

UDC 821.111

SCOPUS CODE 3312

<https://doi.org/10.36073/1512-0996-2024-4-215-223>

Why Should America Fall

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Abstract. In this article, we will review the pivotal stages of the formation and evolution of the United States of America as the epitome of modern civilization, often called as “New Rome”. Our examination will be targeted solely at analyzing American literature, as fiction represents one of the most important and reliable indicators of any culture.

We believe that fiction possesses the ability to notice, capture, and mirror the characteristic nuances of an era, often overlooked by “the Great History”.

American literature is a very organic continuation of great European literature. And yet, it is self-sufficient, like American culture, the American way of life, and the value system as a whole.

By exploring American literature and the masterpieces of prominent American authors, we aim to comprehend a distinctive world. The assertion that America, like other

significant cultures (especially civilization) is inherently messianic with a focus on the clear benevolent origins of American “Messianism”.

However, the significant point today is that America’s impact on the rest of the world is greater than ever which is why it is so relevant to local trends

Keywords: american fiction; american protestantism; values.

Introduction

„America is great because America is good, and if America ever ceases to be good, America will cease to be great“ (Alexis de Tocqueville). Indeed, if America ceases to be good, it will fall and is up to the country. (The first known use of this quote dates back to 1922, when the Presbyterian journal Herald And Presbyter published a

letter about the preaching of the priest John McDowell, in which he cited the quote in its full version, indicating Alexis de Tocqueville as the author. For him, this mistake began to repeat to other preachers, and from them, it got to politicians. Even though perhaps this statement does not belong to A. De Tocqueville, since it was attached to him, like other famous quotes for other great people, and has been used by American politicians and not only as his quote, for more than a century, we will not be original and leave everything as it is).

An individual exhibits different behaviors at home and in public. So do countries and states. In a narrative by the eminent scientist, culturologist, literary critic, and semiotician Yuri Lotman, during the Second World War in 1943, he found himself confined to a barracks with German prisoners after they had been captured in a village.

They had more than enough time to talk to each other. Lotman says that the German corporal turned out to be a teacher with good manners and cultural behavior. However, in the village where they were captured, the villagers spread rumors about the captives misbehaving. They discussed instances such as walking naked in rooms full of women and children. Lotman recalls his surprise when he asked the corporal, "I know you as a cultural person, do you behave like this at home?" – The German corporal's answer was candid: "But I am not at home, home is different". – Later, Lotman called this event "Occupant's Complex".

Main Part

That is why the field of interest of our article is not the foreign policy of any state, including the USA. We will only discuss "Home is Different" mainly based on the great American literature.

When we mention American literature, the first people who come to mind are Hemingway or Dreiser. Not because they are explicitly the greatest. Simply, from our point of view, most "American" people are outside the borders of America. Dreiser's "American Tragedy" effectively captures the concept of the American Dream and its unattainability. It highlights the inherent contradiction within the American mentality: the pursuit of success in a land of opportunity, juxtaposed with the Protestant notion that human aspirations cannot be fully realized.

It could be said, that American literature is deeply religious. Even with Irwin Shaw or Kurt Vonnegut, who is a left-wing liberal and an atheist, God, faith, even as something absurd, still figures. This is a specific, "American Christianity", characteristic only to America. American Christianity is defined by Protestantism to a certain extent, or more precisely by Calvinism, partly by Unitarianism. At first glance, the Old Testament seems to be even more relevant than the New One, which makes it closer to Judaism than to Christianity. The names of the first American settlers are also from the Old Testament, that is, Hebrew. The germs of American literature, like the hagiographical works of ancient nations, are the primitive records of the Calvinist settlers, basically depicting their spiritual feelings and scenes of work and farming. Art is unnecessary for Puritans. The Old Testament paradigm completely rejects idleness, laziness, and "useless activity", as literature is perceived.

Ralph Waldo Emerson emerged in the midst of the 19th century, marking a pivotal moment in the foundation of American literature. However, the remains of the old paradigm persist and continue to influence contemporary thought. Protestantism represents a paradigm of the Old Testament. If you behave, God will reward you.

The idea is that earthly prosperity, longevity, and the abundance of offspring directly reflect one's righteousness. In essence, success in this life is viewed as a sign of divine favor. Max Weber's "Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" delves into how these beliefs fueled the rise of Protestant capitalism, propelling Protestant nations to the forefront of global economics and politics. This worldview contrasts with the concept of indulgence in this world and rewards in the next, as espoused by Orthodoxy and Catholicism. America, in particular, is often conceived as the "promised land," offering opportunities for all. Not only for the always persecuted and oppressed Jews, Huguenots, Calvinists, or other "sectarians", but absolutely for everyone. However, of course, in any era, freedom was perceived differently, as well as "all" or "universal". In Greece, the cradle of democracy, "all" did not count slaves. They were not meant either in Rome or in America. what will you do? The Promised Land is for everyone, with few exceptions. It is a place of opportunity for everyone, a place to start from scratch. For everyone, except for exceptions. And these exceptions, perhaps... perhaps they have done something wrong so that... Protestant ethics explains it this way. Others can create themselves. Able to do things that it could not do in the Old World, both because of the natural scarcity of land or other material resources and because of origin (difficulty or lack of strata elevators in Europe). There is a lot of land in the "New Land" and it does not belong to anyone. In a way, everyone here is Adam and Eve themselves. Everyone writes the history of mankind. If you are forced to live in the confines of a system built by others in Europe, here you are the creator yourself. God's co-creator. The Statue of Liberty and a poem by Emma Lazarus engraved on it:

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,*

*The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

- which is an allusion to the call of the Savior: "Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will comfort you."

The American Dream emerges in its original form, untainted by later materialistic interpretations centered around possessions like family, job, house, and car. It embodies the vision of a new, blessed, promised land where individuals find a sense of belonging. However, this dream is overshadowed by the tragic perspective of Protestant ethics, which suggests that human ambitions are ultimately futile and goals cannot be achieved. The other way, even the existence of God would be questioned, because a human does not rule this world. This fatalistic worldview echoes themes found in stoicism, Islam, and particularly in the Old Testament and pre-Christian traditions—where despite the predetermined nature of existence, individuals are compelled to continue striving. This resonates deeply with the ancient, enduring aspects of the human condition—echoing figures like Sisyphus, Tantalus, and others. As Baratashvili eloquently said:

*If mortals of this world we are and bear the form of man,
Our duty is to serve our land and walk the ways of man.
Unworthy is the one who's but a mass of worthless clay,
Who dares to shun all mortal cares, yet in this world does stay!*

This tragedy and very easily noticeable, depending on your results "blessing" or "curse", forms a strict, conscientious, and hardworking character. However, unlike the mindless and capricious nature often associated with ancient Greek views, the Old Testament and Protestant

perspectives carry deeper religious significance. They serve as vessels for the idea, the seed, and the anticipation of Christ's coming. While worldly success remains a cornerstone, it is not because the otherworld is deemed less valuable or disbelieved. Rather, there is a profound religious meaning attached. It carries a deep religious meaning here. "We wait," but worldly "successes" are an indication of our choice. In Judaism, for instance, childlessness is considered a religious tragedy. Beyond the natural desire for offspring, there is a longing to fulfill the Old Testament blessing to multiply and inherit the land – a belief that in some ways, extends one's immortality. "As long as your blood exists, the memory of you will not disappear". The essence of this tragedy here is that any Jewish woman can give birth to the Messiah!

American religiosity is largely a product of Protestantism, more precisely Calvinism, and Puritanism, but it is still different. It still has its own identity. On the one hand, it carries within itself a Protestant pre-determination, but at the same time, it does not allow you to drop your hands and do nothing. You still have to fulfill your worldly mission. There is something stoical about that. On the other hand, of course, it is Christianity. All and all, does American Christianity imply Christ? For instance, at the Presidential Inauguration, the President of America utters the word "God", not "Christ". It is widely known that the President of America cannot become a man who does not believe in God. But which god? Robert Bellah's 1967 article "Civil Religion in America" perfectly explained the phenomenon we are dealing with. According to his explanation, the name of God is removed deliberately to make it easier to address the nation. To the American nation, which is so diverse, multi-ethnic, and multi-confessional, that only the rejection of specification and the revelation of a single, "universal" God can contribute to

its consolidation. "American God" can appear in different ways in certain moments and aspects, for example, in the Constitution. According to Thomas Hobbes, if: "...The king was removed from the common agreement", that is, he could not be wrong ("King Cannot be wrong"). (which, in itself, leads us to another finding, the primacy of the Pope), here the constitution firmly takes the place of the King (Pope) and even God. The Constitution becomes the only inviolable authority "loved by all", capable of unifying diverse America into a cohesive whole.

For the average American, America is an unassailable authority. He/she believes that he/she lives in the best country in the world and hardly cares what is happening outside its borders. We can call it the concept of "American self-sufficiency" and draw parallels with ancient Rome where Rome and Romans were superior to those beyond its borders, often labeled as "barbarians". As for the American media, it is also focused on the American news basically, paying less attention to the world news. This kind of inward focus is also reflected in the realm of sports. While baseball and American football reign supreme domestically, they do not share the same level of popularity internationally. Additionally, the linguistic differences in naming sports, with Americans referring to football as "soccer" while it is known as "football" elsewhere, underscore cultural distinctions.

For instance, National Basketball Association (NBA) winners are called no less than – World Champions. However, this league encompasses only two countries – the USA and Canada (Here, Canada is considered an integral part of American ecumenism representing only a single team). Within this cultural framework, there exist temples, chapels, icons, and even statues, yet the American flag holds a central position in this pantheon, revered as the ultimate object of worship. It's as if

encapsulated in the phrase: “While we may each have our gods, the American flag stands as the singular and supreme deity.” In essence, American theism demands devout belief while simultaneously embracing tolerance. The fundamental principle lies in the act of belief itself, with the freedom to choose. It resembles us the narrative in “Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” where the coachman expresses that the essence lies in a person’s belief. Otherwise, he would not trust someone without belief at all. It’s a lucid and progressive sentiment. Here, we find an indirect echo of Dostoevsky’s assertion, “If God does not exist, everything is permissible.”

Dostoevsky’s conception of God differs significantly from the American Calvinist worldview. While Calvinism often emphasizes a distant, abstract deity, Dostoevsky’s God is vividly concrete, embodied in the figure of Christ as portrayed in the New Testament. This emphasis on Christ as the Savior permeates not only Dostoevsky’s works but also those of writers like Updike and Salinger, who draw inspiration from his portrayal. Through Dostoevsky’s influence, the prevailing image of the transcendent “Old Testament” God gradually shifts towards the tangible and compassionate figure of Christ. This transformation is evident in Faulkner’s “The Sound and the Fury,” where Faulkner echoes Dostoevsky’s exploration of societal decline and raises questions about its underlying causes. In both Dostoevsky’s novels like “The Brothers Karamazov” and “The Devils” and Faulkner’s works, there is a shared inquiry into the reasons behind the downfall of their respective societies. Dostoevsky raises questions about the fate of Russia, probing into why and how the country might perish. Similarly, Faulkner undertakes a similar exploration, though with a more localized focus on the American South, his South, which is fictional and at the same time dear to him. The South perishes. The idealized some kind of paradise disappears. Faulkner shows us the world

existentially, in a process of formation. The world changes and transforms into an uncharacteristic, completely alienated environment. Faulkner’s exploration of the decline of America, particularly focusing on the demise of the South, delves into the existential reasons behind these processes. However, unraveling these complexities proves challenging, both for an individual and for an entire generation. While Dostoevsky appears more specific and confident in his analysis of Russia’s fate, Faulkner’s portrayal of America’s fall offers a deeper examination of the uncertainties inherent in societal transformation.

The “Faulknerian” idea that Christianity is embedded in the entire biological process is captured in American literature by Salinger and Updike. This is also an evangelical idea, and this is also the epigraph of Dostoevsky’s novel: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. John 12.24”.

Yes, the idea that one must undergo a cycle of dying, death, and rebirth to attain eternity is a theme that pervades the works of many great American writers. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* (the Georgian translation does not quite accurately convey the original meaning of the title) is a ball catcher in American baseball. It is the Catcher who wears the glove, which is the leitmotif of the entire novel. Catcher metaphorically represents the catcher of souls; Symbolically, the catcher represents a savior of souls, while Holden Caulfield, the protagonist, embodies the catcher’s role as he strives to protect children playing on the edge of a metaphorical chasm in a rye field. This mission serves as a metaphor for his broader quest to save innocence and preserve goodness in a world he perceives as corrupt. In this sense, Salinger could be reckoned a Christian writer. Harper Lee is a Christian writer as well. She asserts that every person is

good since you get to know them better. American literature is not only religious, it is Christian as well.

But at the same time, religion in America is somewhat a part of business. Sectarian ideologies become prevalent, shaping the legal framework governing the relationship between the state and religious institutions. These dynamic fosters a sense of “tolerance” towards various religious organizations, facilitating their abundance and diversity, as long as they operate within legal boundaries. Ultimately, adherence to tax obligations becomes paramount within this framework. In America, despite the presence of intellectual circles, including literature, business remains the primary focus. Many of the greatest American writers were, in fact, amateur entrepreneurs themselves. They initially pursued careers in business before turning to the craft of writing. Bohemianism, with its emphasis on unconventional lifestyles and artistic expression, stands in contrast to the American ethos, which prioritizes hard work and discipline. This cultural orientation is influenced by Calvinist and Protestant ethics, as well as the Weberian “spirit of capitalism”.

Typically, recognition doesn’t come easily to writers. If it does, it often arrives late or not at all. This reality often leads to a bohemian lifestyle, which is largely frowned upon in America due to its association with laziness and idleness. In contrast, Europe has historically embraced and romanticized the bohemian lifestyle. This lifestyle is characterized by poverty, emaciation, and a relentless pursuit of inner creativity. Bohemians are often depicted as young, melancholic, cynical, self-absorbed individuals who believe the world owes them something. The life of big names in Europe such as Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Dos Passos, and Gertrude Stein - Their life in Paris... They would eat, drink, have fun,

write. For the American consciousness, such a way of life was a tragedy, while for Europe it was bohemian.

In American consciousness, parents must be proud of their children. While poverty may have been somewhat romanticized for artists in Europe and Russia, in America, it was viewed as a negative and unromantic circumstance, often associated with a sense of curse. Despite America’s pragmatic spirit, there existed pockets of free-spirited intellectual life, particularly in certain regions such as California or New York. These areas stood apart from the rest of America, functioning as artistic islands where individuals like Huxley, Kesey, and Woodstock thrived, along with the countercultural movements of the 1960s. Even in the 90s, intellectual thoughts would significantly influence the American political agenda. However, in recent years, commercial interests have increasingly replaced intellectual spaces.

Recently, serious problems have occurred in American society. At first sight, it should not have appeared, as everything seemed to be all right. The problems have shifted from human rights to absurd, formalistic, and self-excluding “postulates”. Even worse, this absurdity has been legalized and passed into law, and considering America's supreme deity, the "Constitution," and Americans' attitude toward it, it's easy to imagine the vicious circle the American electorate has gotten itself into. Genuine virtues have been supplanted by false concepts. For instance, politeness has given way to political correctness, humanity to inclusiveness, and friendly help to indifferent tolerance. To put it mildly, it is disappointing when a friend asks you where you spent the summer this year. And you know that he/she does not care whether you were in Antarctica, Ibiza, or in a monastery. There is one answer to everything – “Cool”. Why? Because it is a tolerant response. – Anyway.

Political correctness is not a core value for America. It appeared in the 60s and has become a scourge for culture and a tool for political manipulation. It often takes sick forms and simply imposes the strictest censorship. We have all witnessed the results of the “cancel policy” and the complete isolation of the American president, nominally the first person in the world, by the American news media merely because of a different opinion! This phenomenon unfolds in America itself. Sinclair Lewis, the acclaimed American Nobel laureate, provides prophetic parallels to today’s reality in his novel “It Can't Happen Here”.

In the 1950s, when the struggle for the rights of the black population began, it would have been difficult to imagine that it would have reached Black Lives Matter. What does BLM and similar movements serve and what do they represent by themselves? - Masses of people ruled by groups that have been exploiting certain groups of people until now. But - according to the era. Now their goal is to re-marginalize the same ethnic or racial groups, to prevent real integration and to “throw a bone” to the furious crowd, and ultimately to create the illusion of a local victory. In general, the perverse sexualization of centuries-old suffering of people, nations, and racial groups, besides being immoral, is another crime against them, because it aims to divert attention from the essence of the problem.

Leftist tendencies are becoming very dangerous in America. Quoting Ronald Reagan’s cautionary words, “If fascism returns to America, it will come in the form of liberalism”, underscores concern about the direction of liberalism in contemporary America. While liberalism and the left may not share much common ground

traditionally, the complexities of modern times can lead to unexpected alliances.

Conclusion

As we conclude our article, we return to the words of Alexis de Tocqueville, who visited America in the 1830s. Despite describing America’s shortcomings at the time, he possessed a keen foresight, recognizing the nation’s potential greatness (Alexis de Tocqueville, “Democracy in America”). De Tocqueville reminds us of the vital cornerstones of America, the preservation of which is paramount, as their replacement could demolish the essence of what makes America exceptional.

„Liberty cannot be established without morality, nor morality without faith“;

„Democracy and socialism have nothing in common but one word, equality. But notice the difference: while democracy seeks equality in liberty, socialism seeks equality in restraint and servitude.“

America has already experienced a partial erosion of faith-based morality and freedom of speech. There's a noticeable shift towards socialism, and if it further relinquishes another fundamental value - such as the inviolability of private property - there may be significant repercussions. However, too much deviation could ruin everything. Paraphrasing another Nobel laureate Joseph Brodsky – “Life can swing right, swing left...”.

We still hope that America, as the flagship of modern civilization, can find its way back to peace, and rediscover genuine values rather than temporary political slogans. America must avoid becoming a self-destructive cycle, consuming its laws and principles like Ouroboros. If it fails to do so, we will understand why America may fall.

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UDC 821.11

SCOPUS CODE 3312

<https://doi.org/10.36073/1512-0996-2024-4-215-223>

რატომ „დაიღუპება“ ამერიკა

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ანოტაცია. აღნიშნულ სტატიაში მიმოვიხილავთ ამერიკის შეერთებული შტატების, როგორც თანამედროვე ცივილიზაციის ფლაგმანის, იგივე ახალი რომის ჩამოყალიბებისა და განვითარების ძირითად ეტაპებს. ამას ვაკეთებთ, ამერიკული ლიტერატურის ანალიზის საფუძველზე.

მხატვრული ლიტერატურა ახერხებს ეპოქისთვის დამახასიათებელი ნიუანსების შემჩნევას, შეგროვებას და ასახვას. ისეთების, რომელიც „დიდ ისტორიას“ გამორჩევა ხოლმე.

ამერიკული ლიტერატურა დიდი ევროპული ლიტერატურების ორგანული გაგრძელებაა. მიუხედავად ამისა, ის თვითმყოფადიცაა, როგორც მთლიანად ამერიკული კულტურა, მსოფლხატი და ცხოვრების წესი.

სწორედ ამ განსაკუთრებული სამყაროს დანახვასა და გაგებას ვცდილობთ ჩვენ ამერიკული ლიტერატურისა და დიდი ამერიკელი მწერლების დიდი ტექსტების ანალიზის მეშვეობით. ამერიკა, ისევე როგორც ყველა დიდი კულტურა და მითუმეტეს ცივილიზაცია, მესიანურია.

დღეს ამერიკის გავლენა დანარჩენ მსოფლიოზე იმხელაა, რომ მისი ცალკე განხილვა შეუძლებელია. ნებისიერი იქ მიღებული გადაწყვეტილება აუცილებლად აისახება ჩვენს ყოფაზე. ამიტომაცაა აქტუალური იქაური ტენდენციები

საკვანძო სიტყვები: ამერიკული მხატვრული ლიტერატურა; ამერიკული პროტესტანტიზმი; ღირებულებები.

The date of review 15.07.2024

The date of submission 25.07.2024

Signed for publishing 25.12.2024