "Beyond Belief: Attack on America Books Offer Deeper Understanding of Terrorism in Our Time" September 16, 2001, Sunday. *World/Nation*: Pg. A12. *The Columbian* (Vancouver, WA.)

3) This term, "world system" originated from Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System* (New York: Academic Press, 1974). I quoted it from ed., Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex, *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism Multiculturalism and Migration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997) p. 9, Ulrich Beck, *What Is Globalization?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000) pp. 25-6. His world-system view is based on the idea that there is not a single global society but at least two competing ones: the society of national states, and the many different transnational organizations. Maria Mies, *Patriarchy & Accumulations on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed Books Ltd., 1986) pp. 37-8. She views the world

These viewpoints probably overplay the notion that the nation-state is no longer important.⁴⁾ Never before in the history of the world has there been such a concentration of capital in so few nations and in the hands of so few people. The countries that form the Group of Seven⁵⁾, with their 800 million inhabitants, control more technological, economic, informatics, and military power than the rest of the approximately 5.2 billion who live in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Latin America.

We cannot doubt that half of all the multinational corporations are based in the United States. However, this concentration of capital itself corresponds to the character of the new technological revolution, creating global cities such as London, Geneva, Paris, Tokyo, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and even Seattle. These global cities' accumulation of capital depends less and less on the intensive use of natural resources, labor, or even productive capital, but more and more on the accumulation of technology based on the intensive use of knowledge. The centralization of technological knowledge is more intense and monopolistic than other forms of capital, and therefore only increases the gap between the rich and the poor and especially between the "North" and the "South."⁶⁾ Sassen also clearly denotes that "economic globalization has mostly

system character as capitalist-patriarchy.

- 4) The concept of trans-nationalization is emphasized in Ulrich Beck, "Introduction," and "Logics, dimensions and consequences of globalization" in *What is Globalization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000) pp. 3-15, pp. 36-37.
- 5) Mainly the US, Germany, Japan, and Switzerland, that is, the OECD(Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) group.
- 6) Sherif Hetata, "Dollarization, Fragmentation, and God," Fredric Jameson & Masso Myoshi, (eds.) *The Cultures of Globalization* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1998) 273. He defines the poor as the South, the rich who mostly concentratedly inhabits in the US, Germany, Japan, and Switzerland as the North.

been represented in terms of the duality of national-global where the global gains power and advantages at the expense of the national.”⁷⁾ She emphasizes the importance of internationalization of capital and global cities as centers for the servicing and financing of international trade, investment, and headquarter operations.

To expand the world market, to globalize it, to maintain the new economic order, the multinational corporations use economic power, control politics, and the armed forces. Globalization denotes movements in both the intensity and the extent of international interactions. In the sense of intensity, it overlaps to some degree with related ideas of integration, interdependence, multilateralism, openness, and inter-penetration. I will show some examples of new network enterprise and organizations of the informational economy such as “Toyotism,” Tyson chicken, and Benneton. The term “Toyotism” is opposed to “Fordism” which is based on mass production. The mass production model is based on productivity gains obtained by economies of scale in an assembly-line based, mechanized process of production of a standardized product, under the conditions of control of a large market by a specific organizational form. The large corporation using the Fordist model is structured on the principles of vertical integration and institutionalized social and technical division of labor.⁸⁾ Charlie Chaplin’s *Modern Times* vividly shows us the

7) Please confer Saskia Sassen, “Introduction: Whose City is it? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims,” and “Unmooring Identities and a New Transnational Politics,” in *Globalization and its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money with a foreword by K.Anthony Appiah* (New York: The New Press, 1998) xix-xxxii.

8) Castells explains the difference between Fordism and Toyotism. Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* 2nd Edition. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000) 166.

mass product of large corporation and how it affects the human mind.

However, as Castells points out, the truly distinctive character of “Toyotism” does not concern relationships between firms, but between management and workers. It is a new winning formula adapted to the global economy and to the flexible production system. Individual workers, who consist of their own creativity and production system, are interactively involved with the manager in a horizontal organization. The network allows for greater differentiation of the labor and capital components of the production unit, and probably builds in greater incentives and stepped-up responsibility. Therefore “Toyotism” is a management system designed to reduce uncertainty rather than to encourage adaptability. The flexibility is in the process, not in the product. The main difference can be characterized as the shift from vertical bureaucracies to the horizontal corporation. The horizontal corporation is characterized by the following trends: a flat hierarchy, team management, measuring performance by customer satisfaction, rewards based on team performance, maximization of contacts with suppliers and customers, and information.⁹⁾ Benetton workers who live in multiple countries have their own individual, interactive, and horizontal organizational relationships with the manager to produce the best consumable and most attractive clothes with economic investment, after surveying the information from the consumers. Tyson chicken is also based on the individual and horizontal organization to produce the best-selling chicken.

9) Castells, 166-76.

A significant aspect of this modern production process is the geographical spread of labor via emigration or diaspora, universalization, and homogeneity. As already mentioned, migrant workers from all over the world, especially from the third world, because of poverty, migrate into the global cities. Many Ethiopians living in Seattle are working as parking attendants. People in this ethnic group in a global city have recently immigrated to participate into the economic activity of globalization. They are Ethiopian by birth, but immigrate to the U.S.A. to make money due to the strong dollarization. They work cooperatively by communicating through their own native language as well as beginners' English. They use a dual language as well as the Ethiopianized English. They correspond with their family and friends who remain in their country to help them find a way to come to the United States as long as the US government will allow them. They try not only to assimilate to the way of life of the surrounding people but also to preserve their own culture in the global and multicultural society. This is a cultural practice in which they establish their own identity in a global city.

Therefore, globalization is a part of the broad process of the restructuring of the state, nation, and civil society as well. Globalization will allow for "international civil society" which is different from what modern democracy has conventionally been referring to in terms of liberalism. Democracy refers to the location of a state's power, in the hands of people, whereas "liberal" refers to the limitation of a state's power. From this viewpoint, "a liberal democracy is a political system in which the people make basic political decisions, but in which there are limitations on what decisions they make."¹⁰ Liberals continue to dispute exactly how much power the

state should have and how much power the people should have over and through the state. More positively, liberals emphasize the capacity of the individual for rational self-determination. This “involves seeking the maximum area of free choice and action in” civil society.¹¹⁾

International civil society, a part of the globalization phenomenon, should be as free as possible from public or state interference, although it still requires a stable regulative framework that only the international or multinational apparatus can provide for the individuals. Individual freedom in international civil society also requires the maintenance of private ownership of the means of production and an internationally competitive market economy. In the public realm, citizenship rights enable the individual to express his or her will to both the state and the international monetary apparatus by voting for a representative from a political party in periodic elections and, according to most liberals, by participating in supplementary interest groups. Civil society remains insulated from national influence, but maintains an ethnic basis. It is not only because ethnicity has been a fundamental source of meaning and recognition throughout human history, but also because ethnicity is a founding structure of social differentiation, and social recognition, as well as of discrimination, in many contemporary societies, from the United States to Sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, just as Anderson's explanation of nations as ideology like “imagined communities”¹²⁾ is convincing, I think, after all, in

10) Barry Holden, *Understanding Liberal Democracy*. Second ed. Hemel Hempstead (UK: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993) p. 17.

11) Confer to Catherine Eschle, *Global Democracy, Social Movements, and Feminism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001) p. 24-25.

12) Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread*

such global cities, ethnicity can only be constructed at the service of power apparatuses in the international civil society that globalization should accept in the near future. My hypothesis on these “imagined communities” that are based on ethnicity is produced through the labors of shared history, and then spoken in the images of communal languages whose first word is “we,” the second is “us,” and, unfortunately, the third is “them.”¹³⁾

I have pointed to some distinctions of globalization in terms of trans-nationalism and international civil society. To get a more concrete categorization of globalization, it should be compared to and differentiated with imperialism which can be the other side of the same coin of nationalism. As Ernest Gellner defines, “nationalism is rooted in modernity,... culture and social organization are universal and perennial, while states and nationalisms are not.”¹⁴⁾ We all admit nationalism is a doctrine invented in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The end of World War II and the advent of the nuclear age spelled the end of the empire for Britain and of the colonial stage of imperialism. Today the US has replaced Britain as the center of a world Empire. Since 1970s many books and articles have been produced to define this new phenomena of American imperialism.

In contrast to the political and military imperialism of the Roman

of Nationalism. Second ed. London: Verso, 1991)

13) Confer to Manuel Castells, *The information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. Vol. 2 : The Power of Identity* (Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1997) p. 52-53. Castells emphasizes the language- based nationalism. I trigger a hypothesis to emphasize the ethnicity. My hypothesis of ethnic identity as a imagined community can not only cover Castells' concept of ethnicity and race, but also share the fundamental idea of languaged-based nationalism.

14) Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson) confer 5, 13.

Empire, the notion of economic imperialism is somewhat less clear. Today the control of raw materials, exports, and means of communication can be obtained without either invasion or political annexation. What is cultural imperialism? McDonald's, Hollywood movies, and *Dallas*, a TV series in 1980s and 1990s, are products of American cultural imperialism. Even in the United States this idea seems to be accepted that America's culture has given it an empire. However, the fact we should remember is that imperialism, which is somewhat different from globalization, can only result from the policies of a sovereign state using some kind of force and power. Nobody ever mentioned cultural imperialism in relation to the spread of the potato or corn, both of which originated in America. When people use the term cultural imperialism, they are not usually referring to "high culture," which has a cultural influence, nor to scientific and technological knowledge. They are thinking of "mass culture," considered by some to be the best weapon to disseminate an ideology. Since mass culture is carried by media, and since the makers and distributors of such material belong to big business, the debate belongs to the economic level rather than the cultural. Paradoxically the cultural influence of the US seemed to grow for purchasing economic interest for the state, while its political, and military prestige declined. In short, American media can be interpreted as either cultural imperialism or a process of globalization depending on how much the US sovereign state is involved by the force of politics with the purpose of economic interests. Again, here is the important difference between imperialism and globalization. Imperialism is based on nationalist spirit, but globalization is based on transnationalization and international civil society.

From now on I'd like to explore the importance of ethnicity as cultural identity in the US, where multiculturalism has prevailed and brings forward the ideology of cultural nationalism. Most theorists on nationalism explain how nations reflect the strategy of liberalism under the name of nationalism in modern age. Bernard Yack, as one of them, has the common basic assumption in which I also agree: "the age of liberal individualism has also been the age of nationalism; liberal practices have been realized, for the most part, within the framework of national communities."¹⁵ As I already mentioned, liberalism is rooted on the international civil society on behalf of globalization. Individuals have their own cultural identities with the "possession in common of a rich legacy of memories."¹⁶ There are two kinds of nation: one is ethnic nation, and the other is civic nation. Without a rich legacy of memories such as history, culture, and language, there are no communal loyalties to be tested by consent. The ethnic nation like Korea suggests that you have no choice at all in the making of your national identity: you are your cultural inheritance and nothing else. The United States is one of the most representative civic nations. The myth of the civic nation that American citizens have, in contrast, suggests that your national identity is nothing but your choice: you are the political principles you share with other like-minded individuals.¹⁷ The myth of civic nation is born when "the liberal legacy of individual rights and political rationality has developed within political communities that

15) Bernard Yack, "The Myth of the Civic Nation," in ed. Ronald Beiner, *Theorizing nationalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) p. 115.

16) Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990) p. 19.

17) Bernard Yack, p. 107.

impart a kind of inherited cultural identity.”¹⁸⁾ Within this framework we have every reason to construct and defend distinctions between more and less inclusive forms of national community. “Melting pot” and “American dream” are the most evident examples of formation of cultural identity within the US that set up American civic nationalism.

Kai Nielsen asserts the definition of nation should be given in cultural terms, because a nation must have a pervasive public culture. Without such a pervasive encompassing culture, something there in the public domain of a society, it would not be a nation. Having such a culture is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for some geographical entity being a nation. His argument exemplifies how the nation with encompassing culture is important not only in civic nation but in the ethnic nation. Therefore he concludes “all nationalisms are cultural nationalisms of one kind or another.” It is because cultural nationalism defines the nation in terms of a common encompassing culture. This culture can be, and typically is in the West, a liberal democratic culture. Sometimes it takes ethnic forms, sometimes it takes civic forms like the USA, and sometimes non-ethnic but dictatorial forms such as Brazilian, Chilean, and Argentinean nationalisms under their juntas. And sometimes it takes the form of liberal nationalisms, as was the case earlier in this century in Norway, Finland, and Iceland and as is the case now in Quebec, Belgium, Wales, and Scotland.¹⁹⁾

When we focused on the case of the US, as you all know,

18) Bernard Yack, p. 115.

19) Kai Nielsen, “Cultural Nationalism, Neither Ethnic nor Civic,” in ed., Ronald Beiner, *Theorizing Nationalism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) pp. 124-28

American nationalism is categorized into civic cultural nationalism with diverse ethnic cultural nationalism. And American history is one of immigration of diverse ethnicities. Immigrant groups in the US are paradigmatically ethnic groups. An ethnic group in the US is quite distinct from a nation whose historic homeland has been incorporated into a larger US. The immigrant ethnic group, having with a common US culture, does not intentionally seek to be a political community, does not seek self-governance, and certainly does not seek to constitute themselves into a state, through colonization or voluntary federation. For them a crucial issue is how to integrate successfully into their adopted homeland while still preserving something of their ethnic identity. Struggling to assimilate to the main social stream where white dominant culture prevails or concealing their uniqueness as an ethnic group, are no longer important in the multicultural society of the US today. They have double consciousnesses, divided between their ethnic homeland and their adopted homeland where they want to become US citizens and free subjects. They try to get a balance to keep their own ethnic distinction and American civic culture as well. This is the reason why ethnic issues and literature are so important in the United States. The economic dimensions of globalization have grown vigorously on the one hand, but on the other hand, they coexist with the unforeseen resurgence of ethno-nationalism within civic cultural nationalism. The former phenomenon can make the US homogeneous, while the latter can make it politically and culturally heterogeneous. When we study American literature, the interpretation of ethnicity is necessary not only to define American multicultural society but also to estimate the extent of the globalizing world.

What is ethnicity and how do we define the social terms of ethnicity? To begin with, let's look at the word "ethnic." The word "ethnic" is derived from the Greek "ethnos," which originally meant heathen or pagan.²⁰⁾ Until the mid-nineteenth century in the US, it referred to racial characteristics and cultural uniqueness among the whites. "Ethnic" came to be used as a polite term referring to Jews, Italians, Irish and other people of color considered inferior to the dominant group of people of largely British descent.²¹⁾

The term ethnicity became increasingly crucial in the social sciences after the 1960s. The 1960s are marked by the consolidation of the process of decolonization in Africa and Asia. In the US, the Civil Rights movement was strongest in the early 1960s associated with the issue of racism. Racism has its roots in slavery that was finally abolished in 1863, but racism occurred in many forms till the 1960s. So anti-colonial and anti-racist arguments contributed to the generation of a new term, "ethnicity."

The term "ethnic group" may be used only to classify minorities and those who are considered inferior, whereas the dominant groups in the majority do not see themselves as ethnic at all. Thus, in the US the term today is used to refer primarily to non-white immigrants. In order to eliminate the prejudice or discrimination of the non-white ethnic group, the term "Negro" has been changed to "African-American," Mexican and Latin Americans are referred to as "Latinos," American Indians are now called "Native Americans," and many other Asian ethnic groups who have recently immigrated and redis-

20) Ed. By John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 4.

21) Thomas H. "Eriksen, Ethnicity, Race, Class and Nation," in ed., John Hutchinson & Anthony D. Smith, *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 28.

covered their origins and identities as “Asian Americans.” So there are four main ethnic studies in academia, that is, African-American, Latino, Native-American, and Asian American that are in juxtaposition to the dominant European Americans.

As Spoonley has suggested, ethnicity creates “positive feelings of belonging to an in-group,”²²⁾ while racism also refers to the “concept of xenophobia”²³⁾ or simply to the ideologies of exclusion or treating ethnic minorities as inferior. In Michael Banton’s view, “race refers to the categorization of people, while ethnicity has to do with group identification.” He argues that ethnicity is generally more concerned with the identification of “us,” while racism is more oriented to the categorization of “them.”²⁴⁾ So an ethnic group, generally speaking, has an organic solidarity and a subjective belief in their common descent because they have the similarities of physical type, of customs, and a sense of the role of history in shaping their ethnic group, and they have common memories of the past and their experiences as immigrant communities. Above all, a common language exists among an ethnic group to represent their collective consciousness found in their myths, folklore and religion, and they unite together in political action as a central feature to the dynamic of their ethnicity.

What is more important is that ethnic identity is both a psychological and a sociological term. It may provide a definition, an

22) Paul Spoonley, *Racism and Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993) p. 54.

23) Michel Wieviorka, “Racism in Europe: Unity and Diversity,” ed., Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex, *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism Multiculturalism and Migration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997) p. 291.

24) Recited from Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “Ethnicity, race and nation,” in ed. Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex, *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism Multiculturalism and Migration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997) p. 35.

interpretation of the “self” that establishes what and where the person is in both social and psychological terms. As Anthony Cohen put it, “ethnicity has come to be regarded as a mode of action and of representation” to show a certain “cultural identity.”²⁵⁾ For example, if you are a third-generation Korean American or are a mix of ancestries such as Italian, Irish, or Chinese, how do you come up with an answer to a question on a census form about your ethnicity? In this case, your ethnic identity is much more symbolic and psychological according to what you consider yourself and what you psychologically feel you belong to. So, individual attachment to the collective entity is primarily symbolic and socio-emotional rather than pragmatic or utilitarian.

As I already mentioned, globalization of today attempts to transcend the boundaries of a nation or nationalism, and globalization is reflected in the diverse ethnic groups in a nation-state that represent multiculturalism and multi-ethnicities. In the near future all the nations are to define themselves as “multicultural” or “multiethnic,” mainly because of transnational migrant communities. In a multicultural society, John Rex suggests that “ethnicity is necessarily placed within the framework of immigration.” But ethnic group identity is also constituted to serve particular purposes such as the assertion of “political control or sovereignty over a territory,” especially when an ethnic group migrates across different territories as “a diaspora with an ideology of diasporic nationalism.”²⁶⁾

25) Anthony P. Cohen, *Self-Consciousness: An Alternative Anthropology of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1994) p. 119.

26) See Ed. By Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex, *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism Multiculturalism and Migration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997) pp. 7-8. Confer to John Rex, *Ethnic Minorities in the Modern Nation State* (London:

A multicultural society such as the US is based on diverse ethnic communities. The ethnic community has an ideology of cultural nationalism that insists on a unified identity as the only effective means of opposing and defending itself against marginalization in a society. It is because ethnic identity is not only based upon the reality or myth of unique cultural ties but is also formed with the impact of nationalism. Nationalism does not constitute a political theory as such, but rather consists of a politicized cultural phenomenon. The single most potent influence on the ethnic revival has been the birth and diffusion of nationalism since the late 1950s and early 1960s. The revival of ethnicity, therefore, is strongly bound up with the widespread acceptance of nationalist ideologies in the modern world, and with the rise of self-conscious nationalist movements.

For example, after the uprising of the Civil Rights movement, African-American ethnic writers have turned to cultural nationalism. Some African-American writers such as Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, Ishmael Reed, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston feel that blacks must determine their own literary standards, develop their own theater, and expose aspects of the black experience. In the past, blacks have not been encouraged and in some cases were not even permitted to use those themes and expressions which reflect their unique cultural background. Cultural nationalism allows African-Americans to come to terms with the distinctive character of their lives and their experience in a way possible only by themselves.²⁷⁾ The African-American ethnic writers

Macmillan, 1996)

27) O.B. Emerson, "Cultural Nationalism in Afro-American Literature," in ed., H. Ernest

associated with the Harlem Renaissance were even more interested in using and interpreting the uniqueness of African culture in their writing than they were in advancing the case for racial justice. Affirming the existence of a distinctive black culture, they wrote avidly of black life. As Robert Bone has pointed out, Renaissance Harlem to them was a place of love and laughter, not one of struggle and oppression.²⁸⁾

American ethnic literature generally continues to cover the struggle for equality. Except for Native Americans, all Americans are descended from immigrant populations and are members of diasporas. In the case of Asian Americans, they try to create their own pan-ethnic solidarity and identity with other people of color. As Asian American cultural nationalism unified under US history, many Asian American critics ironically repeat the call of US nationalists for a shared unified American identity in response to the threat of fragmentation posed by minority interest groups. Shawn Wong's *Homebase*(1979), and Frank China's *Donald Duk*(1991) could be seen to represent the male-identified "American-born sensibility" that these critics privilege. In contrast to this cultural nationalist position, other critics explicate Asian American works as situated in and reflecting the tensions between their Asian descent and the Anglo-conforming world that discriminates against them and assumes that the Asian American imagination is rooted in cultural conflict between worlds. Most ethnic writers articulate this double consciousness with ethnographic discourse. They recognize not only the historical legislative racism

Lewald, *The Cry of Home: Cultural Nationalism and the Modern Writer* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1972) pp. 211-12.

28) Robert Bone, *The Negro Novel in America* (New Haven, Conn., 1965) pp. 65-66.

against Asians, but also the importance of the Asian diaspora throughout America and the world.

Latino literature includes Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans, as well as the increasing numbers of writers from Central and South America. An example of Latino literature is Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street*. It is a novel about a girl's desire to find a suitable house, to find her identity, and to become a writer. Identity is crucial, for it not only means coming to terms with her Latino ethnicity, but also arriving at a gender consciousness not circumscribed by the gender determinants of her culture. Consequently, the narrator is "twice a minority"; she is doubly marginalized because of her ethnicity and her role in patriarchal society.

If knowledge of Native American spiritualism contributes towards an understanding of the works of Louise Erdrich and Leslie Silko, it is also useful to compare how both Native American writers have used aspects of their local cultures in responding to the effects of colonialism and the modernization on their societies. When reading Native American literature, we have to enrich our understanding of traditional Indian notions of history and geography and familiarize ourselves with the traumatic changes in Native American cultures after their forced assimilation into white culture. We have to make one comprehensible with the other without erasing their differences.

In order to arrive at an inter-cultural understanding of Silko's *Ceremony*(1977), the reader must accomplish several things. First, we must become familiar with the concept of storytelling as a performing act in the oral tradition. Second, we must have a sound knowledge of numerous Pueblo myths such as Ts'it'isi'nako, animal people, and the spirits of the place where people must have been

developed. Third, we must be familiar with the notion of time as circular, and simultaneously fulfilled. Finally, we must develop an understanding of a cultural imagination that holds that the individual and the world are interconnected and interdependent. So when something is disturbed, it must be reconstituted through ceremony and storytelling as well. Ceremony is the process of the ethno-medical healing that realigns man with nature.

It is important, when reading Silko's works, to understand that the novel itself is storytelling that is composed of many frames of storytelling. The novel begins with a poem to depict the Laguna creation myth. It is a storytelling about Ts'its'isi'nako, the Thought Woman, the Spider Grandmother, who is the namer and creator of all. And the work ends with Thought Woman's last word, "Sunrise." Silko participates in the creative expression of an indigenous outlook that is filled with the spirit of place and the ongoing cycle of life that is constantly renewing itself. The purpose of ceremony is to heal, and storytelling is to teach.

Therefore, American ethnic literature, that is, the literature being produced by the immigrant population is preoccupied with the interrogation of the concepts of identity, home, and nation. It attempts to recuperate ideals of tribal origin and community and to re-inscribe the modern invention of cultural nationalism as a political strategy to avoid ethnic assimilation. On the other hand American ethnic literature also reveals aspects of shared American culture and ideology--the shared values of individualism and community and the unique ways in which ethnic identities fulfill a very American need. Americans in general increasingly perceive themselves as undergoing cultural homogenization on the one hand, but on the other hand they

try to identify themselves and differentiate themselves from each other. So ethnicity, now that it is respectable and no longer a major cause of conflict, seems therefore to be ideally suited to serve as a distinguishing characteristic. Moreover, in a mobile society caused by immigration or emigration in a global world system or global village, people who move around and therefore often find themselves living in communities of strangers, tend to look for commonalities that make strangers into neighbors, and shared ethnicity may provide mobile people with at least an initial excuse to get together. Ethnicity in America is an endlessly fascinating and constantly changing phenomenon, which still has real political and social consequences in shaping American thinking about race relations.

With the advent of globalization, the ethnic issue is very important when studying American literature and especially when trying to identify what Americanism is. Consideration of ethnic identity in the American novel affords the chance not only to understand the nature of America as a melting pot, but also to study the multicultural phenomenon of the cultural mix of nations and peoples in the age of globalization.

Universities all over the world have been, in general, notoriously prone to deal with cultural studies and with the humanities in isolation from their political and economic context, that is, what is commonly called "practice." However, recent cultural theory has been trying to deal with the other/I dichotomy, and to find ways out of this dilemma in the representations of other cultures. So the questions of cultural studies relate to this rethinking remain largely in the realm of politics and economics. And their power of discourse can also address the difficulties that the realm of politics and economics

find hard to negotiate. We can say that the main aim of cultural studies is to “dissolve the subjected other.” Today’s hottest issue in the US, Arab Islamic terror and its conflicts can be harmoniously solved with understanding the difference of “other” culture. They attacked the United States just because the America controls the global economy at the sacrifice of their economy, religion and culture. The Arab fundamentalists believe that their banks, their companies, their trade, their arms should be a part of the global economic system, with cooperative business headquarters in Geneva, Luxembourg, Frankfurt, the Bahamas. They attempt to propagate their own religion, culture and the military power, since happiness or unhappiness and wealth or poverty are apportioned by Allah, in not questioning, in fate, and thus all over the world people should accept whatever lot is theirs. They wish to let Americans know this truth that is totally based on their culture and religion. Otherwise, the conflicts between the US and all other third world countries will be only another stage of endlessly continuing anti- colonialist struggles, because the globalization forces are homogenizing other indigenous cultures everywhere.

Multiculturalism and other postmodern trends often appropriate the culture of the “others” instead of allowing them to speak for themselves. Multicultural studies can help to bridge the gap between people in the South and people in the North. They can bring the cultures of the South closer to the North, combat the ill effects of orientalist tendencies and their offspring. One of the cultural theorists, Stuart Hall has argued in “The New Ethnicities” that the new concepts of ethnic difference today can provide a counter to “the dominant discourse, from its equivalence with nationalism, imperialism,

racism and the state.”²⁹) As a result these new forms of cultural practice can counter with the drive for a homogeneous national identity that the globalizing world imposes on us.

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29) Stuart Hall, “The New Ethnicities,” in J. Donald and A. Rattansi eds., *Race, Culture and Difference* (London: Sage, 1992) p. 257.

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