

## Representing the Marxian Dialectic through Discourse: A Socio-cognitive Linguistic Analysis of Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land*

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- Dialectic
- Materialism
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- Manipulation
- Race

### Abstract

*In the Marxian perspective, all ideological abstractions stand corollary to materialism. In a world polarised by socioeconomic disparity, the socially powerful group claims its primacy in the means of production and social resources. Their hegemony over the underprivileged establishes and sustains itself through manipulative strategies that are discursive. However, this hegemony may provoke a strong resistance and subsequent endeavors by the oppressed ameliorate their socioeconomic status. This process of resistance by the deprived to the established hegemony of the few needs the same manipulative tactics to be employed by them as has been used against them by the privileged. This research paper aims at ascertaining this reciprocity of the Marxian approach and critical discourse analysis. It analyses Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* to investigate the Marxian concept of social dialectic the way this dialectic is reflected linguistically. This qualitative research establishes its ontological premise on Marx's philosophy of Dialectical Materialism and uses Teun A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach in Critical Discourse Analysis as a linguistic perspective for its textual analysis. The study applies this socio-cognitive approach as a model as well. The analysis reflects that the socioeconomic monopolization by the ruling class owes to the discourse strategies of this class and that the unprivileged individuals also use the same manipulative tactics to counter the socioeconomic hegemony of the ruling elites to improve their status. The study beckons towards the unexplored research dimensions to synthesize the reciprocity of the Marxian dialectic and critical discourse analysis.*

## 1. Introduction

The debate on whether consciousness shapes the social existence or the latter determines the former continues to intrigue. The Marxian perspective argues for the precedence of the social existence and deems consciousness or idea not only as secondary but a product of *matter* itself. Their concept of social classes is premised on the same argument, which further explains that it is the human needs that generate ideas for their support. In other words, idea or consciousness - both the terms are taken for the one and same reality here - is a product of, focused on, and revolves around matter. That is why the differences in social classes, according to the Marxian approach, divide people much more strongly than the other differences such as religion, ethnicity, race, and gender do.

In the Marxian perspective, ideas that arise out of human needs are imposed in terms of ideologies. This means that, according to Marx, ontology and epistemology are the same. Ideologies are communicated to and imposed on people through means of discourse, which is, according to the poststructuralist view, a tool invented and used by the human organism. Moreover, since social structures are actualized cognitively, mental representations shape the cognitive processes which contribute to producing and interpreting discourse (van Dijk, Discourse-Cognition-Society 2014). The same standard also applies to the reverse relationship, which explains how discourse affects social structure. This process occurs when language users happen to use their cognitive representations as social actors.

Additionally, in this context, idea, and language, each being a product of material needs, complements the other for social interaction to occur. The idea in its communicative manifestation may be expressed through or by language in terms of its suitability under a particular situation. Through the power inherent in language, the idea may, for example, be expressed direct or indirect, made explicit or implicit, generalized or specified, and presented as positive or negative. These linguistic strategies, which aim at manipulating either positively or negatively, exploit phenomena like ideologies and social identities which are, themselves, deemed as biased since these are also constituted or, at least, exploited for the vested interests. Race is one of these socially constituted identities. This social identity determines all the aspects of the lives of the individuals of African American society. The socioeconomic sphere is affected most.

### 1.1 Research Objective

This research paper enlightens on the use and abuse of power as employed through discourse practices by the powerful social class for its vested interests, as echoed in Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land*. In this context, it also explores the function of socially constructed identities. The study also investigates the way the socially unprivileged individuals emerge by using the same discourse tactics as employed against them by the powerful class.

### 1.2 Dialectical Materialism

Marx proposed the concept of Dialectical Materialism as a synthesis of Hegel's philosophy of Dialectic. He is indebted to Hegel for all of the principles of his theory, though they also differ in their approaches fundamentally. What distinguishes the two is that whereas Hegel prioritizes consciousness to matter, Marx believes in the precedence of matter (Russell,



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200). Marx not only prioritizes the matter over the consciousness but also deems the latter as a product of the former.

On the other hand, Hegel's conviction on the immateriality or precedence of the idea of consciousness is a part of his belief in the pre-planned existence of the societies of the world. According to him, the world has been fashioned in such a way that its history runs in a readymade order. His *idea* can be compared with seed on which depends the structure and the future growth of a plant.

On the contrary, Marx believes more in a world of chaos where the matter is the primal reality and where consciousness is a product of matter. To him, man is a product of nature and his consciousness grows as a natural sequel to his needs and urges. In other words, it is man's needs which breed his consciousness and ideas for their satisfaction.

### **1.3 Poststructuralist Linguistic View**

The materiality of consciousness, as highlighted in Marx's dialectical materialism, corresponds with the poststructuralist view of language. Under the poststructuralist reality, language, which is a source of communication, is subject to human needs for its construction. Mills views discourse as a linguistic communication that operates between speaker and hearer. She also thinks of it as an interpersonal activity that is determined by some social purpose (Mills, Discourse, 2004). According to her, Foucault also beckons to the same fact by saying that every society has a particular regime of truth, which is shaped by the type of discourses it fosters.

### **1.4 Critical Discourse Analysis**

The poststructuralist linguistic view is reinforced by critical discourse analysts who relate language to the use and abuse of power. Norman Fairclough, for example, associating language with power and ideology, says that texts in contemporary society are increasingly multi-semiotic. He suggests that this semiotic form of language is increasingly combining language with other semiotic forms (Fairclough, 1995).

Terry Locke also emphasizes that language per se has no sense to give. He thinks that it is used merely to construct meanings in society (Locke, 2004). The point is further reinforced by van Dijk who says that discourse is exploited to establish dominance by the powerful individuals or groups of society (van Dijk, 2006). He does take into consideration semantic elements of discourse, such as grammar, semiotics, rhetoric, stylistics, etc.; however, his main focus is the triangle of discourse, cognition, and society. He sees context as a subjective and dynamic mental representation, which concerns the participants in relation to the for-them-now properties of the communicative situation (Meyer & Wodak, 2004). He explains that it is this mental model that controls the sufficient adaptation of discourse production and comprehension to their social settings.

It is within these mental models that a person's knowledge and fundamental values about events exist. Individuals also share knowledge and beliefs with a larger group. This shared knowledge gets intertwined with one's knowledge and beliefs through the process of generalization. This is because mental models typically represent both, the (instantiated, applied) knowledge and other beliefs of social groups and the cognitive representations which explain a person's self-awareness (van Dijk, Cognitive Context Model, and Discourse, 1997).

Moreover, these mental models not only disseminate knowledge but impose it. This happens because the obvious observations as communicated by a language user are influenced by their social knowledge and beliefs, though the language user may be unconscious to this fact. Van Dijk says, "Models are much richer in information than the discourses that are based on them, both in production as well as comprehension" (van Dijk, 1997). According to him, a journalist may, for instance, not report all the details of an event. The journalist would give only those details which will be relevant according to him. Similarly, a language user may also generalize some specific facts or specify some general ones. Likewise, his manner of presentation may also be subjective to some of the other extent, as van Dijk points out, "Self- and other-representation in context models, and the display of such identities and allegiances in the talk, usually also show in the choice of pronouns". Discourse tactics as employed in a text may include (de)highlighting, and making the desired text bold and italicizing it (van Dijk, 2006). Moreover, lexical selection and rhetorical devices are also used accordingly. These linguistic strategies, which seem to be communicating knowledge, actually make the text opinionated and impose the ideologies inherent in that text or discourse.

### 1.5 Scholarship on the Selected Text

Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land*, the text selected for the study, has invited reasonable criticism from the perspectives of internal colonialism and politicization of drug use in a black community, and black identity. Michelle Alexander, for example, links the novel with the political role that drugs performed in the black communities of the U.S., especially the urban ones (Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 7). According to her, drug use has been meant to eclipse the important issues concerning internal colonialism. She adds that because of the politicization of drug use, the government made only superficial attempts to abate their proliferation in black communities like Harlem.

Arnold Rampersad finds *Manchild in the Promised Land* as a real representation of urbane literature (Rampersad, *Review: The Children of Ham*, 25-26). He regards also the author as a true modern poet, especially of Harlem. He thinks that Brown speaks to his readers genuinely and in a real street language in the opening sequence. To him, Claude Brown's character is, however, very similar in his insightfulness to Ralph Ellison's urchin who lacks identity. He thinks that very much like Ralph Ellison's invisible man, Brown's hero also internalizes the pessimism of being with the inferior status of the American caste system. He writes that Brown's hero was incognizant of his black 'identity' and his connection to a Diaspora and that lacking a 'self' he immediately accepted his dissociation from his community-at-large.

Rita M. Cassidy compares Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land* with Richard Wright's *Black Boy* and says that both novels reveal that unusual pain through which a child matures in poverty prevalent in a Harlem ghetto (Cassidy, *Black History*, 36-39). According to the critic, the novels have been created with a painful eloquence of sensitive men. Likewise, Barbara Dodds finds in *Manchild in the Promised Land* a shocking sound of human life and ecstasy. She finds in Brown's escape a great deal of courage and insight for the juvenile, especially of the black community of Harlem (Dodds, *Black Literature*, 371-374).

Hobart Jarrett identifies the protagonist in *Manchild in the Promised Land* with the author, who escapes from the tyranny of his father and the down-home effect of his mother, gets

rid of drug addiction, and saves himself from the evils of Harlem by shifting to Cooper Square (Jarrett, *To Live Is to Experience*, 205-207).

The novel has also incurred a little critique from a linguistic point of view. William Mathes values Brown's use of language in this novel. He says that the language in the novel reflects the archetypal black life in Harlem (Mathes, *A Negro Pepys Reviewed*, 456-462). In connection with Brown's representation of the common man in the streets of Harlem, he ranks Brown even above a historian. He opines that wherever Brown's language lacks in appeal, his strong reason and powerful feelings assert themselves.

The critique on the novel misses so far the discussion from the Marxian perspective which is important because the novel concerns the racial polarization in the African American society. Moreover, the novel also needs to be explored from an appropriate linguistic perspective that should go beyond a simple analysis of language. This paper, therefore, applies a synthetic approach to ascertain the Marxian social dialectic as reflected linguistically.

## 1. Research Methodology

The study aims at investigating the Marxian concept of social dialectic as reflected linguistically in Claude Brown's *Manchild in the Promised Land*. To meet its objectives, it aligns the Marxian philosophy of Dialectical Materialism and Teun van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach in Critical Discourse Analysis for the textual analysis of the novel. Marx' concept of Dialectical Materialism focuses on the triad of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, which he derives from Hegel's laws of dialectic: the law of the interpenetration of two opposites, the law of the negation of the negation, and the law of quantitative change into qualitative change (Cuddon, *Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 197). In this study, this triad implies the exploitation of the unprivileged individuals, their resistance, and the subsequent evolution.

Teun van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach in Critical Discourse Analysis suggests a discourse-cognition-society triangle and emphasizes that in this triangle of relations, discourse and cognition are inherently social instead of being merely linguistic or psychological (van Dijk, 2014). Social cognition is achieved and used in social situations, whereas discourse functions as a fundamental source of its development and change. No social practices, and, so, no relations of power are possible without social cognition and discourse.

The study integrates these two perspectives under the concept of theoretical triangulation which rationalizes that this experiment of aligning different theories in qualitative research is not only admissible but, at times, also becomes essential as the alignment of different perspectives to analyze a research question offers a deeper interpretation of the data or the text and, thus, strengthens research findings (Patton, 2002). The research also uses van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach as a model for its textual analysis. It focuses on manipulation as a discursive and cognitive phenomena. This implies that it analyses the text not only through the apparent linguistic features including a variety of expressions, rhetorical devices, multiple tones, etc. but equally through the cognitive aspects connected with these micro-linguistic features.

## 2. Discussion

### 2.1. Race as a Superstructure for Economic Reality

The study treats race as a variable for the class system, as in the context of African American society, it is the ideology of race that largely determines the sense of social superiority and inferiority. In this context, Herbert Miller also suggests that class formations take precedence over race consciousness and that the former was only appropriated when the latter appeared in its modern form (Miller, *Race and Class Parallelism*, 1928). He further opines that the racial cult with its associated vocabulary aims to maintain class superiority.

### 2.2. Discursive Manipulation

Discursive manipulation involves the use of diverse discourse devices employed by the manipulator to shape and reshape a text or a talk that helps to implement their agenda. These tactics largely include the use of lexical selection, 'self' and 'other' presentation, conversion of the significant into the insignificant and vice versa, changing the specific to the general and vice versa, etc. The novel, *Manchild in the Promised Land*, depicts a picture of Harlem in the 1940s and 50s. It shows the discourse practices of the ruling elites, which reflect their socio-political and socio-economic interests. At the semantic level, these discursive practices include stereotypical lexical expressions which are meant to establish stereotypical thinking. Sonny, the protagonist of the novel, beckons to these semantic-level tactics, "I learned some things down South too. I learned how to talk to a mule and plow a straight brow in the sweet-potato patch. I even learned how to say 'yas'm' and 'yas suh'". (Brown, 1965, p.46-47). His grandmother has taken extraordinary care in training him about the careful use of language. She has, for example, strictly instructed him to avoid using the term 'white potatoes' "because they ain't white potatoes, they are ice potatoes." Since the word *white* stereotypically refers to white people and the expression 'potatoes' has connotatively a negative association, the juxtaposition of the two expressions annoys the white people.

However, Sonny realizes that these myths have no intrinsic reality. He knows what he essentially needs to learn and practice and what to ignore as redundant. He says that as soon as he got on the train going back to New York, he knew white potatoes were white potatoes. He also felt that he had used 'yas suh' and 'yas'm' for the last time (Brown, 1965, p.93).

Sonny's father too has a servile attitude towards white people. His father's behavior annoys Sonny who himself reciprocates with white people at a socially equal level. Sonny shares with us his experience at court where he gives no straw to the white lawyer his father had hired for his case. His indifferent attitude results in the white lawyer's arrogance towards him.

### 2.3. Cognitive Manipulation

According to van Dijk, cognitive manipulation is fundamental. The manipulator always starts with targeting the targeted mind to elicit the desired behavior and action. *Manchild in the Promised Land* significantly reflects examples of this psychological type of manipulation. Moreover, in the novel, this cognitive manipulation occurs in diverse ways.

Majorly, the manipulator exploits preconceived notions and myths for the accomplishment of cognitive manipulation.

One such myth in the novel is the fable of Mr. Charlie. Mr. Charlie is a lexical coinage intended to scare ignorant black people. This character has always obsessed with Sonny's mother as well. This obsession has always been a strong barrier in the way to improve her family's life. For example, she gets scared with the idea of this scary character when she thinks to complain to her landlord about the miseries which she and her family have long been suffering from in their rented house. The house is shabby. Its ceiling leaks whenever it rains. But, Sonny's mother can afford to live in this house in such a pathetic condition. She is void of any courage to express her concerns with the landlord. She does not even allow her son to complain. Sonny tells us that his mother had a Southern upbringing and, so, was scared of the Southern myths. The protagonist tells us that his mother was scared of the fabricated character of Mr. Charlie to such an extent that she saw in every white person the horrible face of Mr. Charlie (Brown, 1965, p.274).

Sonny's mother tries to inculcate her fears in her children as well. Sonny's varied experiences from his outdoor life have enabled him to resist her influence completely, but his younger siblings, Pimp, Carole, and Margie, are easily vulnerable to her brainwashing. Most of all, his younger sister gets victimized by her indoctrination. The apprehensions about the future of his siblings worry Sonny greatly. He feels that his sister is losing her confidence and spirit as she is maturing. At times, he wants to burst at his mother, "Look, all that shit Mama's tellin' you is nonsense and bullshit, so you don't have to listen to it'. She needed somebody to tell her that" (Brown, 1965, p.189). Sonny tells us that her mother had succeeded significantly in indoctrinating his younger sister. Since all her attempts to indoctrinate Sonny to fail, she, in frustration, works harder on her younger children. Sonny's successful resistance put her into immense frustration. At times, she was at her wit's end. However, all she could do was only to give vent to her anger verbally: "Boy, you better stop that dreamin' and get all those crazy notions outta your head" (Brown, 1965, p.281).

Sonny's mother got scared much when Sonny would share his future dreams and plans with her. She was scared because she believed that her son wanted to break the limits drawn for the black people. "She had the idea that colored people were not supposed to want anything like that. You were supposed to just want to work in fields or be happy to be a janitor" (Brown, 1965, p.281). Sonny was constantly worried about his younger brother, Pimp, because his mother was restricting the kid's vision. Her biggest desire was to see her sons settled down, and for that reason, she once told Pimp, "Now if you just get a job as a janitor, I'll be happy and satisfied" (Brown, 1965, p.282). Listening to this, Sonny, who was also around and attentive, yelled at her, "Doesn't it matter whether he's satisfied or how he feels about it?" (Brown, 1965, p.281). The reply was typical: "You better stop talkin' all that foolishness, boy. What is wrong with you? You better get all that stuff out of your head" (Brown, 1965, p.282).

Sonny, however, never leaves any stone unturned in his endeavors to educate his siblings about reality. He often tries to spend time with them, listen to their innocent questions, and enlighten them on their confusions. His younger brother, Pimp, for example, frequently expresses his innocent curiosity about their domestic and social conditions. He often comes up with philosophical questions expected from a child of his age. However, most of Pimp's questions are about his father. For example, he inquires, "Sonny, you think God is scared-a Daddy?" (Brown, 1965, p.42). And when the protagonist answers him that the daddy is

scared only because of the police, he retorts, "Maybe God gonna put the police on Daddy, huh, Sonny?" (Brown, 1965, p.42).

Sonny comes to realize how deeply his brother has been indoctrinated through the myths which have always been facilitating the dominant social group to control the behaviors and actions of the black people of Harlem. Pimp inquires his brother, "Sonny, Margie said they got snakes down South and they bite people and the people die when the snakes bite 'em. Is that true, Sonny?" (Brown, 1965, p.42). He also expresses his curiosity about another mythical character, the bogeyman. He asks, "Sonny, is the bogeyman down South too?" and, then, adds, "Mamma said the bogeyman comes around at night with a big burlap sack and gits all bad kids and put in that burlap sack and nobody don't see 'em no more" (Brown, 1965, p.42). He is also scared of and curious about the crackers, unaware of the fact that *cracker* is a term used for white people there. He asks Sonny, "They got cracker down there, ain't they, Sonny?" (Brown, 1965, p.42). He is confused, "Sonny, what is crackers? They ain't the kinda crackers you buy in the candy store, is they?" (Brown, 1965, p.42). Sonny tries to explain to the young mind the ideology behind this term: "No, the crackers down South is white people, real mean white people" (Brown, 1965, p.42). He utilizes the occasion to enlighten his innocent brother further about the myth and the reality associated with this ideology, "You see, Pimp, white people are all mean and stingy. If one-a dem is more stingy than he is mean, he's a Jew; and if he is more mean that he is stingy, then he's a cracker" (Brown, 1965, p.43).

At times, the protagonist loses his temper on the attitude of his parents, especially that of his mother, to the extent of desiring to physically assault her as well. He blames particularly his mother for inculcating nonsense into her children's minds. He tells us, "Mama would be telling Carole and Margie about the rootworkers down there, about somebody who had made a woman leave her husband, all kind of nonsense like that" (Brown, 1965, p.274). On one occasion, when he finds his younger brother too much obsessed with scary ideas, he advises him to hit the one who tries to stuff this nonsense in his mind. "The next time she says it, punch huh in huh mout' real hard and she won't say it no more" (Brown, 1965, p.90).

Additionally, when the young boy tells Sonny about his mother's strong conviction about the existence of this scary creature called bogeyman, the latter desperately tries to wash out this part of the memory from the former's mind. He explains to Pimp that their mother merely wanted to scare him so that Pimp could become a good boy. He tells him how their mother had played this trick on him as well. Further, he advises him to knock down the bogeyman with a stick if he comes to find this obnoxious creature around. Or else the young boy can inform him. "The next time somebody tell you the bogeyman is someplace, git you a big stick and go see him. If I'm around, come and get me and I'll show you it ain't no bogeyman" (Brown, 1965, p.90). Surprised and impressed, Pimp questions his brother if he will go to the South, the region where bogeymen are said to live. Sonny, determined, replies in the affirmative. Sonny's gesture reflects his determination about his future course.

Sonny leaves Harlem in search of a place that may offer scope for the fulfillment of his dreams and aspirations. However, he does not completely detach himself from his native area. Of and on, he returns to see and help his parents and siblings. Once, he returns to find that his parents are living in even much more deplorable conditions than ever before. The house was unable to save them from the adverse weather; windows, which were completely broken, needed to be relined. But his parents, especially his mother, were still content with the existing living conditions. His mother preferred to continue living in these



conditions than to complain against the landlord. Sonny very difficultly prepares her to accompany him to the housing commission for the submission of a complaint. Though reluctantly she finally gets prepared, yet she gives him a very tough time during the process of the submission of their complaint. She interferes again and again while he is writing the complaint. She wants him to write as little and as mild as possible. While Sonny is writing, she keeps a constant eye on the paper. She keeps instructing him about the addition to and deletion of the words he is writing. Sonny tells us, "I had to write with one hand and keep Mama from pulling on me with the other hand" (Brown, 1965, p.273).

Symbolically, the event reflects an oscillation between contentment and aspirations, the latter represented by the protagonist while the former by his mother. The lady views every action taken by her son as ominous. She warns him, "Boy, I don't know what's wrong with you, but you're always ready to get yourself into something or start some trouble" (Brown, 1965, p.273). The son reacts resolutely, "Yeah, Mama, if I'm being mistreated, I figure it's time to start some trouble" (Brown, 1965, p.273). She gives up saying, "Boy, I just hope to God that you don't get yourself into something one day that you can't get out of" (Brown, 1965, p.278). He replies, "Mama, everybody grows into manhood, and you don't stop to think about that sort of thing once you become a man. You just do it, even if it's the trouble that you can't get out of" (Brown, 1965, p.273).

The life away from Harlem has given the protagonist a colossal scope for the fulfillment of his dreams, aspirations, and future plans. There, he is earning enough to enjoy his life. However, he is constantly worried about his siblings, especially Pimp, his younger brother, who have unluckily fallen a victim to the parents' negligence and brainwashing. His conviction has grown stronger that it is merely money that makes the difference. He believes strongly that ideologies, such as race, have no intrinsic reality but serve as a tool at the hand of the exploiter. He concludes that success depends on how well one resists these extraneous but inevitable forces. He has consistently fought against all the odds around and achieved his due reward. However, he does express his deep concerns about the future of his siblings, especially his younger brother, Pimp:

I wondered if it was good for him to be around all that old crazy talk because I imagined that all my uncles who were dark-skinned – Uncle McKay, Uncle Ted, Uncle Brother – felt that Papa didn't care too much for them because they were dark-skinned, and I supposed that Pimp might have gotten that feeling too. I had the feeling that this wasn't any place for kids to be around, with some crazy old man talking all that stuff about light skin and how he could have passed for white and calling people black (Brown, 1965, p.277).

### 3. Conclusion

Claude Brown's novel *Manchild in the Promised Land* significantly reflects the reciprocity between the Marxian concept of social dialectic and discourse. Through the persona of a racially marginalized individual, Sonny, the novel demonstrates that the dominant social class exploits the dominated one based on their discourse practices. It also reflects that manipulation is primarily cognitive, which is accomplished by the semantic features of discourse.

Discursive manipulation includes diverse ways, for example, a monopoly on social resources of discourse, such as electronic and print media and literature of various types. These social resources are exploited to shape and ultimately control people's minds. However, the most common discursive strategy that the analysis of the study has focused

on is lexical selection. This strategy gives the manipulator the scope for their choice among available expressions for communication. The analysis has shown how the expression “ice potatoes” was preferred by whites to the term “white potatoes”. The banned term supposedly may lead one to imagine whites in association with potatoes. The coinage of the character “Mr. Charlie” is another example of this discourse strategy. This word is meant to represent some awful figure which has no intrinsic reality. This word with its entire associated connotation is supposed to restrict the thinking of the people of the black community of Harlem.

The study has also revealed that the cognitive manipulation, which is the primary manipulation, is accomplished through the semantic features of discourse. For example, the word “Mr. Charlie” is loaded with a particular ideology. Other similar terms which have been used in the novel include bogeyman, crackers etc. Either these words have no intrinsic entity to refer to or maximum they merely have some associated meanings. The word “bogeyman” is merely a coinage for ideological purpose, while the term “crackers”, which has been used for the Southern whites, has an associated meaning which is also derogatory. All these discursive practices are meant to disillusion the people of the black community of Harlem, and the objective is to restrict them to the underprivileged conditions of life available to them.

The study has also highlighted the strong resistance by the socially marginalised individuals to the manipulative strategies of the ruling class. Sonny, the protagonist of the novel, shows consistent endeavours to counter the manipulation of the dominant class. Unlike his parents, he refuses to be victimized by the preconceptions as prevalent in his society. He learns and adapts to the practical approaches as used by the dominant group. He not only completely safeguards himself from the traps of stereotypes but also tries to save his parents and siblings, an attempt in which he only partly succeeds.

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