

## FAULKNER'S AND MORRISON'S NOVELS: SEARCHING FOR NATIONAL IDENTITY

*У статті йдеться про пошук Джо Крістмасом у романі Вільяма Фолкнера "Світло в серпні" та Мілкменом Дедом у романі Тоні Моррісон "Пісня Соломона" власної національної ідентичності, та національної ідентичності американця загалом.*

**Ключові слова:** мотив, персонаж, Моррісон, Фолкнер, американська національна ідентичність.

The Deep South with its enormous complexity (white immigrants from Europe, black slaves from Africa and American Indians from various tribes of North America, descendants of Maya, Aztec and Incas of South America) and versatility of the phenomenon as the reflection of the American history, its failures and victories was brilliantly recreated by William Faulkner, and later by Toni Morrison. The two Nobel Prize authors seem very different: a white man writing in the early twentieth century, and a black woman writing in the last decades of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty first century, examined a parallel experience and produced works remarkably similar in style, thematic values characterization and search for the human identity going deeply into the consciousness of their characters to tell their stories.

For William Faulkner the search for the human as well as the national identity was the main quest of all his works. This is more than true about Toni Morrison too.

Though Toni Morrison declared, "I am not like Faulkner. I am not like in that sense..." [8, p. 152], she told the audience at the 1985 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference, "there was for me not only an academic interest in Faulkner, but in a very, very personal way, in a very personal way as a reader, William Faulkner had an enormous effect on me, an enormous effect" [7, 295-296].

Both Joe Christmas and Milkman Dead were described by two authors in the constant movement – running – flying for the search for different features of their identity: social, racial, geographical, sexual and human in general. They both tried in different ways to find themselves as a member of the family who knows who his ancestors are and where their bones lie, as a representative of a manhood, as a representative of a society they live in and as a representative of race. William Faulkner's novel *Light in August* creates and sustains an atmosphere of human misfortune and suffering, though raising the story above the level of empty violence and sensationalism, which. It invests this particular story, involving particular people, with a sense of a larger, almost cosmic, significance. Here, Jefferson is a small town in Mississippi, and at the same time is everywhere human beings live and aspire and suffer [1, p.98]. *Light in August* traces the history of a character of Joe Christmas who is shaped by and responds to the cultural, religious, and racial traditions of the Deep South. Faulkner uses recurrent religious, racial, and cultural patterns as well as his development of the themes of racism, alienation, and withdrawal in the novel. The plot line of Joe Christmas in *Light in August* is motivated by striving to overcome the uncertainty of his racial status and acquire certainty of his existence. The analyses of this subject in detail seems important hence this motif is based on the motif complex of 'running away' (fleeing to avoid this constant for the hero status when he cannot identify himself with any other communities that occur on his way). However, this complex is the dominant motif for the novel as a whole. It manifests itself in two ways: 1) as mere 'running away' from danger, harassment, etc. (this happens to other Faulkner's personages such as, John Sartoris, Joe Christmas, Henry Sutpen, Horace Benbow); 2) running as escape, i.e. escape from reality, due to feelings of alienation, oppression, psychological discomfort, etc. (the same can be stated about Quentin Compson, Joanna Burden, Gail Hightower, Temple Drake).

"Running away and escape" motif is implemented differently to the story of Joe Christmas, but typologically similar to the three stages of his life biography as it is presented in the novel: his stay in an orphanage, living at the house of his stepfather McEachern, three-year 'alliance' with Joanna Burden.

Brought to the asylum at Christmas time Joe gets this name. His ambiguous parentage made him later 'run'; 'escape' in the search for his roots.

Toni Morrison's novel *Song of Solomon* is also about the power of naming and identity. The epigraph to *Song of Solomon*, "The fathers may soar And the children may know their names," points to the importance of knowing family (which Milkman Dead comes to understand when he goes to seek his forefathers). The novel opens with the flight of a Black insurance agent, Robert Smith, who jumps off the roof of the hospital and ends with Milkman Dead, who, after tracing the roots of his flying

African ancestors, gains the incentive he has needed all along to join them. The novel centers on his eventual acquisition of a sense of his history and his embrace of the Black community. It resembles the Greek myth of Icarus. This trait of flying, however, also goes back to the myths of flying Africans that slaves carried with them to the shores and fields of the United States. One of the authors of *The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia*, Lovalerie King, emphasizes: "...slaves frequently told stories of the Africans who flew back to Africa rather than be enslaved. The act of flying is believed to result from a realization, often, of one's identity. While most readers readily suspend their disbelief in this work of fiction, the flying myth grounds the magical realism of the story firmly in African heritage" [11, 13-14].

Both authors focus upon how Africans lost their names through the slavery period, which in turn created a loss of connection with their ancestry. In order to secure an identity, Morrison believes that African Americans need to choose the names for their children themselves. She explains that Milkman needs to learn his own name and the meaning of that name, for it will give him power. Early on, we discover that the name "Dead" originated as a mistake of a drunken Yankee soldier. Milkman's actual name is Macon Dead III, but he was given the nickname "Milkman" by Freddie, the janitor, after Freddie saw a four-year-old Macon nursing at his mother's breast. Early in *Song of Solomon*, Milkman describes his mother as "too insubstantial, too shadowy for love." As a result, he has never thought of her as "a person, a separate individual, with a life apart from allowing or interfering with his own" [9, 75]. Milkman's attitude later changes drastically, and a large part of his understanding evolves from his learning not simply to hear but to listen and, more importantly, to understand.

By pointing out that Milkman's family did not choose their name (a lack like in Christmas's case, which immediately disconnects them from their past) the significant difference between being given and willingly choosing a name is most apparent through the actions of Pilate Dead, Milkman's aunt.

Christmas is seeking freedom and personal approval. His consciousness, distorted by the idea about his possible Negro origin, faces in adulthood the world of blacks as rebellion, rejection of closed-world chaos. While the world appears at first as a female, it is later identified as if he is a Negro and gets a specific name – "black female" world. Christmas feels a commitment to him and at the same time this world scares him. Preserving the influence of both worlds, the personage, however, can not accept any of them. Failure to assimilate himself with any of these two worlds causes his 'escape', his rebellion and his tragedy. The world for Christmas is a cage or prison. He is 'homeless': "though he had no city or home town, no street, no stone, no piece of land" [6, 16]. C. Brooks emphasizes Christmas' detachment from community: as a result of psychological trauma in his childhood, he "was far from any significant past" [3, 55-56]. While observing Faulkner's attitude to the past Cleanth Brooks also writes: "The past is never for Faulkner a realm of irresponsible fantasy. For his characters, the past may seem to be a doom, a judgment, a portent, a responsibility, even a providential hope. But it is never simply irrelevant – something that is finished and done with..." [4, 277]

The same can be said about Morrison's works. Shaped by their incomplete pasts, the characters in Faulkner's and Morrison's fiction come to adulthood incomplete, unfulfilled, and alienated from their emotions. Moreover, they find themselves withdrawn and their interaction with the rest of society difficult and often violent.

Each stage of Christmas' life reaches its final point with 'running away'/'escape' since the penalty for the first 'crime' committed by him in the asylum in the age of five. The important point of Christmas self identification is the episode when he and his fellow peers come in the dark barn to the young Negro girl. It becomes an entrance into the 'different dimension', meeting with the darkness, with the abyss, which appeals Christmas and makes him frightened. Joe, entering the barn, did not even see the girl, in her place he sees a 'black pit' and 'the dead glare of the stars' in it: "Leaning, he seemed to look down into a black well and at the bottom saw two glints like reflection of dead stars ... "[6, 66]. Loss of innocence here means surrender to this 'abyss', and Christmas cannot afford it. He kills a black girl, fights with four friends, although he is not fully aware of what has caused his hatred.

At the age of seventeen, Joe meets a waitress from a small restaurant on quiet city streets, where they come with his stepfather for some business. This woman draws him to herself. But this time he does not feel the 'bottomless pit' that scared the fourteen-year-old Christmas in a dark barn. It seems to Joe, that she belongs to some extraterrestrial world in which there is no dirt and curse. Her face appears to him almost holy, which is "a quality unworldly" [6, 74]. Now Christmas understands that he rejected that Negro girl for this meeting. He seems to have found a perfect image out of the two worlds which are equally hostile and challenging to him. However, the disappointment is following very quickly. Christmas is frightened of 'periodical filth'; he is frightened "to smell the odor reek of all anonymous men above dirt" [6, 76, 82]. Periodic 'filth', periodic sin turn into the same abysses that Christmas rejected before.

Symbol of women's world at this stage of his life is a forest. After the unsuccessful meeting with a waitress and the opening of her 'impurity' Christmas does not go home, he goes deep into the thicket

of the forest. But trees in the forest are not trees for him now; they are cracked vases, from which something rare, with an unpleasant smell exuding. It takes a week, and Christmas loses virginity: this happens in the same forest thickets.

Christmas often meets with the waitress at the crossroads. That appears to be symbolic for his life and which also explains the state of his mind. Crossroads in general can be called spatial characteristic feature of his life.

For the love of women, he finally breaks with 'closed' world of his step-parents house, kills his stepfather and forcibly takes money collected by Mrs. McEachern, emphasizing that he "did not ask it" from her. But the 'new' world does not accept Christmas: he finds himself beaten and left alone in the empty house of the waitress and her friends. So his escape turns into another failure: Christmas turns out to be rejected this world too, having abandoning the first one.

The years pass, fifteen years stretch into endless deserted streets – that is how now life of Christmas is represented. It's a world of constant escape, constant throwing between black and white worlds, and disordered change of the two dimensions. But there is no peace in any of them. Christmas comes to a new phase of his life, a new trial, which begins with the arrival of 'the great dark house' in which Joanna Burden lives.

Joanna's house combines the characteristics of 'women' and 'closed' world. At first sight it seems to Christmas "bulked square and huge from its mass" [6, 94] (a grim house) and at the same time 'drawing' him inside its "obscurity and darkness womb" [6, p.94]. Christmas enters the house, begins his affair with Joanna. Two worlds, in which Christmas and the mistress herself live, begin to rotate as alternating day and night in his life. But Christmas again rejects both worlds. He is afraid of 'spoiling' wild nights of "bottomless swamp" [6, 106] that suck him. Yet very weird fatalism keeps him remaining there. Joanna invites him to do charitable deeds in favor of blacks and even study in one of the colleges. But this is the same 'closed' world for Christmas, whose life is a constant running away/escape, and he surely can not accept it.

The situation with Milkman is somewhat different. Morrison's novel *Song of Solomon* explores the different ways individual characters relate to this expanded notion of the ancestor and how this relationship relates to personal, interpersonal, and communal well-being. Milkman while living in Pilate's place for the first time in his life moves forward to a community and healing. For Milkman to fully embark on this journey to home, he must leave his lakeside Michigan community and travel to the ancestral homeland of the American South. Although his 'running', his journey is not mainly for the treasures of the material world but for more precious treasures of his origin and identity. As a result, it is only when he is on ground of his ancestors, only then he starts to recollect and long his cultural identity, which includes an understanding of slavery and the intergenerational effects of this trauma.

In addition, Milkman's father forcefully influences Macon Dead in reclaims of his identity. He teaches Milkman that earning money and owning things are the most important things in life. Although Milkman believes his father, yet he eventually realizes that he needs more in his life, and he sets off on a journey to the South, where he struggles to reconstruct his family's history and understand his identity. What begins as a search for gold becomes Milkman's journey into the depths of his ancestry, where he comes to understand his place in the world. Along the way, Milkman discovers the emptiness of his father's materialism and accepts Pilate's truth that Pilate carries hung from her ear her name as a symbol and the sense of self-identity. Milkman returns home, not with the gold he seeks but with new realization about his connections to people and a place. Most important, he learns his family's real name. A new man, Milkman freshly understands that his identity does not derive from material things; instead, his sense of self originates from his relationships with others and his individual and communal history, the history of African American, the history of race.

For Faulkner race motif is extremely important too. Although this motif is not traced in all novels, it is essential in the masterpieces such as *Light in August* and *Abssalom, Abssalom!*

For Joe Christmas an attempt to solve the problem of racial identity and awareness that there is no solution of this problem, inability to stick to one or another pole causes all his further actions. His agitation is revealed in many episodes and emphasizes the ambivalence of the problem. Escape, revolt and tragedy of Christmas are caused, according to the author, by the fact that he does not know who he was and will never know it later. Race becomes a factor in the split antagonism and consciousness of his nature, explains the ambivalence that is reflected both in specific actions and in many details that accompany the plot episodes, in particular, the appearance of the hero, self motivated actions, assessments of other characters and the narrator comments. For most of the novel, Joe refuses to accept society's ready-made identity and strives to retain his doubleness; thus, he challenges Jefferson's basic belief system. One has to wonder if he is destroyed for murdering a white woman or for subverting Jefferson's belief system. The central plot motif is antagonistic struggle 'to end' on the verge of existence ("fight up to the final instant"), which determines the extreme tension of events



/ situations with his participation. The most logical answer is to assume that Faulkner is showing the consequences of challenging society's religious, racial, and cultural beliefs. "Faulkner wrote about specific people in specific places and did so in full awareness of his complex Southern experience. He took no shortcut to universality. And if his fiction illuminates the human heart in conflict with itself, it also tells us a good deal about the culture in which he lived" [2, 99]. To compare, in the novel *Absalom, Absalom!* race motif becomes the main obstacle to large-scale projects of Thomas Sutpen. His secret about the origin of Charles Bon, illegitimate son of a woman with Negro blood, and death from the hand of Charles consanguineous brother, is the main intrigue of the novel's plot.

The African 'blood' in *Song of Solomon* also boils, revealing the tragedy of an enslaved identity. Milkman Dead only when hears the legend of his great-grandfather Solomon who could fly he achieves a sense of self and discovers his place in community. This folktale of the flying Africans underscores the importance of community to African American identity, because it helps create a group identity. In *Song of Solomon* Morrison puts Milkman through the same sort of historical reconstruction that Christmas attempts. Milkman's community also provides him with more reliable sources of information, and from that community he gets a much more solid sense of the past, in various ways, than Christmas ever can. That is the Southern community that helps Milkman find his roots, though the representative of this community kill Christmas.

Milkman demonstrates his understanding of his heritage by singing songs at Pilate Dead's death. This song is an oral history, more alive than any written historical document or artifact, because it continues to live. When Milkman finally while singing it goes deeply into the significance of the song, he becomes "as eager and happy as he had ever been in his life" as all the pieces fall into place and the historical story finally fits into the living story of the song [9, 304]. Furthermore, Morrison illustrates Milkman's accommodation to this oral history when she forces him to rely on memory to record the song [9, 303]. And his final leap at the end of the novel is a figurative leap into the past. His acceptance of his ancestors' flying myths enables him to recover his identity while legitimating alternative histories. Consequently, Joe Christmas cannot make sense of the history, so he fails to understand his life story and his own life.

Through Joe Christmas, Faulkner illustrates not only the level of racial prejudice at work in the Deep South, but also the myths that resulted from that prejudice. Faulkner depicts racial tensions and prejudice in the South – "... a damning portrait of the wellsprings of Southern racism so advanced in its insight that it was decades ahead of its time" [10, 175].

Joe Christmas is in the search of his place in the family, in the manhood and in the life itself. Born out of the family and being half-white or half-black southerner he is in the search of his identity during whole his life. These two halves of his "boiling blood" being alien, hostile to each other show how marginalized, humiliated and then freed from slavery, sought to liberate themselves but remained with this sin slavery, fear of living on 'other' (American Indian) land. He tries to assimilate himself with whites, then with blacks but each time having no roots he fails. It is a huge drama that retains its strength to some extent until today. The questions put by Faulkner a century ago have today's solutions in great examples of cultural and political life: literary works of Toni Morrison, cultural and political activities of Obama etc.

Thus both, Joe Christmas and Milkman Dead for their life quest die as that turns out to be the only way for them to retrieve freedom from the land where there is the presence of African American and Indian blood everywhere. But unlike Joe Christmas who dies hiding his past and the past of his ancestors, Milkman Dead dies recovering a family history that moves from slavery to freedom.

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**Summary.** *This paper compares two literary characters of Joe Christmas from Light in August by William Faulkner and Milkman Dead from Song of Solomon by Toni Morrison in their search for the identity, American national identity.*

**Key words:** *motif, character, Morrison, Faulkner, American national identity.*

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## МЕНТАЛЬНІ ДІЇ У ПАРЕМІОЛОГІЧНІЙ КАРТИНІ СВІТУ (НА МАТЕРІАЛІ НІМЕЦЬКОЇ МОВИ)

*Запропонована розвідка присвячена дослідженню об'єктивації мовних концептів “розум” і “дурість” у німецькому пареміологічному фонді та їх аналізу. Розглянуто вербалізовані уявлення про внутрішній світ людини як носія певної культури у межах антропоцентричної парадигми гуманітарної науки.*

**Ключові слова:** *мова, концепт, пареміологічний фонд, німецькі прислів'я, приказки, німецька мовна картина світу, вербалізація, образність, парадигма, національний характер.*

Лексика, що виражає ментальні дії, до числа яких відноситься оцінка розумових здібностей людини, властива мові Homo Sapiens. Знання, мудрість, освіченість і їх носії користувалися повагою і цінилися в усі часи й у всіх народів. У процесі еволюції мова збагатилася прислів'ями і приказками, одним із основних концептів яких є ментальні дії та розумові здібності людини. У ментальності кожного народу, маркерами якого виступають прислів'я та приказки, проявляється властиве тільки йому бачення певного концепта у мовній картині світу. Прислів'я і приказки є важливим джерелом отримання країнознавчої, соціолінгвістичної, а в загальному – культурологічної інформації при вивченні концептів у сучасній науці про мову, що засвідчує аналіз багатьох робіт, виконаних, зокрема, у річці лінгвокультурології [1; 2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 10; 11; 18; 19].

Н.М. Панченко справедливо зауважує, що у пареміях поруч із загальнолюдським виражається характерне і специфічне для лінгвокультурної певної спільноти, тобто те, що прийнято називати “душею народу”, національним характером. Паремії є культурним кодом, вбудованим у мову, який виконує роль скарбниці, і засобом передачі людського досвіду [19, 26].

Прислів'я і приказки, на нашу думку, найбільш чітко, достовірно й достатньо повно фіксують особливості менталітету народу, дух нації (за В. фон. Гумбольдтом), що пояснюється передусім їх відомою прецедентністю і цілісністю, легкою відтворюваністю у комунікації. Оскільки прислів'я і приказки відрізняються регулярністю вживання, можна зробити висновок, що в них дійсно виражені найактуальніші поняття, судження їх носіїв, вони є дзеркалом, у якому відображений стан суспільства на тому чи іншому етапі розвитку, його побут, звичаї, традиції.

Дослідження початку ХХІ століття характеризуються увагою, яка постійно зростає, до мовних концептів, що неминуче торкаються питань про ментальні здібності людини (див., напр. [7; 8; 9; 12; 13; 14; 15]).

Актуальність дослідження полягає у необхідності поглибленого вивчення способів вираження мовних концептів у мові. Очевидно, що немає такої сфери людської діяльності, де б не траплялася характеристика розуму і дурості людини. Будучи складним переплетінням інтенціональних, когнітивних і моральних аспектів, розум і дурість супроводжують людську комунікацію і реалізуються в ній.

Метою статті є аналіз концептів “розум” і “дурість” у фрагменті німецької мовної картини світу – пареміологічному фонді.

Предметом дослідження є прислів'я та приказки німецького народу, внутрішня форма яких апелює до концептів розум, дурість, вилучені методом суцільної вибірки з фразеологічних словників.