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Countermeasure Research on National Identity Education for College Students in Changde, China from the Perspective of National Ideological Security: A Case Study of “American Literature Appreciation” Course

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Abstract

*Because the teaching content of foreign literature appreciation courses in universities inevitably harbors Western capitalist ideologies and cultural values, it is imperative to implement national identity education among university students from the perspective of national ideological security. In the practical teaching of American literature, teachers and students should adhere to the subject-critical stance of a “Chinese scholar”. On the one hand, instructors must focus on political guidance to help students resist the infiltration of Western values; on the other hand, they must assist students in firmly establishing a Chinese national identity. Taking “American literature appreciation” course in universities at Changde, China as an example, and coupling it with a critical analysis of the “American national identity” issue in Philip Roth’s *The Great American Novel*, this paper systematically elucidates how to organically integrate professional literary appreciation with the ideological and political elements of national identity education. Starting from the ideological problems faced by this “American Literature Appreciation” course, the specific implementation link of classroom ideological construction (such as theme lead-in, classroom discussion, and after-class reflection), and macroscopic educational countermeasures, this study aims to provide a reference for foreign language teachers in Changde and beyond to circumvent ideological risks and build a solid defense for national security.*

Keywords: National ideological security; national identity education; universities in Changde, China; “American Literature Appreciation” course; Philip Roth.

I. Introduction

As an institutional and political socialization practice, National Identity Education is a core means of sustaining a nation’s survival and development and of fostering national cohesion. By systematically conveying the national will, historical memory,

cultural traditions, and core values to the educatee, it aims to deepen citizens’ patriotic feelings, political loyalty and identity belonging. As the primary base for the development of higher education in China, colleges and universities are an important field for China to unswervingly promote national identity education. In

an era of profound transformation and great change, carrying out national identity education among university students is of immense urgency and extraordinary significance. It greatly concerns national ideological security, strongly promotes the building of a powerful nation of education, and energetically assists the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation (Ma Jianqing et al., 2025; Ouyang Changqing et al., 2012). As a renowned city that values learning and a hub of culture and education, Changde in China plays a crucial role in the process of cultivating socialist builders and successors, with university students as the primary demographic who are comprehensively developed in terms of morality, intelligence, physique, aesthetics, and the work ethic. However, the effectiveness of national identity education in colleges and universities in Changde city needs to be further improved, and some problems involving potential ideological risks are still exposed in the specific implementation process. For example, some students harbor a blind admiration for foreign countries and lack identification with mainstream ideology and values. Simultaneously, some teachers blindly embrace Western ideological values, lack the fundamental stances, viewpoints, and methods of Marxism, and fail to effectively carry out and implement socialist culture with Chinese characteristics through practical and impactful “curriculum politics”. The existence of these issues has posed certain obstacles to Changde’s pace in becoming a leading educational city in China. Amid the clash of diverse values and cultures and escalating ideological risks, how should universities in Changde city effectively conduct students’ national identity education? What problems should be avoided in the specific implementation process? And are there any paradigm to follow?

To address the aforementioned issues, this paper attempts to juxtapose and analyze the problems revealed during the implementation of national identity education in colleges and universities in Changde against the backdrop of “national ideological security”. “National ideological security” refers to the state in which the mainstream ideology, core values, and corresponding political belief systems upheld and championed by a sovereign state remain free from infiltration, subversion, fragmentation, and sabotage by internal or external forces, while maintaining a state of relative independence, stability, autonomy, and prosperity (Wang Guanyu et al., 2023; Wang Yonggui, 2022; Hu Huilin, 2019). Against this backdrop, and adopting the perspective of national ideological security, this study draws upon Anglo-American literary criticism and appreciation of the works of contemporary U.S. author Philip Roth. Through a detailed case study of “American Literature Appreciation” course at universities in Changde, it aims to find out feasible strategies for high-quality implementation of national identity education and the effective mitigation of ideological risks.

II. Ideological Problems in “American Literature Appreciation” Courses at Universities: A Case Study of Philip Roth’s *The Great American Novel*

Philip Roth (1933–2018) is one of the most renowned contemporary American writers of Jewish descent, garnering countless awards throughout his career. Although he never won the Nobel Prize, he secured nearly every other honor attainable by a writer and was hailed as a “living legend” of the American literary world. Published in 1973, *The Great American Novel* is a typical

satirical novel written by Roth. The narrative focuses on the Ruppert Mundys, a ragtag baseball team composed of the elderly, the infirm, and the physically impaired during the Second World War. It mainly tells the absurd experience that the team was secretly manipulated by the lurking Soviet spies during the wandering expedition, and finally fell into the ideological political conspiracy and went to destruction, which was ruthlessly erased by the American authorities from the official historical records. As a classic in the field of contemporary foreign literature, this novel has long been included in the required reading lists for “American Literature Appreciation” courses at numerous universities in Changde, and become a key text used by many teachers in their instruction and read by students across various disciplines. However, despite its significant influence within the realm of English and American literature, this literary work actually contains deep-seated ideological problems and poses a great challenge to the teachers and students of “American Literature Appreciation” course in universities at Changde city. This is mainly reflected in the following two aspects.

(I) The Center of the Course: American National Identity or Chinese National Identity?

In *The Great American Novel*, the narrative plot meticulously crafted by Roth remains consistently anchored to the core theme of “American national identity”. In the process of leading students to appreciate this literary work, teachers must always be aware that all discussions on national identity issues in the novel are based on the national identity of the United States. In other words, the issues of national identity that Roth explores through baseball in the novel center on the United States rather than China. This implies that any understanding of the issues of national identity within the novel cannot be grounded in the premises of Chinese national identity; still less should these issues be mapped onto or situated within the discourse surrounding Chinese national identity. This stance rests on a fundamental premise: Chinese national identity and American national identity are distinct concepts, a distinction determined by the differing national conditions and political systems of the two countries. In the novel, the American national identity Roth delineates is firmly established upon the core cultural system of Anglo-Protestant culture and “involves four major components: race, ethnicity, culture (most prominently language and religion), and ideology” (Huntington, 2015: 11). “Race” and “ethnicity” point directly to White Anglo-Saxon Protestants, while “culture” manifests primarily in the American myth and American civil religion. “Ideology” refers to a political belief system unique to the United States, possessing “key characteristics that distinguish it from other political belief systems,” and forming the core of the exceptionalist American national identity with its political foundation of liberal democracy (Huntington, 2016: 26). In short, the American national identity is exceptionalist; the American myth, civil religion, and the political ideology of democratic freedom constitute its three vital components. The entire US strives continuously for psychological, emotional, and behavioral identification and belonging around these three pillars to shape its national identity.

In contrast, Chinese national identity mainly includes three core levels of political, cultural and ethnic connotations. The first is political identification; its core lies in unswervingly upholding the leadership of the Communist Party of China and identifying with the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The second dimension is cultural identification,

which constitutes the deep-rooted foundation of Chinese national identity; it requires citizens to actively practice the core socialist values and to vigorously promote and pass on the fine traditional culture of the Chinese nation. The final dimension is national identification, which serves as the substantive vehicle for national identity. Its core philosophy lies in forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation while emphasizing that China is a unified multi-ethnic state. And meanwhile, it calls upon its citizens to share honor and disgrace, life and death, and a common destiny throughout the long process of historical evolution and mutual interaction and integration.

This aforementioned cognitive premise on the differences between Chinese and American national identity exert a profound ideological influence and act as a significant intervening force on how teachers and students appreciate *The Great American Novel*. In a specific course on “American Literature Appreciation”, both teaching and learning activities should naturally center on the issue of American national identity. Taking the textual analysis of *The Great American Novel* as an example, this entails a deep exploration by both instructor and students of how the Rupert Mundys baseball team fell victim to ideological fanaticism, followed by an examination of the fragility and exclusionary nature inherent in this form of “exceptionalist” American national identity within the context of the Cold War. However, if the course stops merely at analyzing domestic American political issues, its focus risks shifting; this could even lead to some university students adopting an ambiguous stance when confronted with the powerful cultural output of the West. Therefore, it is crucial to clearly define the core orientation of appreciation courses. At the same time, however, both teachers and students must always hold a fundamental ideological cognition of Chinese national identity. They must clearly realize that while the object of study is American national identity, the absolute center of classroom value guidance must remain Chinese national identity. When conducting course instruction, teachers must effectively fulfill their role as gatekeepers of ideology. At the same time, guided by the fundamental stance of Marxism, they must encourage students to critically examine and strip away the underlying Eurocentrism found in the novels, thereby guarding against potential ideological infiltration. When analyzing and appreciating the issue of American national identity in Roth’s novels, teachers must remain mindful of their own cultural identity as Chinese scholars and strictly avoid becoming trapped in the mindset of American national identity; at the same time, they must maintain a comparative perspective. This perspective demands that in classroom discussions and post-class reflections, students should initiatively contrast the deeply divided American national identity in Roth’s novel, which is built on political persecution and obscured by hegemonic power, with Chinese national identity centered on forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation and highlights the strengths of its system. Through this cross-cultural comparison, and by viewing themselves in the mirror of the “Other”, students can see through the deep-seated limitations of American democratic philosophies while profoundly solidifying their confidence in the path, theory, system, and culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

(II) The Stance of the Appreciator: Subject of Criticism or Object of Reception?

When conducting a literature class around *The Great American Novel*, another ideological issue that requires attention is the stance

of the appreciator. In traditional foreign literature teaching practices, some teachers and students tend to fall into “textual worship,” viewing the value presuppositions in Western literary classics as universal truths, thereby imperceptibly weakening their own cultural subjectivity. In the face of the national identity issues deliberately portrayed by Roth, teachers and students must adopt the subject-critical stance of Chinese scholars, rather than becoming passive objects of indoctrination.

This requires the teacher to play an active guiding role, preventing students from losing their political acumen. For instance, Roth depicts the Rupert Mundys as sacrificial lambs completely erased from historical records by official US entities, exposing the extreme ideological paranoia and political persecution of the US government during WWII and the early Cold War. If students act merely as “objects of reception”, they are susceptible to being swept up by the intense Cold War mentality and Western binary opposition discourse logic, easily developing a blind conformity to the political landscape painted by Western literature. Conversely, when teachers and students adopt the stance of “subject of criticism”, literature appreciation is no longer a one-way knowledge reception. Teachers should instruct students to learn to use the Marxist dialectical-materialist view of history to objectively analyze why U.S. authorities in the novel employ a political conspiracy to destroy a marginalized baseball team in a forced attempt to preserve the purity of their national identity. As the subject of literary appreciation and criticism, students should under the guidance of their teachers keenly uncover the hypocrisy, class limitations, and overtones of power politics underlying the American national identity depicted by Roth. Only by steadfastly maintaining this clear-eyed, independent critical stance can teachers and students successfully immerse themselves in the material while simultaneously stepping back to view it from an external perspective. In doing so, they can enhance their literary appreciation while firmly upholding the ideological position of socialism with Chinese characteristics and fortifying the defenses of national ideological security.

III. Ideological Construction in “American Literature Appreciation” course at university: A Case Study of Philip Roth’s *The Great American Novel*

(I) Topic Introduction

In actual teaching practice, the topic introduction serves as the crucial first step in establishing the ideological tone for the entire literature appreciation lesson. The author suggests that teachers should begin by using comparative video footage to instruct students to visually contrast the distinct paths taken by the United States and China to construct their national identity respectively through “national sports”. For instance, the teacher could screen two short documentary clips. One would feature footage capturing the fervor for baseball in the United States, which is a sport regarded as an “American myth” and the embodiment of “democracy and freedom”. The other would show historical footage of the Chinese women’s volleyball team winning a championship or of “Ping-Pong Diplomacy”, highlighting the spirit of collectivism and united, tenacious struggle. After watching the video, the teacher can pose guiding questions to the students: What underlying differences in national identity are

reflected by these seemingly superficial differences in sports culture?

At this juncture, the teacher needs to pinpoint the fact that this disparity essentially reflects fundamental differences in the underlying ideologies and values of the two nations, and that the construction of national identity based on Western capitalist ideology often harbors latent risks. The United States has long linked competitive sports, for example, baseball, with “American Exceptionalism” and Anglo-Protestant culture. This form of national identity, rooted in exclusivity, binary opposition, and Cold War mentalities, easily fosters domestic factionalism (exemplified by the political persecution of the McCarthy era) and the projection of hegemony abroad. In this context, how should university faculty and students, confronted with the covert infiltration of Western cultural soft power, properly view and steadfastly uphold their own national identity?

In addressing this issue, teachers should guide students to formulate a “Chinese approach” and articulate a Chinese stance for navigating ideological risks. Since ancient times, traditional Chinese thought has advocated the concepts of “harmonious but different” and “a world of universal harmony”. In the new era, China has vigorously championed the goal of “strengthen the consciousness of the Chinese nation community”. As General Secretary Xi Jinping has emphasized, “cultural identity is the deepest level of identity; it is the root of ethnic unity and the soul of ethnic harmony”. Chinese national identity is based on the exchange and integration of various ethnic groups, tolerance and mutual learning, and socialist core values. This is essentially different from the hegemonic logic of the West that relies on creating “imaginary enemies” to maintain internal unity.

How, then, did that hypocritical, exclusionary, and politically fanatical form of American national identity sow division within capitalist society and ultimately descend into absurdity? And how might we employ a Marxist critical perspective to deconstruct this myth of Western ideology? Taking Philip Roth’s satirical masterpiece *The Great American Novel* as a case study, in the “American Literature Appreciation” course, the teacher should guide students to further deeply analyze the tragic destruction of the Rupert Mundy baseball team, thereby conducting a concrete analysis of the interplay between literature and ideology.

(II) Introduction to the Author and Work

During actual instruction, a teacher’s introduction to an author and their work should not merely convey objective facts from literary history (like dates of birth and death or award-winning experience), but should instead be guided by a clear ideological perspective and a targeted focus on key issues. When introducing the author Roth, for example, the teacher should emphasize his specific background as a Jewish-American writer and his characteristic stance of irony and deconstruction. Teachers need to point out to students that it is precisely this marginalized identity existing outside the WASP mainstream that enables Roth to scrutinize and deconstruct the so-called “American myth” with a deep, critical gaze.

When introducing *The Great American Novel*, the teacher should place particular emphasis on the “baseball myth” metaphor it contains, as well as the political connotations of America’s “ideological exclusivity” within a Cold War context. The teacher should carefully parse and distill the novel’s central conflict: that the sport baseball featured in the work is by no means merely a sport, but rather a core material vehicle for American

exceptionalism, American civil religion, and American national identity. The absurd fate of the Ruppert Mundys in the novel, suspected of infiltration by Soviet spies and ultimately ruthlessly erased from official historical records by U.S. authorities in the name of national security and ideological purity, serves, in essence, as a microcosm of American political hysteria and the oppression of power.

Through such introductions to authors and their works, which are explicitly designed to serve ideological and political educational goals, the teacher can help students establish a “subject of criticism” stance right from the outset of literary appreciation. This enables students to approach the text with a critical awareness regarding the hypocrisy and fragility of American national identity, thereby laying a solid cognitive foundation for the subsequent and effective implementation of education on national ideological security.

(III) Classroom Discussion

Classroom discussion serves as the core component of this course’s case study, where the transmission of professional knowledge is organically integrated with elements of ideological and political education. In this section, the author suggests that the teacher should play an active guiding role by organizing students to conduct a close reading of *The Great American Novel* and focusing on the following two questions: 1) How does Roth portray the “baseball myth” to reveal the illusory prosperity of American national identity? 2) What does the “historical erasure” of the Ruppert Mundy baseball team by U.S. authorities reveal about the exclusionary nature and ideological hegemony of American national identity?

To address the first question, the teacher can select excerpts from the novel describing the “Patriot League” and the portrayal of baseball as a symbol of the American spirit, using them as case studies for small-group analysis. Building on this, the teacher should guide students to analyze how baseball in American society functions not merely as a sport, but as a cultural vehicle and political creed for an American national identity rooted in “exceptionalism”. The American ruling class has sought to use baseball to mask domestic class contradictions and racial conflicts while instilling the “American Dream” characterized by liberty, democracy, and equality in the populace. Through a close reading of this narrative, students can explicitly recognize that the fervent baseball culture depicted in the novel is, in essence, a tool for internal ideological consolidation in the United States.

Turning to the second question: how did this seemingly unshakable American national identity begin to crumble? Teachers should guide students in a deep analysis of the work’s most absurd and shocking episode—the destruction of the Rupert Mundy baseball team. This team comprising the elderly, the infirm, the sick, and the disabled, was a marginal and woefully inept squad that was nonetheless part of American society; yet, amidst the Cold War mentality and the political hysteria of McCarthyism, it was completely suppressed by U.S. authorities simply because it was being covertly manipulated by a Soviet spy. The teacher might organize students to focus their reading and discussion on the novel’s conclusion, which describes how the U.S. government used official power to ruthlessly erase the team from historical records, statistics, and public memory. Drawing on this detail, the teacher should pose a penetrating question to the students regarding the underlying logic: Why could a nation like the United States which

champions “freedom and democracy”, not tolerate such a weak and vulnerable baseball team?

Through spirited discussion and teacher-student interaction, students will gain profound insight into how this plot element in Roth’s work serves as a supreme satire of the hypocrisy inherent in American national identity. When the existence of the Mundy baseball team, as a marginalized group, threatened the purity of the dominant ideology centered on Anglo-Protestant culture, the U.S. government did not hesitate to cast aside the veneer of “democracy” and employ brute force to carry out political purges and engage in historical nihilism. This form of national identity is rooted in factionalism, binary opposition, and the oppression of the powerful; it is a product of capitalism’s efforts to maintain its hegemonic rule.

To further counter the covert infiltration of Western discourse, towards the end of classroom discussions, the teachers should uphold the cultural perspective of Chinese scholars and guide students in conducting a comparative analysis between the divisive and exclusionary national identity found in the United States and the inclusive and symbiotic national identity of China. As General Secretary Xi Jinping of China has emphasized, “the sense of community for the Chinese nation is the foundation of national unity, the bedrock of ethnic solidarity, and the soul of spiritual strength”. In stark contrast to the cold-blooded logic of the U.S. government which ruthlessly disregards marginalized and vulnerable groups, Chinese national identity steadfastly upholds the conviction that its fifty-six ethnic groups share a common destiny and a bond of shared honor and hardship; it emphasizes the human warmth of a system that ensures “not a single person is left behind” as the country advances Chinese-style modernization.

In short, by organizing critical discussions on the “baseball myth,” the appreciation class is no longer a site for the passive reception of Western values. It trains students’ critical thinking using Marxist historical materialism and stimulates emotional resonance with the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, tangibly enhancing their political fortitude.

(IV) Thematic Expansion and Post-Class Reflection

To help students consolidate their understanding, the author suggests assigning thematic expansion tasks with cross-cultural comparative traits after class. Specifically, teachers can ask students to watch the Chinese sports narrative film *Leap* (originally titled *The Chinese Women's Volleyball Team*). Combined with the classroom analysis, students should reflect deeply: How does the “women’s volleyball spirit” shown in the film forge Chinese national identity, and what is its fundamental ideological difference from the “baseball myth” in Roth’s novel?

Drawing on post-viewing reflections and the critical analysis of American national identity in Roth’s works conducted during literature appreciation classes, students can discern a sharp contrast: while both China and the United States regard a signature national sport as a vital medium for constructing national identity, the underlying ideological logics differ fundamentally. In *The Great American Novel*, Roth depicts baseball as having been thoroughly alienated by U.S. authorities into a political instrument for factional exclusion; to preserve the ideological purity of a so-called “exceptionalist” American national identity, the government ruthlessly employed coercive power to erase the persecuted Ruppert Mundy’s baseball team from official history. This form of American national identity is rooted in hypocrisy, exclusion, and

Cold War-era persecution. In contrast, the spirit of the Chinese women’s volleyball team portrayed in the film *Leap* vividly embodies the collectivist values of the Chinese nation characterized by unity, tenacious struggle amidst adversity, and a shared destiny through both triumph and defeat. Free from exclusionary political purges, it reflects a genuine emotional resonance among the entire populace, united in a shared fate for the sake of national honor, and serves as a crucial spiritual bond that solidifies the sense of community of the Chinese nation.

Thus, guiding students beyond single Western texts and introducing high-quality cross-media materials with a localized Chinese stance for post-class reflection not only helps students profoundly perceive the hegemonic undertones of American-style national identity, but also stimulates their strong resonance with the advanced culture of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

IV.Strategies for National Identity Education among Students in Universities at Changde

As revealed in the earlier analysis, foreign literary works are by no means neutral arrangements of words; embedded within them are the ideologies of specific nations. When carrying out national identity education, universities at Changde should confront the challenge of Western culture engaging in covert infiltration via classical literature. Based on the specific teaching case detailed above, this paper proposes the following five strategies from the dimensions of teacher literacy, teaching paradigms, evaluation systems, student output, and localized practice.

First, it is essential to enhance the Marxist theoretical literacy of foreign language and literature faculty and reinforce their role as “gatekeepers” of the ideological defense line. A core issue hindering the effectiveness of national identity education among university students in Changde is that some teachers lack a firm grounding in the fundamental Marxist stance, making themselves prone to blindly admiring Western ideologies. In the actual teaching practice, the teacher bears primary responsibility for ideological security. If, for instance, a teacher discussing *The Great American Novel* treats it merely as a literary work about sports, humor, satire, or individual destiny, without applying the Marxist materialist conception of history to expose the capitalist power dynamics and ideological persecution behind the ruthless erasure of the Rupert Mundy Baseball Team by U.S. authorities, then the course risks becoming a mere conduit for Western values. Therefore, universities in Changde should establish a regularized, specialized training mechanism for “Curriculum-based Ideological and Political Education”, requiring literature teachers to adopt the critical stance of “Chinese scholars” during both lesson preparation and classroom instruction. Only when instructors possess the theoretical acumen to see through and deconstruct the myth of American “exceptionalism” can they keenly identify ideological traps within texts and effectively guide students to resist being co-opted by Western discourse, thereby firmly safeguarding the literature classroom as a frontline position for national ideological security.

Second, a cross-cultural teaching paradigm of “comparative reading of Chinese and foreign texts” should be established to cultivate deep-seated confidence in Chinese culture while deconstructing the myths surrounding Western national identity. To address the phenomenon where some students harbor an

uncritical admiration for foreign cultures and lack identification with mainstream values, mere theoretical preaching often proves ineffective; instead, these concepts must be organically or “genetically” integrated into the analysis of literary subject matter. Universities in Changde should comprehensively implement a cross-cultural teaching paradigm based on “comparative reading of Chinese and foreign texts” within their foreign literature appreciation courses. Taking the teaching of *The Great American Novel* as an example, the teacher should avoid teaching concepts like the American “baseball myth” or the “Patriot League” in isolation; rather, they should incorporate regular “comparative discussion” sessions into the curriculum. The specific focus of this approach lies in requiring students to conduct a deep comparison between two concepts of national identity: the American model depicted by Roth which is rooted in exclusion and factionalism (whereby marginalized groups like the Mundys must be destroyed if they fail to conform to the dominant Anglo-Protestant ideology) and the Chinese model, which emphasizes “inclusivity and mutual learning” and “forging a strong sense of community for the Chinese nation”. Through this clash of ideas grounded in close textual analysis, students in Changde can be guided to independently recognize the hypocrisy and fragility underlying the so-called American ideals of “democracy” and “freedom”, and through genuine cross-cultural comparison, come to sincerely embrace the scientific soundness and progressive nature of the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Third, the assessment system for “American Literature Appreciation” course in universities should be reformed to establish a multifaceted evaluation mechanism centered on “value orientation” and “critical thinking”. Current assessments in “American Literature Appreciation” course at universities in Changde often overemphasize the memorization and testing of literary movements, authors’ biographies, rhetorical devices, and plot details, while neglecting to evaluate students’ ability to discern underlying ideologies. To effectively implement education on national identity, the assessment process must serve as a guiding force. Universities should reform their traditional approach to exam design by incorporating “political identification” and “critical thinking” into the evaluation criteria for both final exams and continuous coursework assessment. For instance, when assessing the novel *The Great American Novel*, instead of merely requiring students to recount the absurd plot elements surrounding the 1943 baseball season, the teacher could design essay questions such as “Analyze, from a Marxist class perspective, the ideological motives behind the U.S. authorities’ erasure of the Mundy team’s official history” or “Examine the deep-seated crisis of American national identity through the lens of the shattered baseball myth depicted by Roth”. This shift in the evaluation system compels students to maintain the stance of Chinese scholars throughout their daily reading and study, proactively applying Marxist methodology to filter Western texts, thereby subtly reinforcing their national identity through the process of academic training.

Fourth, innovate the pathways through which university students express and share their learning, facilitating a shift from being mere “passive recipients of Western texts” to becoming “active agents in disseminating Chinese discourse”. As previously noted, in the context of literary appreciation, students must not be reduced to “objects” that passively and wholesale accept Western ideas; instead, they should assert their status as “subject of criticism”. Universities in Changde should actively create platforms for students to engage in academic expression and discursive practice,

while innovating the formats of assignments and practical activities. For instance, the teacher could organize student academic “micro-salons” or seminars on course papers centered on themes such as “American Literature Appreciation from a Chinese Perspective”. After studying *The Great American Novel*, students could be encouraged to write critical essays, such as “A Study on the Exclusivity of American National Identity under Cold War Mentality: A Case Study of *The Great American Novel*”, and to present their findings publicly or in class. Through such proactive “output”, students cease to be blind followers of the political landscapes constructed by Western literature; instead, they learn to leverage their specialized foreign language proficiency and literary criticism theories to actively articulate a “Chinese voice” and expose the internal contradictions of Western capitalist ideology. This process not only hones the critical thinking skills of students majoring in foreign languages and literature but also significantly strengthens their sense of responsibility and capacity to safeguard national ideological security in practice.

Fifth, leveraging Changde’s local cultural resources as “A City that Values Learning”, universities should expand the physical venues for national identity education beyond the confines of literature appreciation courses. In *The Great American Novel*, Roth profoundly exposes how the United States attempted to forcibly stitch together a national identity through a frenzied “sports myth” and historical nihilism, characterized by the arbitrary alteration and erasure of official history, resulting in an identity devoid of deep historical and cultural roots that ultimately descended into absurdity. This stark negative example offers a crucial practical lesson for universities in Changde: a stable national identity must be deeply rooted in the nation’s authentic, excellent traditional culture and historical memory; it must never devolve into hollow political slogans. As “A City that Values Learning” and “A City of Heroes,” Changde boasts a rich cultural heritage and abundant “Red culture” resources (such as the Monument to the Fallen Soldiers of the Battle of Changde and the former residence of Lin Boqu). When planning national identity education, universities in Changde should closely integrate the “post-class thematic extensions” of literature courses with local cultural practices. For instance, after critically analyzing in class how US authorities maintained a false national identity by “erasing history”, teachers could organize field trips for students to Changde’s War of Resistance sites. There, they could explore how the Chinese people, at a moment of existential crisis, forged a shared sense of national community by honoring authentic history and uniting with a common hatred against the enemy through bonds of blood and shared sacrifice. This approach, combining abstract critiques of Western literature with concrete, local Chinese historical practice, enables students in universities at Changde to deconstruct Western ideologies while simultaneously experiencing the tangible reality of Chinese national identity, ultimately achieving the educational goal of cultivating character through the unity of knowledge and action.

V. Conclusion

In summary, viewed through the lens of national ideological security, the national identity education embedded in “American Literature Appreciation” courses at universities in Changde is mainly manifested in three key aspects: first, by guiding students to deeply analyze the shattering of the “baseball myth” and the absurd tragedy of the Mundy team’s erasure in Philip Roth’s *The Great American Novel*, the courses encourage students to perceive the

hypocrisy, exclusivism, and hegemonic nature underlying the American national identity of “exceptionalism”, thereby dispelling blind worship of mainstream Western values. Second, by explicitly distinguishing the fundamental differences between Chinese and American national identities, the courses prompt both teachers and students to firmly adopt the critical stance of “Chinese scholars” when engaging with Western classic texts, enabling them to consciously resist the covert infiltration of capitalist ideology. Finally, through a cross-cultural pedagogical approach involving the comparative reading of Chinese and foreign texts, complemented by extracurricular activities leveraging Changde’s local “Red culture” resources, students are guided to deconstruct the myths surrounding Western national identity while simultaneously gaining a profound understanding of, and firm commitment to, a Chinese national identity centered on “strengthening the consciousness of the Chinese nation community”.

In an era of great changes, faced with the complex infiltration of Western cultural values, the Party and the State have put forward stricter requirements for the national identity education of university students. As vital educational fronts, universities in Changde must never act as passive “megaphones” for Western values. Instructors must effectively play their role as ideological “gatekeepers”, leading students to conduct rigorous ideological screening, reflecting through criticism, and establishing cultural confidence through comparison.

Based on the specific academic conditions of universities in Changde, this paper uses the literature appreciation class on Philip Roth’s *The Great American Novel* as a micro-entry point. It systematically explores concrete pathways for organically integrating professional literary criticism with national ideological security education and proposes targeted strategies. It is hoped that this exploration can provide useful references for foreign language and literature courses in Changde and universities nationwide to implement national identity education with high quality and to build a solid defense line for national ideological security.

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