

## ABSTRACT

### Migration and Identity in Maryse Condé's Recent Fiction (1993-2001)

Wendy Elizabeth Grant

Since her departure from her native island of Guadeloupe in 1953, Maryse Condé, like her characters, has travelled extensively both within and outside of the Caribbean. This particular aspect of her history has fuelled critics' penchant for interpreting her novels as "identity travel narratives" which invariably follow "the attractively obvious and problematically teleological and linear"<sup>1</sup> correspondences between Condé's life and that of her literary creations. They have therefore employed this personal information to chart a progression in Condé's novels from a focus on Africa to the Caribbean. Inevitably, such a process, by virtue of its inherent deficiencies, does not and cannot capture the totality of places evoked in Condé's fiction, since, as Rosello asserts, it overlooks the fact that the narratives are precisely that, narratives (Rosello, 567).

The objective of this study is to highlight the fact that the narrative, thematic and stylistic organization of Condé's novels reflects the author's cosmopolitan approach to the literary presentation of the human experience in general and the Caribbean experience in particular. This cosmopolitan worldview is achieved through the constant presence of Africa, the Caribbean, Europe and the Americas, whether through the characters' physical journeys to these regions or their memories and thoughts of these places and/or the individuals associated with

---

<sup>1</sup> Mireille Rosello. "Caribbean Insularization of Identities in Maryse Condé's Work: From *En attendant le bonheur* to *La colonie du nouveau monde*." *Callaloo* 18.3 (1995): 567.

them. The textual absence of a specific location or a lack of an extended focus on it does not therefore imply its insignificance in the characters' identity formation.

The choice of migration as a structuring device underscores the importance of the French Caribbean notion of *errance* or wandering permeating the novels. An analysis of this form of population movement facilitates an examination of the characters' geo-physical and/or emotional presence in multiple locations. Thus, although they may be rooted in one region, they are always already present elsewhere through their memories and thoughts.

Keywords: Migration; Identity; Errance; Wandering; Maryse Conde's Fiction 1995-2001.