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FROM POSTMODERNISM TO MINORITIES' STRUGGLES: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF GIOVANNI'S ROOM AND *THE BLUEST EYE*

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Abstract: The ambivalence and ambiguity of postmodernism in minorities' struggles for legitimation permeates the ongoing study. Thanks to the concepts of borders and connections in literary comparatism, the study realizes a comparative analysis of sexual and racial minorities' struggle within postmodernism in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. So, the paper shows that the subordination of Blacks in *The Bluest Eye* comes from White establishment while American puritanical worldview is to blame for the hatred of homosexuals in *Giovanni's Room*. But, identity crisis characterizes both minorities. The non-linear narrative and the questioning of privileged groups' legitimacy eventually highlight the particularities of both groups. Unlike racial minorities, sexual minorities take advantage of identity instability peculiar to postmodernism. Those findings comply with the initial hypothesis.

Key words: Ambivalence, identities, literary comparatism, minorities, postmodernism.

Résumé : L'ambivalence et l'ambiguïté du postmodernisme dans les luttes de légitimation des minorités imprègne l'étude en cours. Grâce aux concepts de frontières et de rapports du comparatisme littéraire, l'étude réalise une analyse comparative de la lutte des minorités sexuelles et raciales à travers le postmodernisme dans *Giovanni's Room* de James Baldwin et *The Bluest Eye* de Toni Morrison. Ainsi, le travail dévoile que la subordination du Noir dans *The Bluest Eye* provient de l'établissement Blanc. À l'opposé, la vision puritaine américaine du monde est responsable de la haine dont les homosexuels sont victimes dans *Giovanni's Room*. Mais la crise identitaire est propre aux deux minorités. La narration non-linéaire et la remise en question de la légitimité des groupes privilégiés finissent par mettre en évidence les particularités des deux groupes. À la différence des minorités raciales, les minorités sexuelles valorisent l'instabilité identitaire propre au postmodernisme. Ces résultats confirment l'hypothèse initiale.

Mots-clés : Ambivalence, comparatisme littéraire, identités, minorités, postmodernisme.

INTRODUCTION

Extant literature (Lister, 2011; Oforlea, 2017; Kimbles, 2020) displays no traces of a comparative study of James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* appropriation of postmodernism in minorities' struggles for legitimation. This urges the ongoing research work. Postmodernism is regarded as a "problematics" in Linda Hutcheon's view. Indeed, it encompasses a set of problems and basic issues that have been created by the

various discourses of postmodernism, issues that were not particularly problematic before but certainly are now. Likewise, postmodernism combines both theory and art (Hutcheon, 1987, 224-226). In this study, the concept of minority is inspired by the Constitutionalist José Woehrling's works. Therefore, it takes into account both the criteria of numerical inferiority and political non-dominance. The postmodern taste for particularism over universalism (Dunn, 1998, 43) urges historically marginalized groups namely racial and sexual minorities to appropriate it in their struggles for emancipation. However, postmodernism perception of identity as unstable and socially acquired seemingly serve minorities' concerns differently. There is the issue of postmodernism ambivalence in minorities' struggles. So, how does postmodernism serve the diversity of minorities' struggle? The study intends to make a comparative study of James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* in order to show the ambivalence of postmodernism in racial and sexual minorities' struggles for freedom. *The Bluest Eye* and *Giovanni's Room* turn out to be useful in the ongoing study. In fact, the first novel focuses on a racial minority group that is African-Americans whereas the latter emphasizes sexual minorities.

To conduct the research, we resort to literary comparatism. This is regarded as the study of relationships and connections between texts (Niang, 2024, 218; N'Goran, 2015, 15). Thanks to its concepts of borders and connections, the article will reveal similarities and differences in sexual and racial minorities' appropriation of postmodernism in the issue of identity legitimization. This article is structured around three main parts namely from hegemonic construction of identities to identity crises, challenging racial and sexual hegemonies and dual logics of postmodernism and identity.

I- From Hegemonic Construction of Identities to Identity Crises

The apparently natural hegemony of heterosexuality and White race is viewed as a social construction from the perspective of postmodernism. Moreover, White establishment social discourse, its media and American puritanism strengthen the hierarchization of races in *The Bluest Eye* and sexual orientations in *Giovanni's Room*.

I-1 Hierarchization of Racial and Sexual Identities

The hierarchy of races and sexual orientations in America is viewed as socially constructed in *The Bluest Eye* and *Giovanni's Room*. Indeed, the classification results from the processes of identity formation as Robert Dunn reports: "Whiteness, maleness and heterosexuality, he asserts are just as much a part of the discourse of race, gender and sexuality as blackness, femaleness and homosexuality" (Dunn, 1998, 41). In Toni Morrison's novel, Claudia argues that Maureen Peal is not to blame neither for her hatred and downgrading words towards black skin, nor for her feeling of the embodiment of supreme beauty: "I *am* cute! And you ugly! Black and ugly black e mos. I *am* cute!" (Morrison, 1970, 61). Instead, Claudia points to the White establishment. Indeed, it appropriates all power and sets up the criteria of beauty and ugliness in the United States of America. Those criteria unsurprisingly reflect its traits, will

and values. In so doing, White establishment becomes the real enemy of Blacks: “And all the time we knew that Maureen Peal was not the Enemy and not worthy of intense hatred. The *Thing* to fear was the *Thing* that made *her* [light skin] beautiful and not us [Blacks]” (Morrison, 1970, 62).”

Beyond White establishment discourse, its media also strengthen the hegemony of fair skin at the expense of black skin. The surrounding neighborhood of the main character of *The Bluest Eye* exemplifies this dichotomy. The eleven-year young Black girl Pecola suffers the constructed evilness of blackness: “You are ugly people.’ They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement; saw, in fact support for it leaning at them from every billboard, every movie, every glance” (Morrison, 1970, 34). Furthermore, the environment characterized by a flux of simulated images that Jean Baudrillard names “hyperealité” and Fredric Jameson ‘simulacrum’ creates self-contempt and identity crisis within Breedloves in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*. In *Giovanni’s Room*, the American Christian ideology, Puritanism, prioritizes the opposite-sex choice as the moral basis of sexuality. In so doing, heterosexuality becomes the sexual norm of the country to the detriment of any other sexual orientation. David, as the name of the main character recalls American Christian roots. Indeed, the first settlers from Europe, particularly the Puritans, have sought and found a peaceful land [America] to practice their religion. In this way, American men are afraid of femininity, which reminds them of homosexuality. They rather align themselves with unquestioned manhood. The fear of David’s mother’s photograph hanging in the living room in the novel is an embodiment of that fright: “It was as though her photograph proved how her spirit dominated that air and controlled us all. I remember the shadows gathering in the far corners of that room, in which I never felt at home” (Baldwin, 1956, 18). Femininity reminds David of his non-normative masculinity.

Because of the fear of his homosexuality disclosure, David flees America for Europe where he realizes that his true self is homosexuality: “I think now that if I had had any intimation that the self I was going to find would turn out to be only the same self from which I had spent so much time in flight, I would have stayed at home” (Baldwin, 1956, 31). David suffers because his country associates non-heterosexual orientations with immorality. In this respect, David’s homosexual partner, Giovanni criticizes Americans: “If your countrymen think that privacy [homosexuality] is a crime so much the worse for your country [America]” (Baldwin, 1956, 107-108). Americans downgrade homosexuality in such a way that its nationals see it as a humiliation: “It was as though he [Giovanni] was forcing me [David] to taste the cup of

humiliation. And I hated him for this” (Baldwin, 1956, 194). Besides, the whole world sets the heterosexual marriage as the condition of happiness. This is the reason why the tenant of the hotel advises David: “But you will be happy again she says. ‘You must go and find yourself another woman, a *good* woman, and get married, and have babies. Yes, that is what you ought to do” (Baldwin, 1956, 92). The woman suspects David of being a homosexual. In her mind, only a heterosexual marriage is valid and guarantees happiness.

If James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* largely focuses on sexual minorities and Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* deals with racial minorities, they both blame the primary school blue books for hierarchizing races, genders and sexual orientations in the United States of America. Simultaneously, those blue books strengthen the hatred and discrimination against minorities. However, neither *Giovanni’s Room*, nor *The Bluest Eye* adopts the same narrative structure to talk about races or sexual orientations classification. In *Giovanni’s Room*, it is only at the end of the novel and after highlighting the consequences of gender and sexual binary division that the narrator adds: “There’s a difference between little boys and little girls, just like they say in those little blue books. Little girls want little boys. But little boys...” (Baldwin, 1956, 219). In *The Bluest Eye*, the plain allusion to *Dick and Jane*, a primary school book that praises the White family lifestyle comes within the early pages of the novel:

Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane live in the green-and-white house. They are very happy. See Jane. She has a red dress. She wants to play. Who will play with Jane? See the cat. It goes meow-meow. Come and play. Come play with Jane. The kitten will not play. See Mother. Mother is very nice. Mother, will you play with Jane? Mother laughs. Laugh, Mother laugh. See father. He is big and strong. Father, will you play with Jane? Father is smiling. Smile, Father, smile. See the dog. Bowwow goes the dog. Do you want to play with Jane? See the dog run. Run, dog, run. Look, look. Here comes a friend. The friend will play with Jane. They will play a good game. Play, Jane, play (Morrison, 1970; 7)

Only Whites are able to hold a beautiful and peaceful household. That is why White race is the only one that appears in the aforementioned story. Thus, the story establishes White race as the norm and turns others into evils. The described situation brings about self-hatred and urges members of Black community to bleach their skin in order to be like Whites. In this vein, Pecola prays God to turn her black eyes into blue ones. Comparatively, David is striving to hide his homosexual identity on behalf of heterosexuality in *Giovanni’s Room*. He seeks to comply with social sexual expectations. This is reminiscent of the rejection of minorities and the identity crises that ensue.

I-2 From Social Exclusion to Identity Crises

Sexual minorities as well as racial minorities are associated with the periphery. In other words, they are excluded from the center, the privileged position. In *The Bluest Eye*, the narrator Claudia aligns Pecola's status with African Americans' position in the United States of America: "But to be slack enough to put oneself outdoors, or heartless enough to put one's own kin outdoors [...] Our peripheral existence, however was something we had learned to deal with" (Morrison, 1970, 18). Cholly, Pecola's father is to blame for the situation Pecola experiences. Nevertheless, her social situation as outdoors goes hand in hand with African American peripheral status. In the same way, the character Giovanni in *Giovanni's Room* admits that sexual minorities are compelled to the periphery of the city as an embodiment of their exclusion and ill-treatment: "We were far from the center of the city and we had no phone" (Baldwin, 1956, 113). Center and periphery derive from a mere social construction. Therefore, they are contiguous and interchangeable from postmodern view.

Postmodernism also contends that truth is beyond humans' knowledge. Indeed, it is difficult to grasp the truth within a story. Because of the impartiality of the storyteller and the instability of words from the perspective of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, truth becomes unreachable. This ideology pervades the corpus of the study. So, *The Bluest Eye* as well as *Giovanni's Room* chooses to emphasize the manners (*How*) of events instead of the reason (*Why*) of events. In Toni Morrison's novel, the narrator gives up providing the reader with the reason why Pecola's father rapes her own daughter: "He [Cholly] closed his eyes letting his fingers dig into her waist" (Morrison, 1970, 128). A little scrutiny of the narrative permits to blame White American racism for Pecola's father's misbehavior towards his daughter:

We dropped our seeds in our own little plot of black dirt just as Pecola's father had dropped his seeds in his own plot of black dirt. Our innocence and faith were no more productive than his lust or despair.[...] There is really nothing more to say... except why. But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how" (Morrison, 1970, 9).

The narrator Claudia admits that *why* is hard to deal with. That is why she opts for *How*. Beyond the impartiality of the storyteller and the instability of words that describe events, Claudia's refusal to tackle *why* reflects the psychological anxiety and the oppression of Blacks, indirectly all racial minorities in the United States of America. White establishment silences all of them, including Black women. That is why, Claudia decides to tell Pecola's story in a retrospect perspective narrative in order to unveil and reconstruct a young Black girl's memory. Likewise, Claudia's opinion that *why* is difficult to handle implies the narrator's incomprehension and anger against American society that despises Pecola because of her black skin. This despoliation is shameful to deal with. In *Giovanni's Room*, David recalls that the *why* of the murder of Guillaume is hard

to address: “The newsprint told the unforgiving world how Giovanni repented, cried for mercy’, called on God, wept that he had not meant to do it. And told us, too, in delicious detail, *how* he had done it; but not why. Why was too black for the newsprint to carry and too deep for Giovanni to tell”(Baldwin, 1956, 202-203). The refusal of a homosexual intercourse is the why that is too black to carry and too deep to tell. It reflects the hatred and intolerable attitude of the world towards sexual minorities.

Pecola, the main character of *The Bluest Eye* as well as David, the main character of *Giovanni's Room* experiences identity crisis. Indeed, blackness as well as homosexuality is so hated in the American society that individuals’ representing those groups are willing to leave their initial group, the *out-group*, to join the privileged one the *in group*. Armengol (2012) argues that blackness aligns with homosexuality whereas whiteness blends with heterosexuality in *Giovanni's Room*. In these circumstances, David lamented: “I wanted to be inside again, with the light and safety with my manhood unquestioned”(Baldwin, 1956, 131). In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola longs for blue eyes, symbol of whiteness and beauty: “My eyes... I want them blue”(Morrison, 1970, 137). Postmodernism sees every hierarchy as arbitrary that sexual and racial minorities embarks on challenging racial and sexual hegemonies.

II- Challenging Racial and Sexual Hegemonies

Postmodernism advocates’ viewpoint that any hierarchical position is arbitrary and socially-constructed emerges as a factor that prompts minorities’ struggles and questioning of privileged groups’ legitimacy. Linda Hutcheon adds: “postmodernism rejects any neat binary opposition that might conceal a secret hierarchy of values” (Hutcheon, 1987, 43). In the ongoing study, white race and heterosexuality turn out to be the hegemonic entities; the centers whose legitimacy are questioned.

II-1 Questioning the Legitimacy of Centers

Jacques Derrida analyses Western History only to ascertain the deconstruction of binary division theory. Derrida argues that centers and peripheries are interchangeable. Therefore, the privileged position is vulnerable and liable to change. Robert Dunn, another theorist, recalls: “As Cornolly (1991) argues, dominant identities are “vulnerable” to challenges from those who would “counter, resist, overturn or subvert definitions applied to them” (Dunn, 1998, 42). Even if the whole world agrees that the fair complexion baby-doll is the most beautiful Christmas gift in *The Bluest Eye*, Claudia contradicts this universal acceptance. She rather foregrounds the

flaws of the doll. Her gesture is inspired by postmodernism effort to highlight the inconsistencies of universal theories:

But I could examine it to see what it was that all the world said was lovable. Break off the tiny fingers, bend the flat feet, loosen the hair, twist the head around, and the thing made one sound... a sound they said was the sweet and plaintive cry "Mama," but which sounded to me like the bleat of a dying lamb, or more precisely, our icebox door opening on rusty hinges. (Morrison, 1970, 20-21)

Claudia's hatred against the baby-doll is reminiscent of her loathing towards White race supremacy. Therefore, she is opposed to fair-skinned girls namely Rosemary Villanucci and Maureen Peal who see themselves as the embodiment of supreme beauty. The narrator's attitude takes root from the "Black is Beautiful" movement of 1960s. It is also consistent with Cornolly's opinion that dominant identities are vulnerable to challenges from minorities who subvert biases applied to them.

In *Giovanni's Room*, David deconstructs the ideology according to which happiness only comes from heterosexual marriage. Previously, David's landlady advises him to marry a good woman and be happy again. In her mind, happiness goes hand in hand with a heterosexual marriage. Instead, David asserts: "I perhaps don't like women very much, that's true. That hasn't stopped me from making love to many and loving one or two. But most of the time... most of time, I made love only with the body"(Baldwin, 1956, 105). Making love with the body implies the emotional detachment of David to girls. He is rather interested in his male sexual partner. In puritanical America, heterosexuality is also considered the normal and moral sexual orientation. Conversely, David puts heterosexuality as well as homosexuality on the equal footing. In his opinion, no sexual orientation is higher neither more moral than another. He eventually associates heterosexuality with darkness:

Her [Sue's] apartment was dark and full of furniture... What we were about to do [sexual intercourse] woud not be pretty [...] I took off my shoes and lay back on her sofa. I tried not to think. But I was thinking that what I did with Giovanni [my homosexual partner] could not possibly be more immoral than what I was about to do with Sue [my heterosexual partner] (Baldwin, 1956, 131-132)

David's uneven sexual orientations delegitimize the primacy of heterosexuality. In the same way, the uneven narrative structure of *Giovanni's Room* compromises the linear narrative as well as the linear vision of the world. It also sets itself up as a resistance mechanism of minorities.

II-2 Non-linear Narrative and Resistance of Minorities

It is known from the French theorist Roland Barthes' perspective that the linear narrative structure is reminiscent of Bourgeoisie unique dominant ideology. Conversely, the non-linear

narrative structure characteristic of postmodernism and minorities' writings reflects the downfall of Bourgeoisie. It simultaneously highlights the emergence of diverse ideologies, particularly minorities'. As a mechanism of resistance, the non-linear narrative structure is common to both novels. In *Giovanni's Room*, the narrator displays a situation in which the consequences of an action precede the action itself. The French theorist Gerard Genette refers to it as a prolepsis. So, David recalls: "I saw Jacques, as a matter of fact, just after Giovanni was sentenced. He was sitting bundled up in his greatcoat on the terrace of a café" (Baldwin, 1956, 34). Giovanni's sentence is the result of the murder he commits on Guillaume. But, the circumstances of that murder appear later in the narrative while its consequences come earlier in the narrative: "Then Guillaume fell. And Giovanni fell... back into the room, the streets, the world and into the presence and shadow of death" (Baldwin, 1956, 201).

In *The Bluest Eye*, the non-linear narrative structure is striking in the broad structuration of the novel. The distortion of the yearly cycle of seasons around which the novel turns exemplifies this situation. *The Bluest Eye* opens in autumn, crosses winter and spring to end in summer. This is inconsistent with the regular annual order of weather seasons; that is spring, summer, autumn and winter. Furthermore, Claudia tells Pecola's story retrospectively. Indeed, Pecola's story is Claudia's childhood story; a story that she retells once she becomes an adult. In so doing, the narrator distorts the linear narrative structure. This technique complies with what Gerard Genette refers to as 'analepsis' or flashback. In the early pages of *The Bluest Eye*, the narrator Claudia mentions: "Mama had told us two days earlier that a "case" [Pecola] was coming" (Morrison, 1970, 17). Later on, she reveals the circumstances in which Pecola becomes a social case. In the same way, the narrator relates Pecola's father's adulthood before his childhood.

In all, the non-linear narrative structure allows both racial and sexual minorities to question the legitimacy of hierarchical entities namely White race and heterosexuality along with their linear dominant ideologies. As a narrative mechanism of postmodernism, the non-linear narrative concurrently diversifies ideologies and values minorities' particularisms. However, postmodernism hardly establishes a culture or a sexual orientation as the eternal model.

III The Dual Logics of Postmodernism and Identity

Blacks and homosexuals are considered the peripheries in this study. They both take advantage of postmodernism call for diversity to highlight their particularisms. However, postmodernism simultaneously valorizes loose, fragmented and depthless identity.

III-1 Centralizing the Peripheries

In *The Bluest Eye*, Claudia metaphorically associates African Americans with the periphery: “Our peripheral existence, however, was something we had learned to deal with”(Morrison, 1970,18). Notwithstanding, in *Giovanni’s Room*, Giovanni reveals that homosexuals occupy the peripheral neighborhood of the city : “We were far from the center of the city and we had no phone”(Baldwin, 1956, 113). It is established that African Americans as well as sexual minorities are associated with peripheries. However, Hutcheon contends that postmodernism promotes margins: “Part of its questioning involves an energizing rethinking of margins and edges” (Hutcheon, 1987, 42).

Claudia’s revolt against the overwhelming domination and praise for White race and culture is striking in Morrison’s fiction. So, the baby-doll that embodies the supremacy of White race is dismembered by the narrator: “Break off the tiny fingers, bend the flat feet, loosen the hair, twist the head around, and the thing made one sound” (Morrison, 1970, 20). Conversely, Claudia foregrounds the particularities of African American culture: “I want to sit on the low stool in Big Mama’s kitchen with my lap full of lilacs and listen to Big papa play his violin for me alone”(Morrison, 1970, 21). Before the overwhelming pressure of mainstream culture, Claudia strives to valorize Black culture beauty. She contends that grown-ups use of vernacular language can soothe tormented minds: “Their conversation is like a gently wicked dance: sound meet sound” (Morrison, 1970, 16). In *Giovanni’s Room*, sexual minorities also foreground their sexual practice. If homosexuality is repressed from ancient writings, it is set on equal footing with heterosexuality in James Baldwin’s novel. David is no longer ashamed of disclosing his sexual orientation:

I know I could not open the door, I know it was too late; soon it was too late to do anything but moan. He pulled me against him, putting himself into my arms as though he were giving me himself to carry, and slowly pulled me down with him in that bed. With everything in me screaming *No!* yet the sum of me sighed *Yes!*(Baldwin, 1956, 86-87)

Homosexuality sets itself up as a normal sexual orientation as heterosexuality in *Giovanni’s Room*. This is possible thanks to postmodernism taste for promoting all particularisms. This state of fact eventually legitimizes historically marginalized groups, among others homosexuals. Simultaneously, postmodernism views identity as depthless, unstable and multiple.

III-2 Multiplicity and Instability of Identity

It is the contention of postmodernism that all races and sexual orientations must be on the same footing. In this respect, the issue of diversity is key to postmodernism. Thus, Black race is as beautiful as White race while homosexuality is as moral as heterosexuality. On the contrary, instability implies changes of ranking among racial or sexual groups or changes within one's own identity over time. In *Giovanni's Room*, Giovanni argues: "You are lucky that what is happening to you is happening *now* and not when you are forty or something like" (Baldwin, 1956,74). No one has control on his/her sexual orientations. It changes abruptly. That is why David adds: "People are too various to be trusted so lightly. I am too various to be trusted. If this were not so I would not be alone in this house tonight. Hella would not be on the high seas. And Giovanni would not be about to perish"(Baldwin, 1956, 10). The main character of *Giovanni's Room* is referring to his unstable sexual identity that ranges from homosexuality to heterosexuality and bisexuality. This situation eventually brings about the disappointment of his sexual partners. In the same token, Robert Dunn argues that cultural identity is multiple and unstable in postmodern social context: "[...] Second, the distinction captures both the *destabilizing* and *restabilizing* features of contemporary cultural phenomena. While the postmodernity of consumerism and media poses a problem of fragmented identities, the postmodernity of groups and movement... reconstitute identity" (Dunn, 1998, 145). This aporia of postmodern social context culture is somewhat inconsistent with ethnic minorities', particularly African Americans' quest for cultural authenticity.

In *The Bluest Eye*, even if Claudia strives to reconstitute and keep her African American cultural identity, she admits that the mutual influence of races and cultures in the contemporary social environment seems undeniable. Claudia is no longer very hostile to White race as such: "I saw a pair of fascinated eyes in a dough-White face. Rosemary [White girl] was watching us" (Morrison, 1970, 27). Races and cultures are no longer antagonistic. This is true with Pecola's mother, Pauline Breedlove in the novel:

I'member one time I want to see Clark Goble and Jean Harlow. I fixed my hair up like I'd seen hers on a magazine. A part on the side with one little end on my forehead. It looked just like her. Well, almost like. Anyway I sat in that show with my hair done up that way and had a good time. [...] There I was five months pregnant trying to look like Jean Harlow and a front tooth gone. Everything went then. Look like I just didn't care no more after that. (Morrison, 1970, 97-98)

Jean Harlow, whom Pauline Breedlove tries to emulate is representative of White race-a race widely promoted by the media as the racial norm. That is why Pecola longs for blue eyes, symbols of whiteness, in order to feel beautiful. Ultimately, the attitudes of Pauline and Pecola illustrate the interrelation and multiplicity of everyone's cultural identity. The ideology of

multiplicity and instability of identity anchored in postmodernism seemingly serves minorities differently. It seems more profitable to women and sexual minorities than ethnic minorities. Indeed, ethnic minorities' quest for identity is based on traditional, natural and stable conception of cultural identity while postmodernism perceives identity as fragmentary, depthless, socially constructed and unstable. Claudia, the narrator of *The Bluest Eye*, claims an authentic self: "Frieda and she [Pecola] had a loving conversation about how cu-ute Shirley Temple [symbol of whiteness] was. I couldn't join them in their adoration because I hated Shirley Temple... because she danced with Bojangles, who was *my* friend, *my* uncle, *my* daddy. (Morrison, 1970, 49). In all, Claudia turns out to be ambivalent and ambiguous as the condition of culture in postmodern social context. On the contrary, women question the traditional conception of genders and call for the social and constructivist dimension of gender identity. This is reflected in feminist theory. Likewise, sexual minorities advocate the multiple and unstable view of identity. Referring to one's sexual identity, David admits that Man is too various to be trusted.

CONCLUSION

The article undertakes a comparative study of sexual and racial minorities' struggles within postmodernism in James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. The claim for particularism over universalism characteristic of postmodernism prompts the emergence of historically marginalized groups, but the unstable view of identity anchored in postmodernism seemingly suits some minorities to the detriment of others. This tension reveals the ambivalence and ambiguity of postmodernism in minorities' struggle for legitimation. How does postmodernism serve the diversity of minorities' struggle? The study aims to cross-read James Baldwin's *Giovanni's Room* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* in order to highlight sexual and racial minorities' similarities and differences in appropriation of postmodernism in the struggle for legitimation. Besides, the research paper resorts to literary comparatism, particularly its concepts of 'relationships' and 'connections' between texts in order to examine its hypothesis.

Therefore, from the hegemonic construction of identities to identity crises, the research moves to the challenging of racial and sexual hegemonies, then it tackles the dual logics of postmodernism and identity. The scrutiny of the aforementioned issues discloses that the biases applied to both racial and sexual minorities are socially constructed. As the consequences of biases, the identity crisis is common to sexual as well as racial minorities. Pecola in *The Bluest*

Eye and David in *Giovanni's Room* exemplifies the crisis. Furthermore, the non-linear narrative structure and the questioning of the legitimacy of White race and heterosexuality turn out to be the mechanisms of resistance of racial and sexual minorities. Postmodernism choice of particularism over universalism guarantees the legitimization of historically marginalized groups namely racial and sexual minorities. However, the postmodern praise for uneven and fragmentary identity makes it somewhat ambivalent and ambiguous, particularly for racial minorities. Therefore, the findings go hand in hand with the initial hypothesis of postmodernism ambivalence and ambiguity in minorities' struggle for legitimation.

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