

MIGRATION AND IDENTITY (RE)CONSTRUCTION: THE SHAPING OF IDENTITY IN ERNEST J. GAINES' *CATHERINE CARMIER*

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Abstract:

Grounded on deconstruction, this paper stresses on the changes in migrants' identity. It assesses the ambivalent impacts of migration on identity (re)formation in *Catherine Carmier*. For a community that considers migration as a quest for education and employment to improve its life conditions in the plantation, migration may have non expected effects on the identity of characters. They encompass emotional detachment, acculturation, the loss of faith and identity crisis. These facets of the migrant identity set a mood of tensions within the black community. However, migration may foster appraisive identity features. The migrant self-assertiveness informs the way he perceives himself. Migration instills progressive traits on the individual's identity through interracial love transgression, political commitment, critical awareness, and empowerment. Identity (re)construction often fosters interracial tensions between black and creole people.

Key Words: deconstruction, identity, migration, multifaceted impacts, tensions

Résumé :

Ayant pour levier théorique la déconstruction, cet article met l'accent sur les changements dans l'identité des migrants. Il évalue les impacts ambivalents de la migration sur la (re)formation de l'identité dans *Catherine Carmier*. Pour une communauté qui considère la migration comme une quête d'éducation et d'emploi pour améliorer ses conditions de vie dans la plantation, la migration revêt des effets non désirés sur l'identité des personnages. Il s'agit du détachement émotionnel, de l'acculturation, de la perte de la foi et de la crise d'identité. Ces facettes de l'identité des migrants créent un climat de tensions au sein de la communauté noire. Cependant, la migration peut favoriser des traits identitaires appréciables. L'affirmation de soi du migrant influe sur la perception qu'il a de lui-même. La migration inculque des traits progressistes à l'identité de l'individu, car elle conduit à la transgression de l'amour interracial, à l'engagement politique, à l'esprit critique et à l'autonomisation. La reconstruction identitaire génère des tensions interraciales entre les Noirs et les Créoles.

Mots clés : déconstruction, identité, migration, impacts multiples, tensions

Introduction

Set in Bayonne, *Catherine Carmier* is a compelling love story that explores the relationships between a young black man and a creole lady in a social context where Blacks, Creoles, Cajuns, and Whites coexist uneasily. The setting of the story is marked by stratification, where black characters are considered as second-class citizens and face racial injustice that burdens their lives. Unemployment and poverty push black men to leave Louisiana countryside, this is clearly stated by Brother who underlines: "the only thing you can do is to get away" (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P.61). These circumstances compel black characters to embark on migration projects, looking for better conditions of life elsewhere.

Persuaded by her pastor, Aunt Charlotte agrees to send Jackson to California in the North to pursue higher education. While she encourages him to leave the plantation, their farewell affects her deeply. Migration is a painful and challenging experience that causes a loss of roots and affects the identity of migrants to some extent, as noted by O. Emile (1993, P.171).

Throughout history, human beings have migrated for various reasons, and the experience of migration deserves close attention due to its impacts. Once back in their homeland from the North, some characters face (re)adaptation problems due to the multifaceted impacts of migration on their identities. The tensions between migrants and their community members reveal (re)construction of their identities along with the changes that occur. This article explores the changes in migrants' identities, assesses the ambivalent impacts of migration on identity formation, examines the educated migrant's stance vis-à-vis his counterparts and white oppression, and sheds light on how the impacts of migration on the individual cause communal tensions. This deconstructive reading rests on binary opposition, language instability or aporias, implicit, marginals, and allusions.

Based on the trajectory of migrant characters, the research assumes that migration (re)constructs individuals' identities in an ambivalent way. Therefore, this work prompts us to ponder on the following questions: What are the impacts and consequences of identity dynamism of migration on characters? To what extent is Jackson, the main protagonist, a fragmented battlefield for competing ideologies? How does he invent a new identity after leaving the North? How do the impacts of migration influence and inform intra-racial and interracial relationships?

1- Migration and the Unpredictable Identity Traits: A Layer of Tensions within the Black Community

External forces either human or natural drives may often create, generate the process of migration. Some migrants are embarked into the movement from a place to another because they are compelled to do so. Racism darkens black characters' existence in the plantation. In *Catherine Carmier*, Jackson Bradley's experience of migration is the legacy of Aunt Charlotte quest for change. She intends to make Jackson go to the North and seek for education that will benefit her community and make her proud. However, migration displays multifaceted dimensions. It often shifts to be an initiative whose outcome is uncertain. Migration may have side effects on people who initiated this form of transhumance. In Gaines' novel, migration leads to unexpected results. Immigration often initiates changes that lead to interracial tensions in the plantation. The evidence of the unpredictable impacts of migration on identity are disseminated throughout the narrative. The declining traits of migration encompass emotional detachment, acculturation, the loss of faith, and identity crisis.

1-1 – Emotional and Cultural Detachment

Migration may foster emotional detachment between the migrant character and his former community members. Back from the North, Jackson's attitudes have changed towards his counterparts. He fails to comprehend the sense of love, affection and belonging his community show off for welcoming him. It seems that Jackson is unable to (re)adapt. His sense of belonging to that community has vanished and falling apart. Migration causes Jackson's emotional alienation. In Part One of the novel, *Catherine Carmier*, the first meeting between Jackson and Brother encapsulates the emotional inadequation between them. Given that Brother was Jackson's closest friend, the unfriendly and cold attitude of Jackson toward Brother foretells the emotional closed fracture between the migrant character and his community. The omniscient narrator depicts Jackson's feelings: "He [Jackson] and Brother had been best friends before he left here -They had been inseparable. He did not feel that way about Brother now, and he wondered if he ever could be." (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P.63)

In this passage, the narrator emphasizes the friendship that existed between Jackson and Brother. The anachronic narrative technique helps the reader discover how close the two characters were in the past and how distant they are now. Through the regression to the initial link between Jackson and Brother, the critic can decipher competing ideologies in this episode. Jackson is besieged by the nostalgia of his close link with Brother and the discomfort of the increasing gap which separates them. As T. Lois (2012, P.257) notes, "as just as language is unstable and ambiguous, human being are unstable ambiguous force fields of competing ideologies". Jackson no longer feels so close to Brother. It can be assumed that migration infects

and affects his relationships with Brother. G. Marc (2013, P. 60) also points out that the declining social link leads the subject to retreat into the narcissistic sphere of individualism. Jackson subsequent aloofness from Brother predicts the loss of communal sense. A standing aporia emerges in this context where in the meaning, if there is any, is elusive. The critic just has the trace of a set of meaning prone to deferral. First, the term “Brother” may refer to the name of that male character who represents Jackson’s close friend. Second, “Brother” in religious groups is used for a male member of a congregation; at this point, the one called Brother and his other brethren are linked by religious rituals. Third, “Brother” may also refer to the brotherhood. The friendship between the two young male characters is so intense that it shifts into brotherhood. Fourth, “Brother” is a term of address used by black people to refer to a black man in North American English. One’s inner thoughts may result into actions. Deep in his heart, he is no longer able to consider Brother like he used to do it. Jackson’s literacy prompts him to reject his people’s tradition (K. Amani, 1992, P.42). That African American community value communal responsibility and the sense of belonging. Migration influences Jackson in such a way that it destroys the emotional link he once had.

Considered as a process of displacement from one place to another, migration often causes cultural bereavement which is the state of losing important cultural values. Migration leads to acculturation. Jackson’s stay “Up There” influences and transforms his identity. He has obviously lost some cultural values pertaining to his community. Deeply anchored in tradition, the African American community under description highly values folkways. Gathering, socializing, showing solidarity and cultural identity celebration matter to that community. However, Jackson Bradley rejects these values. During the party that Aunt Charlotte organized to celebrate Jackson’s return, the newcomer fails to create and maintain a friendly and emphatical relationships with the guests. He is not at ease with them because their ways and illiteracy annoy him. He is no longer bind to his people. As a result, Jackson left the party earlier while family friends and acquaintances were still around. That action hurts Aunt Charlotte and the whole community. Though education can establish a bond between Madame Bayonne and Jackson, Gaines unveils how in other instances it acts as a barrier, a wall. After Jackson greets the people at the party:

Viney and Jackson came up to where they [the men] were, the conversation came to an abrupt end. The men shook Jackson’s hand and spoke to him, but they did this just as the others had done. They waited for him to make the first

move. He had been educated, not they. They did not know how to meet and talk to educated people. They did not know what to talk about. So let him start the conversation, and if possible, they will follow. (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P. 67)

This excerpt encapsulates the rather complex relationship between educated and uneducated people. After graduating from college, Jackson represents the educated who to contempt his aunt must socialize with the unschooled men of the plantation. To explore the specific ways in which the text determines Jackson's acculturation, the critic may resort to the derridian concept of polar opposites or binary oppositions. Jackson's educated status is highlighted and amplified by the plantation people's ignorance. The binary opposition at stake here can be formulated as followed: educated versus uneducated. A hierarchy lies beyond this opposition. The first term, in the pair, is always considered as superior to the other in western culture. "By identifying which member of the opposition is privileged, one can discover something about the ideology promoted by that literary production". (T. Lois, 2006, P.25) In the binary opposition, people tend to identify education with the rational, the elites which implies the intelligent. In sharp contrast, they tend to identify the uneducated with ignorance, the irrational which implies the unintelligent. To some extent, the text seems to promote education and undermines ignorance. For P.Jim (2007, PP.29-30) human beings, in their anxiety for security, will create a Centre. All these desires for a fixed Center are desires for a secure, stable presence that will form a strong, certain foundation for belief systems. But Centers marginalize and tyrannize people and things. For instance, here, if the education is central, then illiteracy is pushed to the margins. Jackson fails to accommodate himself to his people. The silence deriving from Jackson's arrival near the plantation men in the yard is a sign of the wall between educated and uneducated people. Since Jackson too is at a loss of words, no real communication takes place. This episode reinforces the impression that Jackson feels superior to them because he is educated. As a critic observes:

The welcome party, in some degree a celebration of cultural identity, turns to be a disastrous event. It marks openly the beginning of the ever-increasing gap between Jackson and his people [...] The opposition between Jackson and his people is first the one between the intellectual whose education has cut him off from his people who are more attuned to folk culture" (K. Amani, 1992, PP.46-47)

1-2- The Loss of Faith and Identity Crisis

Migration has an impact on the migrant's religious faith. A belief often results into action. The more one's faith is strongly anchored, the more he/she is likely to show off devotion in his religious rituals. Gaines portrays Jackson, the character who experienced migration, as an individual with an unstable religious anchorage. Jackson's rejection of Christianity is the legacy of his stay up North in California. As for his self-mental image, he firmly believes that he has not forgotten God, but he no longer believes in Christianity.

Gaines uses narrative techniques to form mental pictures within the mind of the reader. He is being critical towards religion. Jackson detaches himself from his brethren. Consequently, he does not participate in church prayers. That is why Jackson refuses to kneel with Aunt Charlotte to pray. That old woman helplessly notices the change in Jackson's faith and identity. He has an aversion for religion. Standing as a camera eyed, the omniscient narrator depicts Jackson's inner thoughts while he underlines Jackson's reaction vis-à-vis the submissive dimension of Christianity. Therefore, he rebukes everything that is linked to religion. The text reads: "The picture was supposed to represent Christ kneeling in the garden of Gethsemane. Jackson thought both the idea and the portrait were disgusting, and he looked away. "(G.J. Ernest, 1993, P.99) In this episode of the calendar with the picture of Christ, Jackson's perspectivalism is highlighted. He considers the portrait of the bowing character that may echo powerlessness. As for the idea, it focuses submission and respect for authorities. He will later assert that: "I haven't forgotten God. But Christ, the church, I don't believe in that bourgeois farce." (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P. 100)

This episode emphasizes Jackson's detachment from communal religious life. The way Jackson perceives the image of Christ through his spoken words and thoughts entail his religious decline. In Derrida's hands, the picture or photography shifts to be a word (signified), a text or writing whose interpretation ends into undecidability. D. Jacques (1998) Both psychology and photography involve "a reading of the significant 'detail' in a blowup". In fact, psychology, and photography form two cultures of the 'detail,' and they are also techniques or systems of knowledge. One becomes adept at enlarging or magnifying the minute and discrete element. Thus, whether deliberately or not, it necessarily becomes possible to idealize it, to dematerialize, to charge it with significance. The reader may apprehend stages that help depict that character's standpoint vis-à-vis to Christianity. At the perception stage, when he sees the picture of Jesus bowing, he considers it as a signal of religious devotion. At the manipulation stage, he interprets the picture; Jesus' posture echoes self-demining and submission in front of the Heavenly Father. He fails to realize that this posture also refers to respect, meditation, gratefulness. At the consummation stage, Jackson's interpretation of the picture informs and

instructs his contempt and rejection of religious rituals. Religion implies obedience and the strict respect of authorities. He does not share this submissive dimension of the religion which is doubled with domination and exploitation. Jackson's is critical about Christianity that he parallels it to a "bourgeois force". Religion shifts to be an ideological and spiritual means used by the privileged group (white people) to promote a deep devotion on black people behalf and submission to leaders. It also emphasizes the detachment from the corporeal things or terrestrial realities, socio-political and economic conditions that affect black characters' existence in the plantation. The speaker voices out his disillusion regarding religious teaching which urge brethren to obey and endure what they are going through while expecting celestial self-fulfillment and happiness. That accommodative dimension of religion leads to a form of renunciation to the improvement of social conditions. In short, Jackson's rejection of Christianity originates from immigration as he has acquired new ways of life that contrast to the ones existing in the South.

For characters who experienced displacement, migration can bring about identity crisis. Jackson is portrayed as a rootless character who is confronted to existential problems. The inner crisis Jackson is subjected to is echoed in the emptiness that torments him. He actually feels empty. As a result, that emptiness leads to isolation and discomfort. Jackson's fragility resonates with this assertion: "I'm like a leaf □ that's broken away from the tree. Drifting." (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P.79) Jackson's emptiness and estrangement is both echoed in his inability to recognize the places and graves, and his overwhelming feeling of homelessness. After his experience of migration, Jackson is concerned with finding a place where he can fit and feel comfortable. He feels at home neither in the South nor in San Francisco, North. Whereas "he did not like being empty, unable to recognize things [...] He did not like being unable to recognize the graves. He did not like being unable to associate with the people." (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P.191) Jackson's inability to recognize the graves in the cemetery as he could once do when he was a child is the expression of the agony of an individual alienated from his roots. Thus said, Jackson is subjected to inner crisis that he can hardly handle. As H. Norman (1988, P.7) puts it: "the more immersed a character is in the folk culture the more likely he/she is able to resolve conflict."

It should be emphasized that the narrator uses repetition characterized by the negative form to refer to Jackson's discomfort. That repetition, in deconstructive reading, stresses on the problems Jackson is going through. First, Jackson's emptiness unwraps the inner emotional trouble he has been facing since his arrival from the South. Second, his inability to recognize things and graves is a metaphor of his disconnection from his motherland. Third, Jackson's

inability to socialize with his people reinforces the idea of the rupture of the umbilical cord from his people. In deconstruction, the most suggestive marker of implicitness is the syntactical ellipsis. Since every text is in some way making the addresser expect and foresee the fulfillment of every unaccomplished sentence” (E. Umberto ,1979, P. 214). The reader may discover what is not apparent in relationship to what is present. From Jackson’s uneasiness, in this context, the prospective situation that he vies for is enlightened. Through insinuations, he wanted to get connected to his land and his people to be full-blown. However, Jackson unveils his plight through this simile. Talking about his own inner emotions, Jackson said: “I’m like a leaf- that’s broken away from the tree. Drifting” (G.J. Ernest,1993, P.79). This rhetoric figure crystalizes Jackson’s weakness. Jackson feels like being snatched from his motherland; he is overwhelmed by a feeling of isolation from the plantation communal life. Thus said, Jackson’s decline is reminiscent of Dante’s inferno.

2- Highlighting The Appraisive Impacts of Migration on The Individual Identity In The Narrative

If migration represents an adventure whose outcome is unpredictable for the one involved in such a social mobility process, that displacement often generates, creates, and instills some progressive traits on individual’s identity. In *Catherine Carmier*, Jackson, during his stay in the North, evolves into a different socio-political system. It is worth mentioning that Jackson’s new perspectives and values can be paramount for his southern community, which is still observing, respecting racial regulation codes and unwritten laws strictly. Through Jackson’s actions, words and what the narrator reports about him, the reader may perceive the progressive influences of migration on that character. As a prospective agent of social change, Jackson may foster tensions in deeply conservative community: the South. From an accommodationist stance before his experience up into the North, Jackson challenges both southern racist system and the inconsistencies of his community through interracial love transgression, political commitment, critical awareness, and individual empowerment.

2-1- Interracial Love Transgression and Political Commitment

Social mobility can contribute to the shaping of an individual’s identity which can lead to adopt a rebellious posture vis-à-vis the social norms in force. Once back from California, Jackson Bradley tries to transgress interracial love regulations in a conservative southern society. He goes beyond his filiative link to create an “unnatural” affiliative bond. He attempts to undermine southern racial laws through interracial love which leads him to woo the creole girl, Catherine Carmier. Departing from accommodationists, Jackson posits himself as a rebel

who attempts to transgress, subvert, undress the firm established social norms which forbid interracial love especially between a man of color and a white woman. Going beyond the non-physical barriers of interracial love, the migrant character embodies an activist who endeavors to dematerialize the established barriers by color lines. The following excerpt captures Jackson and her beloved ambition to stand against their society's dictate: "We can like each other, can't we? They can keep us apart, but they can't make us stop liking each other, can they?" (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P. 125) Physical barriers may exist preventing their love. But love, as a deep feeling, cannot be subjected to restriction. Catherine underlines the intolerance of her relatives concerning their relationships. To them, it appears as a non-conventional love affair that may create troubles due to Raoul and the creole community hostility. As a matter of fact, in Gaines' work, the Creoles picture themselves as unique people and they are eager to preserve their uniqueness. Jackson's transgressive attitude may generate tensions between him and the conservative characters because he acts as an active agent of social change.

Gaines sets in motion two opposed groups of people which are the conservatives and the progressives. Reluctant to accept change, conservative characters such as Raoul Carmier and Cajuns desire to preserve the current societal structure which bans interracial love between black men and white women. They strongly believe that the existing form of racial divide is worthy of preservation. Any mixing between white and black people may provoke racial impurity. So, conservatives thrive for racial purity preservation that represents a paramount pillar of their superiority. In sharp contrast, progressive characters mainly Jackson and Catherine Carmier challenge this stance as they are advocates of love reforms. They are eager to challenge interracial love restrictions in that southern community. The textual evidence articulates a binary opposition between progressives and conservatives. They say: "we can like each other, - they can keep us apart" Jackson and Catherine may represent progressive characters and "they" refer to the conservative ones. On the one side, the privileged term, in this polar opposition, exemplifies progressives. On the other side, the under privileged term alludes to conservatives. As C. Kip (1993, p.24) notes in the western culture, the first term is always valued or privileged over the second one. Considering the privileged pole, the reader may unearth a hidden project a stake in the narrative which is the legacy of immigration. That project consists in combatting conservative practices that darken black characters' existence. Jackson and Catherine's word acquire an emotional and ideological function. They stand against the prevailing ideology that forbids, impedes their union. Relying of the strength of their love, they try to destabilize restrictive boundaries regarding interracial love. The progressive quest of Jackson flows from immigration.

One of the most appraisive values that migration confers on the individual is political commitment. One's progressive views may impinge his attitude face to injustice. Jackson's prospective political commitment constitutes the legacy of the set of newly acquired values in the North. He embodies an agent of social change. His political ideas dictate involvement. At twenty-two years old, Jackson, after graduating from college in San Francisco, comes back to the plantation. He brings back a new perspective and values acquired during his stay "Up There". Later, Jackson acts accordingly to Charlotte's wish. For everybody in his community and particularly Aunt Charlotte, the old woman who brought Jackson up until he left for California, except him to come back to teach and thereby redeem them. That is why, Charlotte tells Jackson:

In ever' family, they ought to be somebody to do something. We ain't had that somebody in this family yet [...] all the others, they been drunks, gamblers – and your pa, there, even 'fore you was born, he had packed up and left your mom. [...] but I just want you to know [...] you all they is left, Jackson. You all us can count on. If you fail, that's all for us. (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P.98)

Though he seems reluctant to be considered as a freedom fighter. Jackson does not fit the image of the freedom fighter who engages in actions aimed at group liberation; but that postulate falls apart when he refuses to use the segregated side room in the local store of the plantation. He later emphasizes that he would never give up his revolutionary stand:

I don't want to give up, do you understand? I don't want to ever give up! There are so many people who have gone up there - who have come from all over the world the world up there – and not being able to find what was promised them, they've given up. I don't want to be one of those people. (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P.149)

The first-person homodiegetic whose presence can be justified by the repetitive use of the pronoun "I" refers to Jackson in the narrative. Jackson depicts his inner thoughts and political convictions. He foresees himself as an individual who acts as an active advocate of social change. when the heterodiegetic narrator skillfully gives Jackson the floor. He insists that he didn't want to give up. From what he doesn't give up, the critic may discern what Jackson really wants. One of the practical strategies of deconstructive reading is to work on the marginals. (A.K.I. Myson, 2019, P.501) Undelightfully, once back to their native land, some characters due to social hindrances give up the struggle aiming at improving their people life conditions. Any actions or / and inactions incompatible with commitment for community's welfare may lead to disillusion and indignation. Jackson's forthcoming engagement may confer on him respect, pride, and admiration. He tries to embody a hero for his community. That is why

K.Amani (1992, P.49) assumes that “Jackson is the torchbearer, the hope of the whole community.” The reader may also assimilate Jackson’s determination as the result of his people expectations. He fears to be portrayed as a racial traitor. Through the anaphora “I don’t want to”, the first-person speaker who impersonates the migrant character report his thoughts. That is the first-hand experience, Jackson’s point of view aligns with that of Aunt Charlotte. As her great Aunt reminds him, the community is relying on him. He has been “selected by the community to serve as what is termed the “one”, a kind of messiah” (L. John ,1995, P.304). Through Aunt Charlotte the community has chosen Jackson to represent them, to stand for them; and he doesn’t want to disappoint them.

2-2 Critical Awareness and Empowerment

Migration can sharpen one’s critical awareness, as it confers multiculturalism. In *Catherine Carmier*, multiculturalism posits Jackson as a double-edged sword for both white and African American people. That bold character is part of and outside the two worlds. As Jackson vacillates between the opposing poles, his experience echoes the ambivalent nature of Blacks’ existence in American society which W. E. Du Bois terms as “double-consciousness” (1903). Du Bois’ idea has become paramount in the description of the cultural ambivalence of black people. Referring to Jackson’s doubleness, K. Amani (1992, P.44) notes that after his stay “Up There”, Jackson is hurled into the abyss of “in-betweenness”. Amani’s coinage of the term in-betweenness refers to DuBois’ double consciousness. Thus said, Jackson is being critical towards both the North and the South with regards to his people’s life conditions. The omniscient narrator unveils Jackson’s inner thoughts concerning both places:

The North had been pictured [...] for him before he went there. But he had found out that it had its faults as well as the South. Only the faults there did not strike you directly and as quickly, so by the time you discovered them, you were so much against the other place that it was impossible ever to return to it. (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P.91)

Owing to migration, Jackson has gained critical; he perceives both places in different perspectives. Jackson’s double critical views resonates with the word of a character in Richard Wright novel’s *The Outsider* : “Negroes are going to be gifted with a double vision, for being Negroes, they are going to be both inside and outside of our culture at the same time. [...] They will become psychological men [women], centers of knowledge, so to speak”. (1965, P.129)

Before his stay in the North, the place has been pictured to him. The mode of presenting action, in this excerpt, is the objective point of view. The third person narrator neutrally reports

Jackson's experience. Jackson stands as a first-hand witness because he has observed the South. Operating as a camera-eye, he is the perceiver. He realizes that the South incorporates some inconsistencies. The speaker compares both the South and the North in terms of racial matters. "He found that it [the South] had its faults" the use of the verb of perception "found" proves that he detects himself the faults in the Northern system. There, black people are also subjected to discrimination. Although, the North seems appealing and tolerant in terms of race relationships, racism under sophisticated forms impinge black people's life conditions. He alludes to the shared assumption about the northern people's progressive attitudes. That place shows attractive features regarding interracial coexistence. However, Jackson points out that the South and the North have faults. Blacks evolve in difficult conditions in both places. That allusion to his community's fate in these places proves the illusion of immigrants who venture up North to improve their life conditions. In short, Jackson's scrutinizes the North and the South. His parallel reinforces the hypothesis that there is still a long way to go in racial matters.

Owing to the acquired education in the North, Jackson's individual development results in empowerment. To some extent, migration (re)shapes, influences identity positively. He has obtained some cultural values and ideologies in which dignity and truth are relevant. He is all the more concerned with these two values that he has detached himself from other migrants. Gaines disseminates binary oppositions through the following phrases: "a pile of lie" (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P.81) , "no truth" (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P.81) versus "truth"(G.J. Ernest, 1993, P.81), as he is passing by the " worn and dilapidated houses" (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P. 78) his indignation and frustration grew stronger and stronger. Madame Bayonne, the only character who understands Jackson's uneasiness and dissatisfaction, while talking to him, notes: "I know what you're looking for. Dignity. – You want to make something out a senseless world." (G.J. Ernest, 1993, P.81) Jackson has acquired a set of revolutionary ideas. He realizes that his community cannot help him change the prevailing situation; nor the church can do anything about it. He comes to the conclusion that his struggle has a universal dimension. (G.J. Ernest, 1993, PP.93-94) Thus said, Jackson is teaching the African American community as Aunt Charlotte had planned it. But the rationale behind his way of teaching seems unintelligible to his people. He emphasizes that he doesn't hate Raoul Carmier although this conservative creole character is hostile to his interracial love with Catherine Carmier. Jackson refuses to live in despair.

In the narrative, through the order of occurrence of the concepts lie/ truth, Jackson tries to undo the centring of lie by referring to the disruptive incongruities in race relations in the North. In doing so, he is likely to introduce new center: the truth. He is so concerned with the

idea of truth that he may fail to allow either pole in the dual system (lie/ truth) to become the centre. Deconstructive “argument put in question the basic metaphysical assumptions of western philosophy since Plato.” (S. Raman, et al 2005, P.164) Derrida uses the term “supplement” to convey the unstable relationship between couplets. As S. Raman et al (2005, P.167) put it “all human activity involves this supplementarity (addition-substitution). Jackson may be said to rest on the opposition between lie and truth. Lie has the original wholeness of falsity. It implies treachery. Truth is the second part of the binarism; as a supplement, it destabilizes the lie about racial equality and the American Dream realization promoted by the North. Here, it supplements the concept of lie and there lies the lie about the acclaimed racial progressiveness of the North. However, if the critic looks closely, he may find that the racial collaboration in the North aims at promoting Northern political ideology. In short, migration helps acquire progressive identical features.

Conclusion

To sum up, migration contributes in shaping the identity of characters in socio-political and economic conditions in the plantation darkened by racism still. Migration causes emotional detachment. Jackson’s unstable emotional stance prevents him to socialize with his people. He retreats into the narcissistic sphere of individualism and isolation. Self-detachment leads to acculturation. Migration provokes culture shock. In the narrative, it causes cultural bereavement. Once back from California, Jackson rejects his people’s values. Gaines unveils how education acts as barrier between the educated migrant and the uneducated people. Migration can have an impact on the migrant’s faith. With an unstable religious anchorage, Jackson’s rejection of Christianity is the legacy of his displacement. The migrant character rebukes the accommodative dimension of religion as it leads to accommodation and defeatism. Migration brings about identity crisis. Wrestling with existential problems, Jackson constructs an unstable identity for himself. He is subjected to an inner crisis because emptiness and isolation torments him. As a rootless individual, Jackson feels excluded from communal harmony.

The unexpected impacts of migration mainly emotional detachment, acculturation, religious faith rejection and identity crisis set a mood of tensions within the black community. The way that community perceives the migrant’s attitude foretells the intra-racial tensions. However, migration fosters social change as it helps instill progressive traits on the migrant identity. Identity is a dynamic social construct. It changes along with the place (of migration),

the time and context. Therefore Jackson identity is (re)constructed according to his experience in the North.

Social mobility contributes to shape the individual's identity. Jackson challenges the interracial love regulations in a hostile environment of the plantation. Jackson's attitude transgresses and subverts racial barriers regarding interracial love, he initiates a reconfiguration of interracial love. Migration also leads to political commitment. In the narrative, Jackson's prospective socio-political engagement constitutes the legacy of a set of newly acquired values in the North. He stands as an agent of social change. Migration can sharpen one's critical awareness as it is a layer of multiculturalism. Jackson's mixed cultural heritage posits him as a double-edged sword for white and black people. Owing to migration, Jackson has reached critical attitude; that double vision enables him to depict both the North and the South. As black characters evolve in difficult conditions in these areas, it can be asserted that racism still permeates their existence, so to speak, from Jackson's point of view. Owing to the acquired education in California, Jackson's individual development results into empowerment. Migration influences Jackson's identity as he has gained cultural values and ideologies that focus dignity and truth. He promptly rejects hatred and racial intolerance. Jackson's struggle seems to have a universal dimension. As a result, he values truth and dignity. To some extent, the appraisive impacts of migration generates interracial tensions as conservatives disapprove of any attitude that is likely to undermine the prevailing social hierarchy.

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