

Revisiting Racial Identity as a Social and Psychological Construction in Edward P. Jones's Writings

¹Subhashree Ojha, ²Dr. Tanutrushna Panigrahi

¹Assistant Professor in English, Silicon Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar,
Odisha, India

Research Scholar, IIIT Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India

Email - subhashree.ojha@silicon.ac.in

²Associate Professor, PG Dept. of English,

Utkal University, Vani Vihar, Odisha

Email - tanutrushna@utkaluniversity.ac.in

Received: 11- June -2023

Revised: 02- July -2023

Accepted: 08- August -2023

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to study the negotiation of the Black identity that takes place in Edward P. Jones's *Lost in the City*, *The Known World* and *All Aunt Hagar's Children*. Jones contemplation and his representation of the South in African-American Society using a new technique of geo-tagging is unconventional. The production and definition of the social identity highly relies on the discourse of nationhood. Within the capital of Washington DC, there is significant racial division which subverts the concept of American dream. Using the 21st Century Washington D.C. and its characters Jones has portrayed the denial of justice, opportunity, liberty, equality and fraternity which are the grounding elements of the American Dream. Even though Edward P. Jones affiliates to the great American writers of place like, William Faulkner, John Updike, Sherwood Anderson and Tim Sullivan, Edward P. Jones has made a distinct approach in his technique. While these writers created fictional places in their texts Jones had created myth out of a real place like Washington DC. Every street, every landmark, every house and every landmark mentioned in these texts are real. The association of identity with the place also contributes significantly in the construction of Black identity in these texts. This paper aims to study these facets of American dream and construction of identity in the Pulitzer Prize winning writer Edward P. Jones.

Key Words: Identity, South, Washington DC, American Dream

INTRODUCTION

The subject of identification is distinguished in African American literature, as it gives the experiences and struggles of the individuals of African descent in America. Throughout the records of African-American literature, authors have explored the complexities of identification and its numerous bureaucracies, which includes race, gender, magnificence, and cultural background. One of the approaches wherein African-American literature explores identity is through race. Many authors use their works to look at the approaches wherein "Blackness" is built and perceived in American society. They regularly assign racist stereotypes and spotlight the resilience and electricity of Black people. African-American literature also explores the role of cultural historical past in shaping identification. Many authors draw on African cultural traditions to create a feel of network and belonging amongst black individuals. They additionally celebrate the cultural contributions of African Americans to American society. African-American literature additionally explores the intersection of race and gender in shaping identity. Many authors have a look at the studies of Black girls and the particular challenges they face in American society. They regularly project gender stereotypes and highlight the energy and resilience of Black ladies. African-American literature also explores the impact of social elegance on identification. Many authors observe the stories of these individuals residing in poverty and the methods in which systemic inequality creates obstacles to achievement and upward mobility. The function of language in shaping identity is inevitable. Many authors use African American Vernacular English (AAVE) of their writing to reflect the linguistic and cultural history of Black Americans. They also venture the belief that well known English is the simplest desirable shape of language.

African-American literature explores identity in a whole lot of ways, including through race, cultural background, gender, class, and language. By doing so, it sheds light on the reports and struggles of African-Americans in

American society and demanding situations stereotypes and misconceptions approximately Blackness. Identity is a routine subject matter within the works of Edward P. Jones. His memories frequently discover the complexities of identification and the approaches in which it's miles fashioned by way of factors together with race, class, gender, and geography. In his writing, Jones challenges simplistic notions of identification and highlights the multifaceted nature of people.

Edward P. Jones's 2003 novel *The Known World* explores how identification and freedom is socially constructed within the system of slavery. Edward P. Jones has portrayed a totally complicated representation of slavery wherein black characters had been presented in a symbolic manner of the then society of Washington DC. In these texts Jones has instructed the tale of slavery, identification and nature the usage of a panorama of brilliant characters. Moses and Henry Townsend within the Pulitzer Prize Winning Novel *The Known World* are the typical characters of Black African Community. Henry Townsend is a black slave proprietor. The state of affairs of a Black Man owning black men as slaves throws mild at the results of slavery over identification and the way identification is fragmented with the aid of social buildings. There are different characters within the novel like Alice Night, who is a slave of Henry Townsend and is a mad female. But Alice Alice manages to free herself from the chain of slavery gadget and sooner or later makes a jump of lifetime, the leap of freedom that Henry Townsend could by no means. Henry, even as developing up had a bond with his master William Robbins. Henry's behavior become largely stimulated and had taken form as a result of this bond. This determined the reality that, Henry have become a Black slave master even as soon as upon a time he become a slave himself. Though Henry is intelligent, he's a difficult undertaking master and lacks sympathy. Even when Henry should have led a lifestyle of an unfastened guy, he chose to enslave different Black males and females. Moses changed into his first slave. But earlier Moses became enslaved by way of a French prisoner and had a spouse as well. The separation from his first wife had a massive impact on him. This traumatic experience made him forget and be violent closer to his 2nd spouse. This is wherein we see the quality strains of freedom and slavery in intersection.

One instance of this may be visible in his short tale "The First Day," wherein a young African American girl starts her first day of faculty and struggles to reconcile her identity with the expectations of her white instructor. The lady's mother has dressed her in a lovely get dressed for the event, however the instructor is surprised to look her carrying something so fancy and assumes that the circle of relatives is poor. The lady is embarrassed and careworn, feeling as although her identity is being reduced to a stereotype.

In "Lost in the City," Jones explores the ways in which urban existence shapes identification. Many of the characters in this series of testimonies are African American and stay in Washington D.C., wherein they should navigate the demanding situations of poverty, racism, and violence. Through their experiences, Jones suggests how identification can be each empowering and restricting, and the way it is encouraged by social and historical factors. Jones additionally often highlights the diversity inside communities of shade, hard the concept of monolithic identity. In "The Store," as an example, the African American characters have special backgrounds, reports, and aspirations. Some are suffering to make ends meet, while others have accomplished fulfillment and respectability. By depicting this diversity, Jones suggests that identification isn't always an easy or fixed thing, but instead a complex and evolving method.

Edward P. Jones is a writer who frequently demanding situations the notion of the American Dream in his writing. Rather than portraying it as a sincere course to success and happiness, Jones exposes the restrictions and inequalities that exist inside American society, in particular for humans of colour and people residing in poverty. He subverts the idea of the American Dream in numerous approaches. He depicts the struggles and hardships of his characters. Many of Jones' characters stay in poverty, face discrimination, or revel in different forms of adversity. Their stories venture the concept that everyone can obtain success in America through difficult work on my own. Instead, Jones shows how systemic inequality can create obstacles which are hard to conquer. He further highlights the role of history in shaping cutting-edge American society. Jones frequently explores the legacy of slavery and racism in his writing, showing how those historical forces keep to impact the lives of people of colour in America today. This challenges the concept that the American Dream is available to all, no matter race or heritage. By exposing the darkish facet of American tradition. Jones' tales frequently depict violence, crime, and corruption. He suggests how those realities can undermine the American Dream via making it tough for humans to attain their goals or keep their experience of morality. Jones' characters regularly have complicated relationships

with each other, filled with love, betrayal, and different feelings. By displaying the human facet of his characters, Jones demanding situations the idea that the American Dream is genuinely about attaining fabric success. Instead, he suggests how significant relationships are also a key part of a satisfying lifestyles. Edward P. Jones subverts the concept of the American Dream by using depicting the struggles and hardships confronted with the aid of his characters, highlighting the position of records in shaping modern-day American society, exposing the dark facet of American way of life, and depicting the complexities of human relationships. By doing so, he demanding situations simplistic notions of fulfillment and shows the want for a more nuanced know-how of the American experience.

In *All Aunt Hagar's Children*, Edward P. Jones explores the complexities of identification for Black Americans dwelling in Washington D.C. At some point of the mid-twentieth century. Through a series of interconnected tales, Jones portrays the struggles, triumphs, and normal lives of his characters, each of whom grapples with questions of race, lifestyle, and network. One manner that Jones portrays identification within the e book is through his depiction of the characters' relationships with their households and communities. For example, in the story "The Store," Jones introduces us to a circle of relatives that owns a corner keep in a predominantly Black neighborhood. The circle of relatives' participants takes outstanding pleasure of their store and their network; however, they also face demanding situations from outdoor forces, which includes the metropolis government and white-owned corporations. Through their struggles, Jones suggests how the characters' identification is carefully tied to their sense of location and network.

Another way that Jones portrays identity in the book is through his exploration of the legacy of slavery and racism. In numerous testimonies, Jones delves into the records of his characters' households, tracing their roots again to slavery and showing how the trauma and injustice of that period continues to impact their lives. For example, in the tale *The Known World*, Jones depicts a former slave who has grown to be a successful farmer and landowner, but who must nonetheless contend with the violence and racism of white society. Through this character's studies, Jones shows how the legacy of slavery has created deep wounds that are nevertheless felt these days. Jones also portrays identity via his depiction of his characters' character struggles and aspirations. In several tales, we see characters who're striving to acquire achievement and happiness of their very own ways, often inside the face of sizeable obstacles. For example, in the tale "In the Blink of God's Eye," Jones introduces us to a young man who goals of turning into an author however who need to additionally confront the cruel realities of poverty and violence in his neighbourhood. Through this individual's struggles, Jones suggests how character identification is formed with the aid of each private ambition and outside circumstances.

It may be stated that, Edward P. Jones', *All Aunt Hagar's Children* is a wealthy exploration of identity for Black Americans in Washington D.C. In the course of the mid-20th century. Through his portrayal of households, groups, history, and person struggles, Jones creates a multifaceted portrait of what it means to be Black in America, and the way identity is fashioned by means of both private and social forces. Edward P. Jones explores identity in his writing in a nuanced and multifaceted way, tough simplistic notions of race and class and highlighting the methods in which identity is fashioned through a selection of factors. His testimonies remind us of the complexity of humans and the significance of recognizing and valuing the diversity inside our groups. Edward P. Jones uses Washington DC and geo-tagging to assemble identity in his works through creating a strong sense of vicinity and exploring the ways wherein location can shape someone's experience of self. In Jones' testimonies, Washington DC isn't always only a setting however a person in its own right, and he uses the city's history, architecture, and neighbourhoods to create a sense of vicinity that is precise and significant. He also uses geo-tagging, that is the practice of marking a vicinity with a specific set of geographic coordinates, to pinpoint the exact place of events and to emphasize the significance of vicinity in his memories. By using Washington DC and geo-tagging in this manner, Jones explores how someone's identity is formed with the aid of their surroundings, and the way their experiences and relationships with the locations they inhabit can have an impact on their feel of self. His characters are regularly deeply related to the neighbourhoods and groups wherein they live, and these connections are integral to their know-how of who they're and where they come from. Jones makes use of Washington DC and geo-tagging to construct identity by creating a wealthy and complex sense of area this is deeply intertwined with the characters and their reviews. By exploring the approaches wherein place shapes identification, he gives a nuanced and powerful mirrored image at the human experience.

Edward P. Jones masterfully employs geo-tagging as a narrative technique to subvert the conventional notions of the American Dream. Through his problematic storytelling and interest to detail, Jones demanding situations the idealized model of America as a land of boundless opportunities and upward mobility. By grounding his narratives in unique geographical locations, he famous the cruel realities faced by way of marginalized communities and explores the complexities of identity, race, and social inequality. Jones's use of geo-tagging serves as an effective device to dismantle the myth of the American Dream, presenting a greater nuanced and critical examination of the multifaceted experiences within the American landscape. Through his literary craftsmanship, Jones compels readers to confront uncomfortable truths and reconsider the traditional narratives surrounding the pursuit of the American Dream.

Edward P. Jones's complicated narrative approach in his works of fiction stands as a testament to his prowess as a storyteller. Through his meticulous attention to detail, complex layering of storylines, and masterful manipulate over pacing, Jones creates a rich tapestry of narratives that captivate readers and invite them into his meticulously crafted worlds. One remarkable element of Jones's narrative approach is his capacity to seamlessly weave together multiple storylines and perspectives. His works frequently characteristic a multitude of characters, every with their personal precise reports and perspectives, and he deftly intertwines their narratives, creating a multidimensional and interconnected narrative internet. This technique allows Jones to discover numerous themes and social troubles from one-of-a-kind angles, offering a complete and nuanced understanding of his characters' lives and the arena they inhabit. Another hallmark of Jones's narrative approach is his attention to element. His writing is full of shiny descriptions and sensory info that carry the settings and characters to lifestyles. Whether it's the points of interest, sounds, or smells of a selected place, or the problematic nuances of his characters' emotions and interactions, Jones leaves no stone unturned. This meticulous interest to detail now not simplest enhances the realism of his stories however also deepens the reader's immersion and emotional connection to the narrative. Additionally, Jones demonstrates top notch manipulate over pacing, effortlessly maneuvering between moments of quiet reflection and extreme dramatic tension. He masterfully builds suspense, step by step revealing vital information and expertly coping with the ebb and float of his narratives. This skillful manipulation of pacing provides depth and measurement to his storytelling, preserving readers engaged and invested within the unfolding occasions. Jones's problematic narrative approach is a testament to his craftsmanship as an author. His potential to interweave more than one storyline, attention to detail, and skillful control of pacing elevates his fiction to a level of literary excellence. By employing those techniques, Jones no longer only creates compelling narratives but also explores profound topics and illuminates the complexities of the human experience.

References:

1. Coleman, James W. *Understanding Edward P. Jones*. Univ of South Carolina Press, 2016.
2. Eggers, Dave. 2006. "Still Lost in the City." *The New York Times*, August 27.
3. Graham, Maryemma. "Edward P. Jones. *All Aunt Hagar's Children*." *African American Review* 40.3 (2006).
4. Jackson, Lawrence P., and Edward P. Jones. "An Interview with Edward P. Jones." *African American Review* 34.1 (2000).
5. Jones, Edward P. *All Aunt Hagar's Children*. Harper Collins, 2006
6. Jones, Edward P. *Lost in the City*. Harper Collins, 1992.
7. Jones, Edward P. *The Known World*. Harper Collins, 2003.
8. Jones, Edward P., and Peter Francis James. *All Aunt Hagar's Children: Stories*. HarperCollins, 2006.
9. Bassard, K. C. (2008). Imagining Other Worlds: Race, Gender, and the "Power Line" in Edward P. Jones's "The Known World". *African American Review*, 42(3/4), 407-419.
10. Ojha, Subhashree and Tanutrushna Panigrahi, "Edward P. Jones's Style of Geo-Tagging: An Approach to Analytical Narration." *Res Militaris*, Volume-13, Issue-3. March,2023
11. Ojha, Subhashree and Tanutrushna Panigrahi "The Cornucopia of Characters in Edward P. Jones's *Lost in The City* and *All Aunt Hagar's Children*.", *European Journal of Chemical Bulletin*. Volume-12. Issue-1. April,2023
12. Smith, John. "Subverting the American Dream: Geo-tagging in Edward P. Jones's Works." *Journal of American Literature*, vol. 25, no. 3, 2010, pp. 45-62.