

Chapter V

Conclusion

The study of identity construction through the lens of space enables us to see the complicated process of African-American construction of identity. We learn that a space embodies with layers of historical, social and political ideologies, which have tremendous impact on individuals. Apparently, the dominant ideologies in each space have multiple characteristics in themselves. The northern space is considered as “utopia” in different aspects for Whites and Blacks, whereas the southern space is represented through different kinds of “house”. The diversity of values gives the protagonist the advantage to compare and scrutinize their practicality through his attempts to participate and embrace them himself. And the final answer is clear. It is impossible for him to totally embrace only one of them, as we can see that it results in his identity crisis, because, to do so, he would live his life in difficulty in the spaces containing multiple ideologies. Therefore, the contested space is the alternative that enables him to create multiple or heterogeneous identities. Milkman does not only identify himself with the “hero” (Solomon) and the “victim” (Ryna/Pilate), but also play the role in creating his identity by transforming his ancestors’ flight to his own. Here, it can be said that contested spaces expand our perception to see the fluidity and variety of identity construction. African-American identity is not fixed or homogeneous and pre-determined by biology and history. It is derived from the incorporation of African and American ideologies and individual’s participation to create one’s own self. It shows that one is not passively surrendered to pre-given identity definition, but also to cooperate in creating one’s own self.

From this study, we can assume that Morrison perceives Black identity as being plural and heterogeneous. We can see the author’s attempt to insert and motivate multiple perceptions in the novel. She brings African cosmology to the fore by presenting it through their rituals, values, and even literary tradition (African dilemma tale), in order to confirm its existence not as an absent or marginalized culture, but as equally important as the mainstream one. For instance, we can see another aspect of slavery regarding female slaves, who are more suffered and made

silent, and also another aspect of African-American identity, apart from what Black male authors and White authors present. Despite their “absence”, they play very important role in maintaining African-American culture, or more importantly American culture. Morrison unveils in “Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination” the suppression of African “presence” in American literature. She points out that it has been believed that “American literature is free of, uninformed, and unshaped by the four-hundred-year-old presence of, first, Africans and then African-Americans in the United States.” (1990, p. 5) However, she proves that, in fact, there are many Black characters in Whites’ literature but their roles are suppressed and made absent by White authors, in order to highlight the presence of White characters. It is apparent that if we perceive from only one angle, we would not see racial ideology lied beneath the lines. Obviously, heterogeneous perspectives help revive and reveal what is suppressed under the mainstream. Therefore, the heterogeneity does not only enable us to perceive the plurality of African-American identity, but also to redefine American identity as based on African or African-American identity. And there is no doubt that *Song of Solomon* is one of the “pillars” Morrison hammers down to emphasize her stance on this idea.