

Abstract

This dissertation seeks to capture immigrant experiences reflected by Iranian authors living in the USA. The main objective of this literary-historical work is to explore the literary devices used by chosen authors to capture immigrants' memories in selected works of prose. The central theme is the issue of identity, particularly the authors' attitude towards Iran and the USA, and the reflection of individual and collective immigrant identity in the works. Another aim is to show whether the tendency to preserve the Iranian, American or Iranian-American identity prevails. Other tasks also include an identification of bilingual specifics in selected works and consideration of its impact on comprehensiveness of the text. To achieve the purpose of this dissertation, mostly autobiographical or semi-autobiographical literary works were selected, analyzed and interpreted. Relations in the Iranian Diaspora and interaction of Iranian characters with Americans were also scrutinized. Literary and linguistic analysis of selected works from Taqi Modarressi indicates that a mother tongue used by bilingual author can be an important device to confirm and reinforce the collective and individual identity in the Diaspora. Analysis of autobiographical, semi-autobiographical and some works of fiction revealed, that Iranian authors use the notion of "iranianness" to a great extent. The authors also oscillate between the assimilation into host society and a tendency to accentuate and categorize their cultural differences. In the selected works we can clearly detect the generational tensions between the immigrant parents and their US born children or between immigrant parents and their one-and-half generation (1,5G) children. Iran - the homeland - seems to be very important motive to choose, the authors often refer to Iran as a country of their ancestors or lost homeland or unreachable (imaginative) homeland. Utterly negative stance towards American society or Americans didn't occur in the analyzed works, the characters of memoirs and novels rather accept many features of the American mainstream culture but strive to preserve their Iranian identity too. The authors attempt to capture characters' persistent efforts to eliminate the uncertainty caused by increasing feelings of belonging to Iran which discords with their American side and represents yet another problematic domain to grasp.

Keywords: Iranian immigration literature, iranianness, Iranian-American relations, bilingual literature, identity, exile and immigration