CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN FICTION: EXPLORING STRANDS OF POSTCOLONIAL CONCERNS

(Thesis submitted to Department of English, Nagaland University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English)

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(Caroline Erue)

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Chapter 1

Postcolonialism in Contemporary African American Literature

1.1 Background of the Study: The main urge of African American literature has always been resistance to human tyranny. This study calls into question the ways in which the body, psyche, and the individuality of the African Americans have been perceived and narrativized, while it also recounts the politics of self-reclamation and resistance. The cornerstone for contemporary African American literature has been laid by the early African American writers that identified themselves as Americans with a mission to proliferate human dignity. They began to address the social, religious, historical, and political standards of America to substantiate the struggles of Blacks for their rights as American citizens. This study seeks to address these subjects through the rubrics of Postcolonialism.

African Americans are the contemporary descendants of the African slaves frequently brought in chains to America to toil as farm labourers by the descendants of the white European immigrants. But where do these people of color as citizens of America stand today? Are they able to exercise as much liberty as their White counterparts? Are they speaking or are spoken for? Because often colored Americans are underrepresented and misrepresented and as such misinformed in the larger context. Just as literature informs us about the growth of African Americans from slavery to Civil Rights to contemporary opportunities and new possibilities, it also projects their plight and consequences of being Black in a White land.

African American studies, then, refers to the literary tradition of America which has its roots in Africa as well as in America. This tradition emerged amid chaos caused by colonization and slavery that were endured by the Africans in America. The inhuman conditions of the slaves and their descendents, as well as the exploitation of their rights were all brought to attention through their literature. Literature also became an important medium for Black women to address and debunk gender politics that despicably subjugated them for a very long period of time. Women today are no longer relegated to passive and submissive positions of service to patriarchal and misogynistic society. These are constructive developments hard fought by colored women, who aided in reshaping America as an indisputable multiracial democracy. Today, mainstream American literature is inclusive of Black-authored texts, and African American literature continues to build a name for itself in the general canon formation of literature. However, it is apparent that this journey has not been unproblematic.

1.2 Layout of the Thesis: Consisting of six chapters, this study examines the lives of African Americans over the years, emphasizing mainly on the contemporary era, through the various strands of Postcolonial theory. As the title "Postcolonialism in Contemporary African American Literature" suggests, the first chapter provides a clear understanding of African American literature from its genesis to contemporary times, positioning its continued importance in the world of literature. A brief outline of the select contemporary fictionists, viz., James Baldwin, Colson Whitehead, Yaa Gyasi, and Tayari Jones, with their select fictional narratives is as well presented. They are all prominent writers on the contemporary literary scene, best known for their works of colonial resistance in any form. Having experienced themselves the problems of racism, neo-colonization, alienation, subalternity, intersectionality and various forms of psychological traumas, they are able to give a realistic picture of the plight of African Americans living in America, which has had a huge impact in the world of literature at large. Since the focus of this study is analysing their works through a postcolonial perspective, a significant examination of the various concepts of Postcolonialism have also been presented. It aims to look into the recuperation of ignored and silenced voices of Black identities. These voices are those of the characters in James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk* and *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone*, Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad* and *The Nickel Boys*, Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing* and *Transcendent Kingdom*, and Tayari Jones' *Silver Sparrow* and *An American Marriage.*

Taking into consideration that James Baldwin's prolific writings belong to the early part of contemporary era, two of his fictional texts are taken for this study, along with the other modern writers. The second chapter "Projecting Black Social Reality: An Iconoclast's Standpoint" examines Baldwin and his sprawling and experimental works *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone* and *If Beale Street Could Talk* published in 1968 and 1974 respectively. As the first openly homosexual African American writer, Baldwin was an iconoclast in its truest sense as he brought subjects to light that were considered taboo at the time he wrote. In his exploration of race and nationalism, the corrupt means of incarceration, White privilege, as well as the sexual fissures in American society, Baldwin went on to deconstruct whiteness and all prejudices against people like him who are colored, gay, and marginalized. Baldwin placed a strong emphasis on the importance of Black lives, whose legacy could be witnessed even many decades after his death in movements such as Black Lives Matter.

The third chapter looks into the traumatic experiences of transgenerational African American community, as it also deals with confrontations to national and hegemonic boundaries in literature through the reinscription of the horrendous transatlantic slavery in *The Underground Railroad* (2016) and the effects of post trauma in *The Nickel Boys* (2019) by Colson Whitehead. While the former recreates the brutish slavery in antebellum America with the events highlighting the struggle between Black freedom and White supremacy, the later recounts the new forms of colonization in contemporary America. Exploratory and historical on one hand, and a reflection on the meaning of freedom on the other, Whitehead's texts are very much a mirror of today's America. Entitled "Collective Memory of Slavery and Post Trauma of African Americans as Represented by Colson Whitehead," this chapter studies the narratives that have impeccably woven the saga of America from the brutal importation of Africans as slaves to the scores of unfulfilled promises of the present day.

The fourth chapter "Identity and Race in a Changing Society: A Postcolonial Psychoanalysis of Yaa Gyasi's Fictional Texts" examines how the author sought a more extensive foundation for African American identity than that imposed by slavery and the United States. Gyasi's own experience as part of an immigrant family living abroad has inspired some parts of her narratives, which touch upon several notable historical events, from the Anglo-Asante wars in Ghana to slavery and segregation in America. Gyasi's narratives bring to light the importance of history, the generational psychic ordeal among diasporic communities, and the still prevalent problem of race in contemporary America, and how the 'ism' in race continues to have an effect on the identity formation of African Americans, while also addressing confrontation and change.

The fifth chapter "Redefining History and Borders by African American Women Writers with Special Reference to Tayari Jones" examines the emergence and progress of African American women writers. It re-evaluates the interconnections of race, gender, and ethnicity with Tayari Jones' select narratives *Silver Sparrow* and *An American Marriage* published in 2011 and 2018 respectively. They explore the intersection of the personal and the public by placing the close details of the lives of the characters within the larger social and political forces in contemporary America. Jones delves deep into the psychological anguish of her Black characters as they try and keep up with institutional racism such as police violence, and in everyday existence, as she look into the subjects of class, gender, and race, with the pervasive racism of the justice system at its backdrop. From a postcolonial Black feminist standpoint, these narratives talk about patriarchal power structures and the importance of

intersectionality. The author explores the context of contemporary American culture at large, and specifically through the lens of a Black woman. The final sixth chapter discusses and concludes what has been researched.

In all the select fictional works under study, we see that the authors share common features that help us understand the complex and many-sided legacy of the slave past and its remnants in contemporary America, although they differ on some grounds such as in the way they narrate or the time and space in which they have written. Through the interweaving of counter-discourse, resistance, memory, race, and psychology, the novels authenticate that the history of colonial rule and the transatlantic slave trade is etched in the collective memory of those living in the present. These subjects work beautifully in the narratives with a message about the blatant inequity against African Americans in America resulting in their diverse psychological impediments, while also bringing in new possibilities and counter discourses.

1.3 African American Literature: The influential literary work of myriad African Americans contributed to the development of American culture in general. African American literature, which largely examines the problem of racial discrimination in all its social, philosophical, political, psychological, existential, and epistemological aspects, has not only become an inevitable part of American literature and culture today, but has also paved the way for the emergence of literatures belonging to Third World countries. It has traveled from mid eighteenth century with slave narratives to the current time with all its socio literary exuberance initiating a literary and cultural transformation in the structure of American society.

For African Americans, literature has been a very important weapon to counter Black intolerance and challenge for equal rights before the law. Their writings confronted the disappointment that followed the betrayal of the United States in failing to exercise what they advocated. Increasingly, it became a space for the development of a unique epistemology, for historical, cultural and psychological reconstruction and representation, as well as for advanced aesthetics. Their narratives that represented the language of the oppressor still continues to exist owing to the fact that the discomforting history of American slavery is still very much part of the nation’s heritage and the racial inequity and tension still colours most of the institutional spheres in America.

African Americans launched their literature in North America during the first half of the eighteenth century. The writers of this period insisted that the Black Americans be given the

same human rights as the White Americans. We see that as an outcome of the different treatments meted out to the Black Americans in the realms of religious and political affairs, from the very outset their literature challenged the governing culture's attempt to set apart the "religious from the political," the "spirit from the flesh," insofar as racial affairs were concerned (Gates and McKay 128). Explaining African American literature sometimes becomes challenging for critics and academicians. This is due to the fact that the inclusion of folk tales, work songs, spirituals and sermons, song lyrics, speeches and prison letters, as well as extracts from autobiographies, suggest certain challenges to a conventional understanding of literature. However, *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* published in 1997, lucidly dissolves the distinction between "high" and "low" culture and calls for a theory of literature which can take account of diverse forms ranging from oral traditions, musical structures, the spoken voice, as well as the political content and context of Black cultural production (Price 249).

Various magazines and newspapers based in Harlem, such as the *Crisis*, worked diligently to promote cultural awakening. These were dedicated to uplift the social and political progress of Black Americans and also to the development of literary and artistic traditions. Publishers and editors such as Knopf, Macmillan, and Harper played an effective role in reducing the barriers between Black writers and the major means of publication in the United States and to this, the Black writers willingly grabbed hold of the opportunities. Deprived of basic human rights such as to read and write for more than three hundred years, and of continuous struggle and solitude under White supremacy, African Americans found solace through their oral literacy works first called slave narratives. From the period of the slave narratives to this juncture, African American literature has been heavily grounded with ideas about culture which represents deep human concerns.

1.3.1 A Voice Through Oral Literacy Works: Orality has largely been the primary mode of cultural conveyance for Blacks. From what we see, despite being denied education to them, Africans had great passion for learning. And the older generation unfailingly instilled onto their offspring the influence of storytelling, songs, music, and the idea that these are key to retaining identity. Orality is simply the spoken expression passed down through generations, found in societies and cultures before writing came into vogue. Its employment made it possible to gain insights about the past cultures.

African Americans have been practicing orality for hundreds of years, with each new generation making use of new accessibility and opportunities to continue its tradition because

the more stories they have about themselves and share them to the world, the more chances of being heard, and less chances of being misrepresented. Storytelling in Africa is a tradition and a presentation of art, and in the US it serves as an important tool to determine the humanity for Blacks. This practice not only preserved their cultural values and long-established beliefs, but it also connected communities. Post-colonial, as Africa became more urbanized and older folks began to die, storytelling began to take new turns. Today, most of the retained orality is believed to have either been lost or considerably changed, besides the stories that have largely been fabricated by White authorities. But contemporary African American intellectuals have been working to the best they can to keep their orality intact, be it through music, art, or writing.

Oral cultures over the years have been overlooked in terms of their lack of the technology of writing by the literate cultures, which can be misleading. Many African Americans' coming to writing was undoubtedly an active resistance against prejudices, but also a want of not having their experiences and history misappropriated and misrepresented to serve the interest of those writing them. In addition, it was also due to their desire of retaining their residual orality which is the legacy of a predominately oral culture carried over into the written realm. Abiola Irele has mentioned the viewpoints of some critics with regard to the limited view of orality, such as Jack Goody's, "One cannot imagine a novel or a symphony in a society without writing, even though one finds narrative and orchestra" (22). Based on such misconceptions, objections have often been voiced concerning the use of the term 'literature' on grounds that the word has to do essentially with writing. For Lawrence Buell, as Irele mentions, literature comprises potentially "all written and oral utterances, insofar as anything made out of words can be treated as a literary artefact," just as Albert Lord who holds that the role of the oral bard "goes beyond passive reproduction and recital of texts." Literature as a social institution in an oral culture can thus be said to be governed by the same protocols as in a literate one, protocols that "stipulate, even in the absence of writing," "the conditions of composition, transmission, and performance, upon which depends the process for the training of younger artists through apprenticeship" (Irele 27).

The oral narrative and folk tradition became a part of African American history as much as academy-derived accounts of enslavement. African American literature has reflected a combination of History "H" and history "h" of everyday folk, that is, the masses of unlettered Black folks for whom orality was the main form of cultural expression (Harris 451). As a people given to orality because of their circumstances in America, African Americans are

thus heirs to dual histories. Storytellers used factual history and fictive imaginations to shape legacies. This linking of fact and fiction occurs remarkably in the writings of contemporary African American writers.

Some of the literary forms of African orality were expressed through songs, a way to express both sorrow and joy throughout slavery. Work songs were taken in light of elation, considered to boost productivity and to entertain slaves and their masters, which clearly is an evidence of denying human subjectivity by the dominant culture. This echoes Said's argument that the colonized countries were described in negative ways which belittled them, as the Other, in order to produce a positive, civilized image of White society. To this, thinkers like Du Bois and Frederick Douglass came forth to present counter discursive viewpoints.

The memory of slavery could be carried and passed on, uncovering a community unified through a common memory, one that joins Africa and America and this community could be "re-membered" through "sorrow songs" as Du Bois calls it, in which "the soul of the black slave spoke to men" (*The Souls* 177). The words in these songs were taken from Christian hymns and rooted in Christian mythology. As Angela Davis holds, these songs retold the narratives about the Hebrew people who struggled against the oppression of Pharaoh in the Old Testament, and thereby "established a community narrative" of African slaves in North America that encouraged the abolition of the slave system (7). As Du Bois recalled the memory of slavery embodied in the sorrow songs, folk tales, and personality of American Blacks as the basis of a new collective identity, he opposed the views of Booker T. Washington, who viewed slavery through an ahistorical evolutionary perspective. While both believed that Blacks gained something from the experience of slavery, and shared a view of progress, this progress required forgetting the past and the appeal to facts for Washington, whereas Du Bois argued for memory and imagination.

If we are to reconceptualise the possibilities of African American traditions of orality, they had also led to the expansion in the field of literature. Since the 1980s there has been a growing recognition of African American literature, calling our attention to its language and subjects. A large part of African American literature is unquestionably shaped by the slave narratives, which is hailed today by many as the origins of a distinctive African American aesthetic. The phenomenal Phillis Wheatley's *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773) not only won international attention as the first African American work of literature, but also demystified the inferiority of the Black Americans in matters of spirit and

art. Further in her narrative about her personal experience as an African American recorded in *On Being Brought from Africa to America*, Wheatley determinedly spoke of equality.

In 1789 Olaudah Equiano published *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, which operated as the foundation for the development of the African American fiction. The narrative of Equiano, a British slave, remains the voice of millions of other slaves echoing the experience of the brutality of the Middle Passage as well as slavery in America. Fredrick Douglas' *Narrative of the life of, Fredrick Douglas, an American Slave* published in 1845 further details life during slavery. Slave narratives continued to be produced even after the formal abolition of slavery. The fictional works of the 1980s added newer concerns to the treatment of this subject, wherein some used the slave past to understand contemporary social relations. Perhaps the most important development made in this genre is their renewed focus on strategies and forms of resistance. These novels raised questions about the possibility of recovery, i.e., how to see the history of slavery afresh and regain from its effects.

Movements like The Civil Rights and Black Power also brought attention to the study of slavery and African American literature, but it was only in the 1980s and '90s that antislavery writers like Frederick Douglass and Harriet Beecher Stowe came to be read alongside American writers such as Herman Melville and Walt Whitman. These movements called for a reconsideration of how African Americans were placed in history books and a renewed sense of awareness in their heritage. While African American students demanded Black studies programs, its historians and critics began to challenge historical texts, leading to the publication of new scholarly historiographies and proliferation of literatures.

The slave narrative, with its simple characteristics, candid style, brilliant characters and distinct traumatic incidents such as the predominantly forceful violence and daring escapes, was the first renaissance in African American literature. Theodore Parker insists that "all the original romance of Americans is in [the slave narratives], not in the white man's novel" (37). Although the slave narrative is basically viewed as the autobiographical accounts of enslaved Africans in Great Britain and its colonies, they maintain such authentic historical facts that go beyond just autobiographies, and serves as a source for reconstructing historical experience. The mount in institutions opposing slavery provided a driving force to antislavery writing. Their proliferation in the 1770s and 1780s was preceded by important legal cases in both Britain and British America judging the legality of slave labor such as the Somerset v Stewart

case, in which the Court came to a decision that a slave could not be removed from England against his will. This served as a channel for various abolition movements.

The expansion of slave narratives from autobiographical accounts to modern fictional works led to the establishment of slave narratives as a literary genre. Whether the Blacks composed their own works, or orally narrated them to White editors, they were aware of "the potentially powerful yet vulnerable position that publication imposed upon them" because these publications necessitated the building of public personae for Black subjects who were often racially maligned (Gould 40). To present slavery in true light, a number of former slaves published accounts of their enslavement and freedom. In total, about "294 slave narratives" exist and during the 1930s in the US, more than "2,300 additional oral histories" of former slaves were collected by writers sponsored by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which employed writers and researchers from the Federal Writers' Project to interview and document the stories of former African American slaves (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slave_narrative).

Some American writers such as Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, and Walt Whitman offered a variety of writings on slavery. However, these White writers refused to make use of their literary art as a critical instrument against slavery. The Whites were not going to do it for them and so the Blacks took every ounce and opportunity to make their voices heard. The slave narrative was written by a small number of people of different descent, taken captives during the nineteenth century, but the vast majority of American slave narratives were definitely authored by Africans in America, first published in England in the eighteenth century. They were largely publicized by abolitionists, who sometimes edited or wrote on behalf of the illiterate slaves. One chief indicator of slave narrative's sense of its own place in the world of letters lies in its inter-textuality, as it borrows phrases and quotations from other works. They are essential demonstration for the horrendous system they challenged, an extensive account of the daily physical and psychological abuses, the slave auctions, the separation of families, and often accounts of the slaves' desire and plans of escape where some are successful and others leading to death. By and large, around the time 1770s-1820s, slave narratives provided a description of a spiritual journey leading to Christian redemption, and from the mid-1820s, writers deliberately chose the autobiographical form to bring about the abolitionist movement. Some writers even adopted the use of fictionalized dialogue.

Slave narratives were not only essential in capturing the historical truth, but were a chief tool for slaves to state their independence in the nineteenth century. Since these narratives were written retrospectively by freed slaves or their abolitionist advocates, the focal point was on the revolution from the dehumanized slave to the self-emancipated free man. Slave narratives that carried a "black message inside a white envelope" has enriched not just American literature and culture, but of world literature at large (Gates and McKay 33). These are accounts of amazing determination and bravery, as some narrators went to extraordinary lengths to be free to tell these stories and some endangered themselves by publishing them.

If we are to problematize the slave narratives, it is the fact that there is no agreement among critics about what type of literature these really are, whether autobiographies, polemical writing, memoirs, testimonials, or novels. For James Olney, aside from Douglass' *Narrative* most slave narratives were neither inventive, nor reflective enough on their own form to "qualify as autobiography or literature" according to "any reasonable understanding of [literature] as an act of creative imagination" (64). But Meer closely records Frances Smith Foster's argument for the narratives' significance beyond historical information, as these writings "somehow had the power to reveal, to transform, and to transcend" (71). Whatever genre these narratives may fall under, much of late-twentieth-century critics' definition of literature as a creative imagination might not have been recognized or might not even have been important to many of the antebellum slave narrators themselves, because what mattered to them was to be heard, by bringing their lives in the limelight of letters. Although Matlack identifies a paradox opposing "slavery" to "literature," because one is heinous and the other beautiful, it has become the prolific theme of much that is "profound in argument, sublime in poetry, and thrilling in narrative" (1). Whether slave narratives count as literature, is a more complex problem than it may initially appear. Nevertheless, these narratives undeniably established their positions in a larger textual world, and played a huge part in keeping up with the memory and representation of slavery that was repressed for a long time.

1.3.2 Myriad Influences in Shaping African American Literature: Throughout history, we find that various social, political, historical, and religious events have helped shape African American Literature. The American Civil War of 1861-1865, which is one of the most important movements in the American history, can be seen reflected in the writings of many Black American writers as their people, including some of the writers themselves, played a key role in the Union cause although they were initially forbidden to serve in the Union army. Even after they were permitted, they were routinely paid less, compared to the

wages that White soldiers received. It is believed that the Whites joined the army for many reasons, but the Black folks fought with the prime objective to end slavery. One very positive result of this Movement on the American academy is that, it urged the historians to revise their idea of the slave past and write history from the bottom-up. For instance, the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery "linked the academic community to the nation, the past to the present, the professors who were writing our history to the men who were making it" (Fisenstadt 757). As a result of which, the activity and self-representation of the slaves, their community, and the forms of resistance they expressed were gradually taken seriously.

The Reconstruction Act well-known between the years 1865 and 1877 is another remarkable movement, which struck down many of the restrictive codes that targeted African Americans. The most significant pieces of this Act were the three Constitutional amendments that outlawed slavery, provided equal protection to African Americans under the law, and granted suffrage to Black men. These amendments, however, were neither mandatory nor recognized in all parts of the country. The daily lives of many Black Americans were therefore not much different in freedom than they had been under slavery. As the nation moved into the twentieth century, we see big businesses providing an enhanced standard of living for most Americans. Still, the wealth and power were not evenly distributed. Discrimination on other grounds such as education and job opportunities also exacerbated. Reconstruction promised renewal but post-reconstruction not only destroyed those dreams but imposed harsh new realities.

The establishment and legalization of the Convict Lease System in 1866 where prisoners were hired by private individuals or companies, proved to be another form of slavery. Studies hold that the Reconstruction ended with the passing of various laws designed to limit African Americans in the social, political, as well as economic areas. A range of violence and oppression were supported by Jim Crow laws, which legalized racial segregation in almost every part of life. Issues of equal rights were diverse and often conflicting as can be seen in the disagreement of White women to work for Black men, when the Congress were to grant the right to vote to Black men but not to any woman.

Although the modern Black civil rights movement inspired Black people to aggrandize their demands for freedom, by the end of the decade the African American freedom struggle had encountered astringent disappointments and brutal setbacks. While most White Americans were content with African American claims to an equal right in the religious realm, they did not share the same attitude in the political field. The Whites supposed themselves to be the

sole authority of rights and privileges. Despite the passage of the Civil Rights Acts, and the Voting Rights Act, the US government continually refused to enforce the laws of the land. The Whites violently harassed Black freedom seekers and laid out pitiless economic sanctions to any who dared to speak for citizenship rights. We find these historical struggles faithfully articulated in the African American literature.

Certain other developments have also undoubtedly impacted early Black writing, such as the natural rights philosophy during the eighteenth century which provided Black writers with an ideological base to argue for their own humanity. An affective form of Christianity is another, as new theological movements in the seventeenth century came to lay emphasis on moral virtue in keeping with empathy and compassion. The discourses of Christianity enabled them to argue more effectively about spiritual and physical forms of enslavement. Skilful writers took passages from the Bible to serve their own advantage and early writers such as Phillis Wheatley and Olaudah Equiano appropriated a wide array of religious mores in order to reclaim civilized identities for themselves. The concept of race was usually defined by geography and history, but by the 1830s and ‘40s it began to be associated more with physical differences especially skin colour, as well as moral and intellectual qualities. Paul Gilroy has rightly argued about re-examining the assumptions about the place of “race” and “nation” in literature and instead read in light of the “transcultural international formation” that he calls the “Black Atlantic” that includes the areas through which Black subjects traveled as both free men and bonded servants (*The Black* n.pag.). The reason such re-examinations are called for is because, ever since the slaves were transported from Africa to the United States, the question of race relations became dominant in all discussions.

White lawlessness and violence led to a Black Power revolt which came about in the mid-1960s. This movement empowered people of African descent to undertake new historical and fictional explorations into the slave past. As Sherley Anne Williams beautifully puts it, while the Civil Rights Movement provided the prospect to earn financial security to “would-be writers,” the Black Power Movement offered these Black writers the ability “to tell it as we felt it” (248). The Movement affected the American academy in more direct ways in 1968-69, when African American students at largely White institutions began to demand Black Studies programs. The launch of these programs created a new set of curricula that required new books, to which publishers were quick to profit from. Many Black-authored texts soon began to come into view. As Rushdy has indicated, “at least six anthologies of slave narratives and interviews” were released and “twenty-five black novels” were published in 1969 and 1970

respectively (“Slavery” 89). For the African Americans, writing was primarily a means of instructing themselves and others and of correcting the historical record. Unlike many of their predecessors, workers in the Black Power and Black Arts movements were not motivated by assimilationist ideas that urged African American writers and artists to imitate Western thoughts and culture. The Black Arts were far more interested in correcting the erasures of Africa, and in creating a contrapuntal reading. They challenged in making Africa a part of a new aesthetic, a new way of being Black in a White land.

The history of contemporary writing began after the Great Migration during the 1910s to ‘30s, when millions of African Americans migrated from the Southern farms to the Northern ghettos. From a literary perspective, this single event was responsible in preparing the ground for the literary Renaissance, because hereon a sense of independence grew among African American culture. As far as African American arts and literature are concerned, the Harlem Renaissance (1919-1940) played a significant role. Many of the underlying strategies and motifs of African American achievement in the field of fiction developed during the renaissance, even if they were not all brought to full recognition at that time. As Hutchinson has remarked, the legacy of the Negro Renaissance is still very much alive, “legible in the vast majority of black novels published in the seven decades that have followed” (67). Expressed in various ways and genres, the creativity of Black Americans is generally believed to have appeared from the consuming urge of Blacks to create excellent communicative art as a response to their social, political, and economic conditions, and also as an assertion of their dignity and humanity in the face of racism.

1.3.3 Contemporary African American Literature: In their description of the Africans, the contemporary African American writers clearly represent the undeniable search for freedom in the context of everyday speech and action, or through various forms of resistance. Early slave narratives not only gave an account of the physical journey to freedom, but also ignited the freedom to write independently amid existing racial prejudices. From a literary point of view, it is regarded as one of the most influential traditions in American literature, dictating some of the most distinguished themes, which were further extended by contemporary writers.

The narratives of former slaves were written with the earnest hope that their stories may bring about a difference toward the American slave system and toward how equality is perceived. The slave narrative was therefore not only an important genre within antislavery print culture,

but also a prominent mode in contemporary African American literature. Influenced by postcolonial and race theorists, today many African American writers and fictionists in particular, reflect on slavery and race in American literary history that helps inspire much new work. Based on what early African American writers have preserved, we see how contemporary writers have creatively altered the traditional forms of slave narratives and devised new forms such as the neo-slave narratives.

The ugly contradiction, between what America advocated of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and its authorization of the crime of chattel slavery, provided early African American literature with its most enduring theme. It was only during the mid twentieth century after the influential revolutionary socio-political texts such as Washington's *Up From Slavery* (1901), Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), and Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* that Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin devised a brand of African American Modernism. Wright's *Native Son* (1940), Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) and Baldwin's eloquent volume of essays *The Fire Next Time* argued for social and cultural emancipation of African Americans. Serious study of early African American fiction did not begin until the 1960s and 1970s with the impact of the Civil Rights and Black Power Movements. The 1980s saw an increasing development of scholarly resources, with more and better edited texts. Finding a publisher for African American writers was often not easy. Majority of the writers were published first and most frequently in the African American Press. Over the years, they had gained their own audiences for their artistic, philosophical, as well as their political declarations. With the end of slavery, African American publications flourished. As World War I began, African Americans were reading and writing, publishing and expounding in almost every genre and literary style. Their writers had become skilled at countering misinformation and challenging stereotypes. It is argued that the literature of African Americans is an attempt that explains in all its multidimensionality, the Blacks' social experience in America.

Fiction was getting a new recognition among African American writings in the decades before the Civil War. When African Americans progressed from the writing of slave narratives to the writing of novels, many were giving up the realism of life for imagination. This, according to Addison Gayle, was one failure because "ignoring their own history and culture, the early black writers attempted to create a literature patterned upon that of whites" (xii). It led to confusion as to whether it was a rich development of genuine slave tradition or a poor imitation of the Victorian novel of manners. Texts come from texts, and the fact that

although African American fiction is rooted in both the Black slave narrative and the White popular novel, it owes its distinctiveness to the slave narrative. Collectively, the novels today are notable for their concentration on contemporary life and its social, cultural and psychological flux, its "modernity" as Hutchinson calls (50).

Explorations in the field of fiction writing became institutionalized with emphasis on the less explored subjects that called attention. Black-authored novel reinterpreted the past by reading Black experiences as inseparable of the nation's past and as an essential standpoint to interpret American culture and society as a whole. In the words of Fabi, the emphasis on the past serves a dual goal. On one hand, the reinterpretation of slavery and the focus of resistance of the slaves redefined the history of Blacks, reinstated cultural pride and served as a means of community building. But on the other hand, they characterized a way to anticipate protestations and to help suspend the White readers' disbelief when presented with a Black-centered outlook of American society that questioned dominant historical accounts that go against White readers' own experiences and self-interest (38-39). By and large, the contemporary African American novel became typically subject to a deconstructive approach to the past.

As mentioned in the beginning, the foundation for contemporary African American literature was positioned by the early predecessors in their operation to propagate human dignity. We see a great deal of hands in the accomplishment of African American literature. Critics often agree that Paul Laurence Dunbar played an important role in an evolving African American literary practice and considered his most famous poem "Why We Wear the Mask" (1895) as a profound expression of the Black experience. Others like Charles Waddell Chesnutt went on to present counter discourses against the color line that excluded Blacks from every aspect of American life, and demanded a more inclusive way of life. The double-consciousness introduced by W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* in 1903, is an influential concept to define the lives of African Americans. According to him, double consciousness is the strange awareness of always "looking at one's self through the eyes of others," "of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" as a result of which, "one ever feels his two-ness, an American, a Negro" "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings" "two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (38). Du Bois strongly believed that although the Negro is inhumanely disregarded, he would not decolour his soul for he knows that the Negro has a greater message for the world. The possibility for a man to be both a

Negro and an American, without having their doors of opportunity closed simply because of the colour of skin, remains a collective cry among contemporary African Americans.

As editor and critic, James Weldon Johnson also played a leading role in preparing the way for literary flowering. His conviction that with time, African American literary excellence could transform racial attitudes was shared by other Black intellectuals and political leaders such as Alain Locke, with works such as *The New Negro* (1925), which celebrated Black assertiveness and cultural achievement. According to Price, writers associated with the Renaissance were ardently aware of the "deep ambivalence" toward Black identity which results from "double consciousness" (257). Black solidarity and politicized education, restless movements and the authenticity of confrontation are the values passed on by early writers that the later generation of Du Bios and Richard Wright found most appropriate to their needs.

We find a difference in the treatment of fiction after Richard Wright, who emerged after the Great Depression and against the backdrop of increasing class conflict in America and Europe. Wright's legacy has been profoundly transhistorical that in 2021 we find the restored novel of "The Man Who Lived Underground" that was originally written in 1941. According to Robert A. Lee, Wright's work lays the foundations of a new school of Black writing which registers a powerful protest against racism through a portrayal of "tough urban scenarios, the dehumanizing cycle of oppression, entrapment, and a view of individual fate" as determined tremendously by skin color and poverty (16). Following Wright's success, other African American writers such as Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin accumulated recognition and prestige from a predominantly White literary world. Although both these writers, who were prominent heirs to Wright, considered his prose to have significance, they also rejected some of Wright's thoughts.

Restoring such previously unpublished works, as Wright's, enable readers to further look at the author through a fresh lens. The Black Power and Black Arts movements not only restored writers such as Frantz Fanon and Richard Wright but also emphasized Black folk forms as bases for art. African American culture could thus be looked to as a genuine culture with its own unique ideas, forms, and styles rather than as a source of White culture. As contemporary African American writers increasingly saw Blacks rather than Whites as their primary audience, they began to explore with a new intensity of their own culture, history, and communities.

We also see the explosion of works by African American women novelists between the 1960s and ‘70s. Arguably, the most thorough revision of the African American literary tradition was started by Black feminists in the early 1970s and its consistency is seen even to this day. Black literary feminism, with its concern in the history and experiences of African American women, examines their representations in literary and critical texts, with the ultimate objective to outline a more expressive and inclusive African American literary history, and not to construct a separate Black female literary tradition. Their main area of exploration was the dual oppression of racism in the women’s movement and sexism in the Black’s movement. As Black women writers explored gender issues, they also conveyed new themes and concepts into contemporary African American literature such as motherhood, lesbianism, the conflict between science and spirituality, Womanism, intersectional racism, and misogynoir, to name a few. These women writers also felt the urgency to address class issues, and related the personal matters of their communities to global political issues. Their works led to the development of Black feminist criticism. Literary theory also became an important characteristic of the study of Black literature by the mid-1980s, and because Black literature was often studied in interdisciplinary programs such as African American ethnic, and women’s studies, it also contributed to the development of cultural studies.

Women writers across the globe back then wrote in pseudonyms for obvious reasons, but they are now proud bearers of their own identity, in articulating and embodying their thoughts into written forms. They made use of various theories and modalities to interrogate sexist assumptions in literary texts written by men. This added to their ongoing efforts to recover lost women writers and re-examine their texts that were devalued to the margins of the literary canon. Their narratives trace the elevation of the female characters’ consciousness, which have the outcome of doing the same for her female readers. They represented an inclusive America that is concerned in a more even-handed future.

If we are to trace the characteristics of contemporary African American literature, they have very appealing and realistic subjects mainly because the writers primarily have imbibed the outlook of presenting to the world their factual stories, so that Blacks are no longer misrepresented, or is spoken for by corrupt and partial authoritative forces. And this is one legacy that contemporary Black writers have passed on to the world of literature. The migration to North is another significant theme. As legal segregation made living conditions for Blacks in the South intolerable, the Migration increasingly seemed an absolute necessity for Blacks seeking for a better life. Harlem and New York quickly became the headquarters

of many important African American cultural and political national organizations, including the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

A clear development of the contemporary literary scene has been the expansion of outlook, and the experimentation in developing diverse modalities to bring to light the less explored subjects, such as homosexuality, intersectional racism, trauma and the postcolonial psychoanalysis of the characters. The novels, poems, plays, and essays of contemporary African American writers remapped the past and sought to give meaning to the present. The writers employed such genres as the historical novel, the pseudo-autobiographical slave narrative, and the novel of remembered generations that not only allowed them to describe life from the viewpoint of the slaves but also motivated revolt, escape, and created vibrant cultural and religious traditions. Like the early African American novels, the contemporary writers attended to the idea of what the black and commodified body of the slave meant to American culture, and also involved the question of how one reconciles an oppressive past.

The apparent success of colonized Africa in overthrowing White colonizers presented a model of decolonization, which is one of the significant themes in contemporary African American literature. Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* offered brilliant accounts of this overthrow, which became a Black Power and Black Arts movement handbook in inspiring their thoughts of transforming African American urban ghettos into powerful, independent and active position. African American literary tradition can thus be conceptualised as "talking *back* and talking *black*," in their search for liberation and self-definition in racist America (Price 250).

Black writers also began to take note of the controversial issues of language and social identity. Novelist such as Alice Walker helped to incite scholarly interest in Black English as a language in its own right, which led to the focus on national languages in the 1990s by both scholarly studies as well as college courses. Contemporary writers, as inspired by their predecessors, continued to use African American musical forms as the bases of their work. Early twentieth century African American writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, and Langston Hughes had drawn on the Black oral tradition for inspiration. In the 1970s and '80s, writers self-consciously played with language in their texts.

To demystify stereotyped misinterpretations, contemporary African American writers significantly incorporated Black protagonists in their novels, which served as spokespersons of the historic and cultural values of Black Americans. It is not just the content of Black

writing that is political, but we see that in order to present counter discourses, these authors went on to deploy a variety of literary forms and made excellent use of oral and musical traditions. The dynamic interplay of political engagement and aesthetic experimentation, such as Du Bois' commitment to art as "propaganda" and Morrison's attempt to develop "a way of writing that is irrevocably black," is a constitutive feature of African American literary tradition (Price 264). African American novelists explored these techniques and literary devices to cross boundaries, to bridge fictionally the social separation between Blacks and Whites that were thoroughly imposed by segregation. Further, mulatto heroes and heroines feature prominently in the contemporary African American novel. They project the mulatto to be extremely revolutionary, embodying the historical reality of racial interconnectedness and the idea that, contrary to racist mythology, Blacks and Whites were of one blood. The mulatto hero and heroine's survival against all stereotypes, discriminations and societal odds represents the Black community's challenges and vigour as a whole.

The contemporary writers pushed for an end of segregation, confronted the issue of racism and helped shape a sense of belonging, independence, and diversity in the American community by focusing on a number of subjects. Coming of age, which is a genre of literature that focuses on the growth of a protagonist from youth to adulthood with its action often set in the past, is also a major characteristic in contemporary African American literature. It highlights upon the question of being an African American in America where belonging and unbelongingness, possession and dispossession are crucial in identity formation. As the position of African Americans over the centuries in America has positively changed, so has the focus of their literature. Today African American writers are not only recognized by the highest awards, but their literature is also accepted as an integral part of American literature.

Contemporary African American authors tried their hands on various genres, be it historical, political, and religious novels, detective fiction, or buildungsroman. They explored international themes, and actively engaged with contemporary literary movements such as realism, naturalism, structuralism, psychoanalysis, postcolonialism, and modernism. Actively opposing the stereotypes and prejudices prevalent in contemporary mainstream American literature and determined to get involved, as writers, in the culture wars, they forcefully opened a new literary space for the representation of Blacks in fiction. They challenged restrictive definitions of American literature through an absolute revision of prevalent literary modes, as well as through the refinement of innovative strategies of representations.

The fact that we read the recurring narratives of racial horrors in every generation of African American literature is because the Black writer is profoundly rooted in the experiences of racial hatred, subjectivity, segregation, favouritism, slavery, violence, trauma, and apprehension. In Richard Wright's comparison between Negroes in America and in other countries, we find how being a Negro according to American racial codes was the least important thing about Alexander Dumas. The reason simply being, there were no decrees excluding him from the society in which he lived. He could exercise his choice because he was "at one with the culture in which he lived," and wrote "out of the commonly shared hopes and expectations of his age" (202). We can say that Dumas was integrated with the culture of France and was a Frenchman.

Like Alexander Dumas, Alexander Pushkin had no reason to grieve his Black identity as can be seen from his writing that does not carry any of the bitter reverberation of racism and frustration that are perceptible in the writings of African Americans. Pushkin wrote out of the rich tradition of Russian realism, and even helped to enrich that tradition. He too was at one with his culture. Both the writers were emotionally integrated with their country's culture. Regardless of the color of their skins, they were not really Negroes. The bitter truth is that, one cannot think of African Americans that had the privilege to exercise their choice like Dumas and Pushkin for many decades, with the exception of Wheatley. Having been bought by a White family to be trained to be the personal servant of the family, Phillis Wheatley enjoyed all the rights of the other Wheatley children. Slavery had not yet been a polluting factor in the minds of White people as they were to be. Hence, the Wheatley family freely advanced to educate her with the same kind of education that the White girls of her time received. Wheatley was at one with her culture. If only the rest of the African Americans had been allowed this same kind of treatment, a different literary expression would have been voiced by these Black writers. As Wright firmly believed, the style and theme of Negro literary expression would change as soon as the attitude of the nation toward the Negro changes (228). After all, people write out of what life gives them in the form of experience.

Contemporary African American authors cannot, of course, magically correct and reform the heap of injustices overnight, but they actively continue to intervene in the battle to shape their cultural imagery. Although not completely acknowledged, their strategies of literary intervention had a vital impact on the development of subsequent African American and American fiction as a whole. These novelists faced tremendous challenges in their determination to represent a racially "bifurcated American world" from their subaltern and

socially marginalized position (Bruce 10). They faced a divided audience of Black and White readers with often opposed perspectives, histories, and experiences of American society, as well as with dissimilar degrees of knowledge of Black culture and its significance. We see the unquestionable development of African American fiction by the second half of the nineteenth century, which was hugely inspired by the increase in Black readership of texts written by African Americans.

In order to deal with the fuming conflict of stereotypical descriptions, the African American novelists advanced to produce not just propagandistic work that overturned stereotypical representations, but also proposed multifaceted and modern literary representations of the rich cultural heritage, as well as the history of resistance of African Americans. They aimed to promote inter-cultural understanding and provide a contrapuntal reading on the prevailing stereotypes of Blacks in White minds. The contemporary novel is as such multilayered, multi-voiced, and readable at a diversity of levels as it is targeted to readers of all races.

1.4 Postcolonial Consciousness in African American Literature: Most of the territories under European colonial domination achieved independence only after prolonged struggle. Their hard fought independence, as such, promised something striking. But the idea of anti-colonial nationalism and the hoped-for social, political, and economic freedoms proved a failure for an inordinate length of time. What was found instead is the increasing division and oppression of people on the basis of class, ethnicity, religion, race, and gender, the failure of the economy to even provide basic necessities for the colonized people, a lack of independent participation by the masses in the political sphere, and therefore the continued economic, political, and ideological dependence on Western imperial powers.

In the first half of the twentieth century, as Ania Loomba writes, “colonies and ex-colonies covered 84.6 per cent of the land surface of the globe” (3). Therefore the countries that were under the dominion of European empires started to feel the need of studies of colonial times and began to question the binary oppositions and eventually, a series of studies devoted to the new global scenario began to unfold and create what is now called Postcolonialism. The contemporary works of postcolonial studies undertaken by American scholars and others have emphasized the correlation between postcolonial theory and African American culture. Critics have tried to identify the connections and build bridges between these two fields. “In practice,” as Ashcroft et al. writes, the proponents of “African American culture have often engaged with classic postcolonial theorists such as Fanon.” African American studies has been and continues to be one of the most influential of recent “intellectual, social and

political movements," impacting not just the United States but also many others who have been victims to racial subjugation and prejudice worldwide (*Postcolonial* 7). It has had a widespread development from postcolonial studies, and is related in complex ways, that is open for discussion.

The study of Black culture in the Americas is seen as partially the study of one of the world's major Diasporas. As such, the history of African Americans has certain features that share commonality with other movements of subjugated diasporic peoples. A heap of African people were forcefully moved from their homelands to serve the economic needs of the colonizers. The fact that these groups were shipped under the miserable conditions of slavery makes the relationship between that institution and the wider practices of colonialism essential to an understanding of the foundation of African American culture. As colonized subjects, African Americans were restricted by immigration policies, linguistic and cultural barriers, and other social and cultural institutions. Through various techniques of lived experiences, language and customs, as well as their awareness and outlook to the homeland, the African American authors provide insights into larger questions of inclusion and exclusion for diasporic communities. African American studies are also concerned much more directly with the history and continuing effects of specific processes of race-based discrimination within US society.

Although there were no postcolonial studies as an institutionalized field of academic specialization before the late 1970s, there were already works being done on issues relating to postcolonial cultures and societies. There were a large number of political, economical, sociological, and historical studies of state-formation in the newly decolonized countries, and accounts of anti-colonial nationalism, and also of various nationalist leaderships which had fought against colonization. And so it is important to recognize that the legacy of anti-colonial nationalist thinkers and theorists like Mahatma Gandhi and Frantz Fanon has been significant in shaping postcolonial concepts of opposition and free will. In sketching out postcolonial theory's intellectual heritage, Leela Gandhi traces it back to these two historical figures, who contributed to enlightening the anti-colonial project by revealing the "ethical inadequacy and undesirability of the colonial 'master'" (21). The two very different traditions of postcolonial thinking, "the theoretical post-structuralist and the practical political," are thus linked in so far as "some of the key concepts in postcolonialism in its first meaning derive from an anti-colonial politics and world-wide struggles for rights" (Boehmer 341).

Aimé Césaire is regarded as the first to theorise the process of colonization following the Marxist framework in course of analysis of capitalism in his book *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950). However, Postcolonialism as a theoretical literary movement gained momentum and became an institutional concern with Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism,* generally regarded as the founding work, which demonstrates how every branch of knowledge is part of the establishment of European political supremacy through the process of colonial conquest and domination.

Although the publication of a vast number of cultural critiques of empire and its aftermath designated with the label 'postcolonial' may differ in their perspectives, as Boehmer states, they are all largely concerned with experiences of "exclusion, denigration and resistance under colonial control" (340). Today postcolonialism is an important critical discourse, and critics frequently use this term in different ways with its prime objective being, as Young says, "to empower the powerless and provide them a status of dignity at par with those privileged and dignified in social hierarchy" (*Postcolonialism* 113). It is broadly agreed that postcolonial is that which "questions, overturns, and critically refracts colonial authority- its epistemologies and forms of violence, its claims to superiority" (Boehmer 341). Postcolonialism is thus a critical theoretical approach in literary and cultural studies, which indicates an opposition to unjust and unequal forms of political and cultural authority.

D. Maya sets out in *Narrating Colonialism* that, "preoccupation with the colonial past is a persisting phenomenon in postcolonial narratives" (11). The nationalists began to question European domination and observed that colonialism was rather responsible for making things worse in the Third World countries and hence began the anti-colonial movement. However, despite many national movements that have been undertaken and the withdrawal of British power, the "colonial hangover" lingers on in the nation even today (Maya 13). It is true that political independence has been achieved but in most Third World countries, colonization still continues in less pronounced but equally harmful forms. The decolonization of Africa followed World War II, when colonized people agitated for independence and colonial powers withdrew their administrators from Africa. The partition of Africa from 1870-1900 ended with almost all of Africa being controlled by European states. We see that by 1905, control of almost all African soil was claimed by European governments, as a result of which, a majority of Africa lost sovereignty and control of natural resources. However in the 1930s, the colonial powers began to cultivate small elite leaders, educated in Western universities and familiar with ideas such as self-determination. Led by these leaders towards the struggle

for independence, we see that many African countries had withdrawn from European colonization by 1977. Postcolonialism therefore refers to those theories, texts, political strategies, and modes of activism that engage in questionings that aim to challenge constitutional inequalities and bring about social justice. It is a theoretical approach that attempts to disrupt the dominant discourse of colonial power**.**

It is true that Said's *Orientalism* serves as the source book of postcolonial theory but we see that postcolonial criticism emerged as a distinct category only in the 1990s. Ashcroft et al. states that the actual term "postcolonial" was not employed in early studies of the "power of colonialist discourse" to shape and form opinion and policy in "the colonies and metropolis" (*Postcolonial* 204). As Peter Barry has maintained, "Postcolonial criticism gained currency" through the influence of such books as Spivak's *In Other Worlds* (1987), Ashcroft et al's *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* (1990) and Said's 1993 book *Culture and Imperialism* (192). Postcolonial exponents such as Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said, and Gayatri Charkravorty Spivak focused on "a critique of literary and historical writing" and were located in the "humanities of the western academy," which was directed especially at "Eurocentricism and the cultural racism of the west" (Lazarus 6). Other proponents of Postcolonialism are Frantz Fanon, Leela Gandhi, Ania Loomba, Khal Torabully, Robert Young, Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths. The proponents of the theory usually examine the ways in which writers from colonized countries attempt to proclaim and cherish their cultural identities.

Contemporary postcolonial theorists sought to redress the perception of colonized as mute and passive, and the colonizer as victorious and ever-present, a view based on Said's *Orientalism*. The theoretical inventions of Homi K. Bhabha, for instance, look at colonization as a process of subject formation. As Azim points out, in Bhabha's formulation, "the old binaries – master/slave, coloniser/colonised or European/other" are broken down and a new "hybrid" identity is seen to emerge. Azim further illustrates that Bhabha's description of post-colonial subject formation thus draws both colonizer and colonized into a close relationship, and deconstructs the binaries that Said's earlier study had exemplified. The new colonial subjectivity that emerges, then, becomes "a strange amalgam – a hybrid" says Azim, born out of mimicry of colonial forms, the effect of which is that the power positions do not remain well-defined any longer, but are rendered "ambivalent" within the colonial encounter (238). It is generally regarded that this notion of ambivalence is Bhabha's striking contribution to the field of postcolonial theory.

Another very influential way of looking at postcolonial subject formations is that adopted by Subaltern Studies, a school of thought represented by Indian historians. Though the subaltern studies project had not originally emerged as an involvement in the field of postcolonial theory, it is important to examine the notions of colonial subject-positioning that it draws out. The version of subalternity that has proved most influential in postcolonial studies is that proposed by Gayatri Spivak. She asks the crucial question, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' One essential element of Spivak's engagement with the post-colonial project is in the fact that it draws in the figure of the woman as the silenced 'other' of colonialism. Bhabha and Spivak, from their very different theoretical positions, have been highly influential in shaping theories of post-colonial subject formation, and together with Said, they have drawn out the main forms of this diverse field of study.

Earlier, the term 'postcolonial' did not mean what it has come to mean in postcolonial studies today. The nationalists came into power when independence had finally been won. The term 'postcolonial' from the early 1970s was a periodizing term, a historical and not an ideological concept. To describe a literary work or a writer as 'postcolonial' was to name a period, immediately following decolonization, not a project or a politics. Over the years, we have witnessed a sea-change in the term 'postcolonial.' And within this context of sea-change, postcolonial studies have emerged to prominence as a field of academic specialization. Bhabha has been an influential figure in structuring the factor of postcolonial studies, whose work *The Location of Culture* shows the concept that postcolonial has ceased to be a historical category, and that it no longer designates the time after colonialism.

Many postcolonial states are still today indebted to and dependent on Western-based capital that it is as though decolonization had never fully taken place. John Saul's reference to Africa, as quoted by Sivanandan, could well be generalized. Saul writes that the term "recolonization" may remain "more evocative metaphor than scientific concept," nonetheless, it does capture much of the reality of contemporary Africa, that the situation in which Africa finds itself both shaped by its long established weaknesses and by the terms of its current subordination, makes it "a mere taker of global capitalist signals, forced at least for the moment merely to slot into the role" that has been defined for it by "capital and its functionaries beyond the continent's borders" (42).

The postcolonial critic, who deconstructively engages in the institution of imperialism, is prompted to negotiate in the structure of which he is a part, and to change something he is required to occupy by interfering with the authority of Europe's story-lines "reversing,

displacing and seizing the apparatus of value-coding" (qtd. in Parry 67). Here the purpose of postcolonial critique is understood as, to dismantle and displace the truth-claims of Eurocentric discourses. It facilitates an understanding of colonialism and its legacies different from the narratives handed down either by colonialism or by anti-colonialist movements. Such intense self-reflection, focused on the critic's responsibility to abate the text of colonial authority as well as to establish a distance from the concepts of anti-colonialist theory, marked the beginnings of postcolonial studies in the late 1970s and early 1980s in what was then called 'colonial discourse analysis.'

The advent of colonial discourse theory and postcolonial literary studies has transformed the way people read metropolitan writings, even the ones that have no ostensible reference to empire, race, nation, colonialism, and anti-colonialism. In recent times, postcolonial theoretical readings are indeed coming out of the literary field to look at more diverse and wide-ranging issues. Postcolonial theory first appeared on the academic agenda with a political and high-handed promise. The strength of postcolonial theory lies in the links that it makes between literary and cultural production, economic and political processes, and in contemporary times between physical and psychological processes, which this study also focuses on. The numerous kinds of resistance to colonial rule began to integrate into "organized, militant, and self-conscious" independence movements in the Anglophone and Francophone worlds while the Second World War gave new impetus to this stirring nationalism in the colonies, helping to mature it (Sivanandan 44).

Postcolonial Theory which is largely based around concepts of otherness and resistance, concerns itself with things that are historically marginal. As Sunita Sinha has remarked, not only the absolute coverage and duration, but also the collapse of the European empire after World War II, have led to an increased common interest in postcolonial literature and criticism in contemporary times (iv). Today, with issues of race, class, and gender at their core, postcolonial theory deconstructs prevailing ideals of history and uncovers the ways in which political, economical, psychological, and social systems have been constructed and transformed in societies where cultures have been forcibly combined to imperialism and colonization. Scholars are frequently faced with the problem of defining the term postcolonialism. Firdous Azim has opined that as a theory that sets out to "examine the power/knowledge nexus, and the processes of intellectual and cultural domination," it must address itself to the "issues as they arise in the 'real' world and work towards eradicating some of these inequalities" (238). Postcolonial theory as such, is a discussion about various

experiences such as migration, slavery, suppression, resistance, representation, difference, race, gender, trauma, and responses to "the influential master discourses of imperial Europe" and "the fundamental experiences of speaking and writing by which all these come into being" and while none of these is 'essentially' post-colonial, together they form the complex fabric of the field (Ashcroft et al., *The Post-Colonial* 2). In the two decades since its publication, postcolonialism has developed into a sprawling academic discipline.

Having received an education under colonialism paradoxically made the new nationalist leaders both conscious of, and miserable with, the colonial racism that held them down. Although they tried to unite their people in the independence struggle, their culture and mentality remained deeply dependent and imitative, and in effect their rule continued the domination and exploitation of the people begun by imperialism, but this time in indigenous form. As Davidson highlights the powerful statement made by Kwame Nkrumah to his voters, "there is a great risk in accepting office under this new constitution which still makes us half slaves and half free" (*The Black* 163). Nkrumah was well aware that the national bourgeoisie, when taken over from colonial rule, can rip society apart into different regions, tribes and religions, and the whole drive of the liberation struggle will be lost. He therefore warned the people of the need for watchfulness and moral courage in withstanding the temptations of temporary personal gains, given that bribery and dishonesty have eaten into the whole fabric of the society and people must take active actions to get rid of these ills in order to pull off any progress. A firm distinction was called for between bourgeois nationalism, a liberationist, anti-imperial, and internationalist nationalism which view the attainment of nationhood as a necessary step towards the general reconstruction of society in the postcolonial era.

The aim of resistance struggles was not merely independence, but a national liberation which involved a struggle against neo-colonialism too, a struggle that did not come to an end at the time independence was achieved and definitely apparent even in contemporary times. It requires initiating and keeping up a culture-changing process. Even after independence, this progress was to be maintained and for that, a well-skilled liberation movement was required to generate an independent and progressive culture. Although the problems of liberation have not yet by any means been resolved, the principles that informed the theories of those such as Fanon remained valid and needed to be reasserted and made relevant to modern problems. The colonized people far and wide continued, and still continue to find myriad ways of resisting exploitation because clearly, they have a common referent of neo-colonization, of

unequal institutionalized distribution of wealth and resources on a world scale. The works of contemporary African American writers can be examined by exploring the various strands of Postcolonialism, which this study focuses on.

1.4.1 Key Concepts of Postcolonialism: Discussed here are some of the imperative concepts of postcolonialism that will be used to critique the select fictional texts:

Derived from the Greek word, **Diaspora** refers to the dispersion of people from their homelands, and is "a central historical fact of colonization." Diaspora is specifically used in postcolonial studies but it has its history with the Greek people spreading across the world with the intention to colonize people, or to work in other parts of the world. Later, it came to signify the specific Jewish experience of diaspora. In postcolonial studies, it refers to people who have been displaced from their native soil to the former colonial countries, but who possess and share a collective memory and nostalgic reminiscence of their native countries. An inherited ideology of home becomes a personal as well as a collective identity of members of a particular community. They are not rooted in one location, and live in the memories of their Imagined homelands as described by Salman Rushdie. Therefore in the new geographical location, they try to negotiate their culture and that of the host nation. The practices of slavery and indenture resulted in world-wide colonial Diasporas. Over the years we have seen that "the descendants of the diasporic movements generated by colonialism have developed their own distinctive cultures" that preserve as well as expand their original cultures and traditions. The expansion of diasporic cultures necessarily questions "essentialist models," and cross-examines the ideology of "a unified, 'natural' cultural norm, one that underpins the centre/margin model of colonialist discourse" (Ashcroft et al., *Postcolonial* 81-83). In recent times, the concept of a diasporic identity has been taken up by many writers as a constructive assertion of their hybridity.

Diaspora in a way gave birth to **Dislocation**, which describes the displacement of people resulting from colonialism, slavery, and settlement resulting in "the willing or unwilling movement from a known to an unknown location." Although the diasporic societies may have migrated through reluctance or willingly, it is apparent that this course of "unhousedness" or "not-at-home-ness" in Heidegger's words as elucidated by Ashcroft et al. has had a huge psychological and emotional impact on the communities. These communities are not only physically dislocated, but are also placed into a hierarchy that sidelines and disregards their cultural practices and principles in favour of the colonizing culture. In the field of postcolonial studies, significant attention is laid on the recognition of the

"psychological and personal dislocations that result from this cultural denigration" that in present times a lot of modern decolonizing struggles are founded against this dislocating process (86-87).

The increasingly large number of diasporic people throughout the world then also problematizes the idea of **Exile**. Colonialism is also accountable for the conception of exile, because as Ashcroft et al. have posited, "the production of the 'in-between' class, 'white but not quite', was often a deliberate feature of colonial practice." The immense force been put forth on the colonized people to separate themselves from their own cultures and traditions evidently justifies this point. Postcolonial subjects are alienated by Eurocentric, imperial systems that will never fully accept them. Simultaneously, they are alienated by native cultures as well. "Exile continues to be an ambivalent state in postcolonial studies" in the words of Ashcroft et al. While for Said, it is a necessary condition for true critical worldliness, "the achievements of any exile are permanently undermined by his or her sense of loss." Furthermore, "while it is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place," "the canon of modern Western culture is in large part the work of exiles" and "this tension between personal desolation and cultural empowerment is the tension for exile" (*Postcolonial* 109-10). Exile is represented both physically and metaphorically. In postcolonial fiction, physical exile takes place when the colonized subjects travel to the land of the former colonizers for better job opportunities and education. Exile cannot always be physical, because it can take place in different cultural spaces, especially through processes like colonization and modernization. This can be seen in the case of intellectuals living oversees for education. Metaphorically, the subject of exile is conveyed in the form of alienation as the characters shuttle between different places, unable to truly belong in either of the host or native land that eventually results in their ambivalent identity.

Eurocentrism is any belief, culture and practice that views the European way of looking at the world as valid, accepted, and universal and that everything else must be measured up to that credence. The collective construction of Europe as a mark of supremacy, against other cultures, had been strengthened by the eighteenth century. There are obvious historical reasons for this Eurocentric policy such as colonialism, the economical, educational and political power of the West. Ashcroft et al. has lucidly identified that while in literary study, Eurocentrism is masked by concepts such as literary universality, in history it is done so by authoritative interpretations written from the viewpoint of the victors, and in early anthropology by the unconscious assumptions involved in the idea that its data were those

societies defined as ‘primitive’ and so opposed to a European norm of development and civilization. It is also masked in the practices of Christianity through education and religious missions, as well as in the alleged supremacy of Western cultural and social practices which have been assumed to be based on a universal, objective set of values (*Postcolonial* 108). In postcolonial studies, this open biased privileging of Eurocentricity is aimed to be challenged and deconstructed.

Coined and popularized in the 1930s by Antonio Gramsci, the term **Hegemony** was initially being referred to the dominance of one state within a society, but it has now generally come to be understood as control by approval. Gramsci has theorized in his *Prison Notebooks* that many a times a regime works either through dominance or hegemony. Hegemony is basically the system established through the assent of the people as the ruling class succeed in convincing to the other classes that their interests are the general interests of every one. Hegemony is therefore more subtle and ideological as domination is wielded not by force but by a more crafty and inclusive power over the society, economy, education and the media. Hegemony, in the words of Ashcroft et al., is useful for recounting the success of colonial power over colonized people, whose desire for self-determination has been suppressed by a hegemonic notion of the greater good (134). In postcolonial studies, the concepts of dominance and hegemony are important because we see that originally most colonial regimes were established through dominance, however, eventually the colonizers went on to develop a hegemonic regime in obvious ways.

Other and Othering is also a significant concept in postcolonialism to analyse African American literature. Othering refers to the social and psychological exclusion and marginalization of a group in a society by another dominant group. Othering, as a postcolonial theoretical concept, was introduced by Gayatri Spivak for the practice by which colonial discourse creates its ‘others,’ the natives. The concept however has its roots in Western philosophy such as in the Freudian and post-Freudian analysis of subjectivity, particularly in the Lacanian argument of the ‘Other’ and ‘other.’ In the colonial context, the ‘Other’ is attributed to the colonizer and the colonized subject is characterized as the ‘other’ through discursive, material, legal and other forms. As some postcolonial scholars hold, othering is not just a necessity for the colonizers to take control over the colonized populations, but in a psychological sense, it also constitutes that the colonizers need the ‘other’ in solidifying their own sense of self. The idea of othering is always to reduce the colonized natives into a stereotype identity, to assign them certain unconstructive qualities

such as primitivism, uncivilized, and cannibalism, as a means of establishing the binary division of the colonizer and colonized.

The concept of **Binarism** is another major subject in the field of postcolonialism, which was first established by the French structural linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Binarism was a linguistic system and then eventually political, that brought divisions by defining who are privileged and who are not. One important point in Saussurian linguistics is the idea that the sign comprises of the signifier and the signified, and that the relationship is not natural but arbitrary. Another important point made by Saussure is that, signs have meanings not by a simple reference to real objects but by their opposition to other signs, that the sign has no substantial meaning of itself. And it is when the meaning of signs comes about not by direct reference but by their difference from other signs that the binaries come in. The binary opposition is the most extreme form of difference possible. Such binary oppositions are widespread in the cultural construction of reality that brings about a violent hierarchy, in which one part of the binary is absolutely always privileged and dominant over the other. In the context of colonialism, binarism is when the colonizers define the colonized through the binary structures of the language where the Europeans are civilized, White, bright, and the natives are primitive, colored, and dark. The fight in the colonies was therefore always about disrupting and challenging the binaries. One of the most shattering binary systems perpetuated by imperialism is the invention of the concept of race. Much contemporary postcolonial studies have been directed to disrupt such kinds of binary separations in the analysis of colonialism and imperialism.

Miscegenation is a significant concept in postcolonial studies. It is a practice that in many ways defines the colonial contact and exchange. According to the Oxford English Dictionary as cited by Ashcroft et al., miscegenation is “the sexual union of different races, specifically whites with negroes” (*Postcolonial* 157). Within the colonial context, it is the sexual union between the European colonizers and the native colonized. Miscegenation is fixed to concepts of racial distinction and because it was generally seen as a negative practice and highly discouraged, it was not legally permitted. The superiority of White races was based on certain beliefs that were considered scientific through some of the works of anthropologists, and the most important person behind influencing this way of thinking about race was Arthur de Gobineau, whose research in “An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races” (1853) demonstrated that European races were superior to others and within Europe the aristocrats were better than the lower race of society. Gobineau’s work had a huge weight in the colonies

and on the colonial policy about miscegenation and the mixing of races. In the US, the term was coined in 1863 in a hoax propaganda pamphlet written by David Goodman Croly, and the history of the word is linked with political disagreements during the American Civil War over the abolition of slavery and the racial segregation of African Americans. Miscegenation also has a huge impact in the American south especially due to the transportation of a horde of African slaves who were brought to America. Although the sexual contact between the owners and the slaves were illegalized during slavery, the sexual oppression of the slaves by their masters was common. There are some others who perceive miscegenation positively and of them the most important is Gilberto Freyre, who argued that the Portuguese colonialism was distinctive because it allowed the mixing and acceptance of different races, and because of which Brazil comes to be a unique nation. As an accepted custom, it was outlawed until very recently but miscegenation, based on pseudo theory of racial superiority, is problematical even at contemporary times.

Derived from the Spanish word meaning of mixed breed, the term **Mulatto** is attributed to the offspring of a hybrid ancestry, a European and a Negro. Hence, mulattos are those that have a biracial identity coming from a mixed or miscegenated society. Ashcroft et al. has suggested that the usage of the term is limited to "the classifications of miscegenation employed in racist slave discourse" that particularly alludes to a slave who is "half white" (*Postcolonial* 163). Over the years, African American fiction has advanced from new studies and new liberal readers, willing to accept the fiction in the terms they set themselves, a new appreciation of a literature of "crossing, passing, and mixing" as Mulvey has enunciated. In its own language, he furthers, "it is a 'mulatto' literature" that does not seek to make any lucid distinctions between "black and white, African and American, or between authentic and fictitious." Instead, it presents "a complex view of life that speaks directly to the twenty-first century, a century in which we are all mulatto" (321). The plot of William Wells Brown's *Clotel* focuses on five mulatto heroines and for which, Addison Gayle has accused Brown of "giving away" his "racial identity" (Gayle 412). But what Brown intended was not to turn away from his condition but rather headed for it. Brown's racial identity, like that of the mulattos, was not fixed to a single matter. In England, he refused a world that was divided into black and white, and in the United States, he began to discard the optimism that his mulatto identity could be accepted by both the black and white culture. The mulatto character appeared in African American fiction from the beginning, and its subject continues to hold centre stage in contemporary African American literature.

Creolization, which is an indubitable consequence of colonization, slavery, and migration, refers to "the process of intermixing and cultural change that produces a creole society," and has generally been applied to "New World societies particularly the Caribbean and South America" (Ashcroft et al., *Postcolonial* 69). The theory was introduced by Kamau Brathwaite, "linking the local to the global, the colonial to the imperial, the past to the present" (Higman ix). As Brathwaite elucidates, creole society is the outcome of "a complex situation where a colonial polity reacts, as a whole, to external metropolitan pressures," and simultaneously "to internal adjustments made necessary by the juxtaposition of master and slave, élite and labourer, in a culturally heterogeneous relationship" (xxxi). "Creolization" then, he says, "is a cultural process – material, psychological and spiritual – based upon the stimulus of individuals within the society to their [new] environment and to each other" (11). As Higman has opined, creolization stand alongside globalization, and that "it is Brathwaite's aim to use the example of Jamaica" to expand "a model of much wider significance, pointing towards the large forces of creolization and globalization" (xii). It focuses on the relationship between a European and an African, and although there are terrific injustices that characterized their relationships, as Brathwaite has affirmed, creolization is "a way of seeing the society, not in terms of white and black, master and slave, in separate nuclear units, but as contributory parts of a whole" (307). And here, he talks about Jamaica and by extension, the Caribbean society. All throughout his career, Brathwaite has persevered to cling on the idea that the world in general must become skilled at confronting the cross-cultural challenge. Brathwaite's representation of creolization can thus be said to be sharing similar components with the concept of hybridization.

Hybridization takes many forms, ranging from linguistic, cultural, and racial to social, political, and even religious. Hybridity is one of the most extensively used terms in postcolonial studies, which refers to "the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization." The term has lately been connected with the work of Homi k. Bhabha, whose examination of "colonizer-colonized relations" stress "their interdependence and the mutual construction of their subjectives" (Ashcroft et al., *Postcolonial* 135-36). Hybridity as a concept is more complex than a person living in two cultures. What Bhabha talks about is at the level of the sign that comes from Jacques Derrida. He talks about the interstitial gap and third space of enunciation, which creates a space between the signifier and the signified. In the process of signification, there is space in between, the hybrid space, which has traces of both. In the process of colonization, the

colonizers introduce new things into the native cultures, but in return the natives also introduce cultural difference in the colonizers culture. Cultural hybridity defies the idea of a pure culture. For Bhabha, hybridity is a more productive space, a more productive mode of dealing with issues of culture. It is also more promising because it creates space for cultural difference, knowing the differences between cultures and not effacing those differences. Robert Young holds a different outlook in that, hybridity itself is a loaded topic and has so much of a history of racialized view of the natives that to make it central to postcolonial studies as a redemptive and productive concept does a disservice to postcolonial studies. Hybridity robs the colonized away from the original culture and identity, shaping a people who are neither here nor there, neither themselves nor their colonizers. In other words, these are people without an effective identity. Because it takes many forms, Hybridity may not necessarily be a peaceful blending, for it can be controversial and disruptive in its experience. This disruptive side is examined in this study, as the identity of the postcolonial African Americans is largely hybridized and creolized, and caught 'in-between' space with traces of both the extremes of the binary that carries the weight and meaning of dual cultures.

In postcolonial theory, the term **Appropriation** describes the ways in which the former colonized societies take over those characteristics of the imperial culture such as their thoughts, language, aesthetics, and ways of writing to serve their own need as well as to resist the political and cultural colonial control. They use the dominant culture and their fluent and expansive approaches of representation and infuse them with their local traditions and customs in order to express their individual, social and cultural identities. There is mixed opinions among postcolonial Africans with regard to the idea of appropriation because it may be illustrated as a work of usurpation in various cultural spheres, the most powerful being language and textuality. Although there are non-English-speaking writers such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'O and Chinweizu who have objected the use of the colonizer's language in their writing, many others such as Chinua Achebe have appropriated the English language in expressing their ideas and cultural realities only because they consider the colonial language to be a useful means of expression that reaches wider audience. In so doing, the postcolonial societies are also able to intercede in the dominant discourse by choice, and articulate their own stories with authenticity. As such, appropriation can sometimes serve as a revolutionary act in using the master's language to dismantle the master's narcissism.

Ambivalence, which is the complex unison of attraction and repulsion that characterizes the relationship between colonizers and colonized as discussed earlier, appears in most

postcolonial writings. The relationship is ambivalent because the colonized subject is imposed to mimic the colonizer but the end product is an ambivalent subject whose mimicry is close to contempt. The term was first developed in psychoanalysis, but first adapted into colonial discourse theory by Homi K. Bhabha. In the words of Robert Young, the theory of ambivalence is Bhabha's way of "turning the tables on imperial discourse" (*Colonial* 161). The concept of ambivalence is closely connected to hybridity, because they both decentre authority from its position of power, and in this process of decentring, "authority may also become hybridized when placed in a colonial context in which it finds itself dealing with, and often inflected by, other cultures" (Ashcroft et al., *Postcolonial* 14). According to Bhabha's theory, terms such as ambivalence, hybridity, and many others that he developed, describe the confrontation of the colonized subjects against the dominion of the colonizers.

Mimicry is an imperative term in postcolonial theory, which refers to the ambivalent connection between the colonizers and colonized. For Homi K. Bhabha, as stated by Ashcroft et al., mimicry is the process by which the colonized subject is reproduced as "almost the same, but not quite." The concept has clearly been a prime objective of colonialism, but it exposed its core limitations and instead advantaged the colonized people. When the colonized subjects are persuaded to mimic their colonizer by adopting their culture and the general way of life, the end result is "a 'blurred copy' of the colonizer" that can be quite threatening. This is because it encloses both contempt and menace. In postcolonial studies, the result is weighty, for what emerges through this flaw in colonial power is postcolonial writing, the ambivalence of which is threatening to colonial authority. The threat of postcolonial writing does not necessarily emerge from some automatic opposition to colonial discourse, but comes from the disruption of colonial authority, from the fact that its mimicry is also potentially mockery (155-56).

Subjectivity, which is a characteristic of an individual that is existing in the mind and not affected by the outside world, has been one major concern of postcolonial theory. Descartes' declaration, "I think, therefore I am" substantiated the centrality of the independent human individual, "a precept that effectively separated the subject from the object, thought from reality, or the self from the other," writes Ashcroft et al. (247). The independent individual, which was separate from the world, could draw on mental power and thoughts in understanding and representing the world. The question that came with the colonized people was that, even their subjectivity was colonized. This subjectivity had an effect on the consciousness of their identities and their competence to say no to the conditions of their

subjection. Many theorists of subjectivity largely ignored the issue of race, even during the twentieth century. As Donald E. Hall remarks, "perhaps no single issue more clearly demonstrates the terrible omissions in, and need for," direct "challenges to early modern and Enlightenment theories of subjectivity than that of slavery and the continuing devaluation of groups of people on the basis of their race" (32). bell hooks has argued in her influential essay "Postmodern Blackness" that "Employing a critique of essentialism … allows us to affirm multiple black identities." She also challenges colonial imperialist concepts of black identity and urges for recognition of "multiple experiences of black identity that are the lived conditions which make diverse cultural productions possible" (425). Recent dialogues of subjectivity focus on the multiplicity of social roles and identity positions. This can be attributed to the works of early theorists of race, whose awareness on class oppression clearly enhanced their understanding of the challenges faced by many African Americans.

Subaltern is another important and multifaceted concept in Postcolonial studies, which refers to the least powerful of society or subordination of the native population in a way that deprives them of both power and voice. Primarily associated with the writings of Antonio Gramsci recorded in *The Prison Notebooks*, the term was adopted to refer to a group that exist within a dominant hegemonic order, but has no place in it and whose views are not taken into account with relation to any given regime. The term has been adapted to postcolonial studies from the work of Ranajit Guha and other Subaltern Studies group of historians, who appropriated and redefined the concept with the purpose to redress the imbalance created in academic work, to retrieve and record in writing and speech the silenced histories of the subaltern groups. However the notion of the subaltern became a major topic of debates in postcolonial theory when Gayatri Spivak not only critiqued the assumptions of the Subaltern Studies group in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" but also contested the assertion of Gilles Deleuze's assertion that representation has withered away and that people can speak for themselves. Here Spivak criticized the Gramscian claim for the autonomy of the subaltern group, and further went on to explore the problems of the subaltern by looking at the situation of the gendered subjects, particularly talking about the Indian women. For Spivak, the definitive subaltern subject is the figure of the subaltern woman, and this is seen not only in the global public sphere but also at the domestic private sphere. Spivak examines that the subaltern cannot speak and because of which, she was accused by some of not recognizing or even not letting the subaltern speak. However, her point is that, "subaltern talk does not achieve the dialogic level of utterance" and that there is a need for representation in

shared aims with the subaltern (https://scholarblogs.emory.edu>). Spivak makes a strong proposition of the danger in assuming that the subaltern can speak.

One of the key concepts in postcolonial studies to discover women's position in the colonized countries is the concept of **Double Colonization.** The term refers to the twofold subjugation of women from colonial and male powers. The term was first introduced by Kristen Holst Peterson and Anna Rutherford against the double colonization of empire and patriarchy. Women-authored texts are therefore "a double voiced discourse" that represents the "muted" as well as the "dominant" socio-cultural and literary heritages (Showalter, *The New* 263). It would not be wrong to say that a lot of the thought provoking and influential works within the study of postcolonialism have sprung up from questions pertaining to the representations of gender difference in postcolonial contexts. In the last decades of the twentieth century postcolonial literature, the subjects of gender politics and sexuality have become prominent. Gender and the role of women in the post-colonial countries have been the focus in the writings of many postcolonial women writers. Postcolonial gender studies examine how class, caste, economy, political empowerment and literacy have contributed to the condition of women in the Third World countries, and how despite their education and status women are continually oppressed. Considering the furtherance of neo-colonial domination of women in national patriarchies, the postcolonial feminists call for the sensitizing of gender difference as they continue to examine gender biases and double colonization in order to refrain from making postcolonial study a male-centred discourse.

The postcolonial concept of **Slavery** has been a major subject matter in the literature of African Americans that continues even to this day. The institution of slavery was practised since the ancient civilization and has existed in many cultures and different forms in diverse societies. But slavery as a recognized institution was of particular significance in the development of many postcolonial societies in Africa and the Caribbean. We have seen that although slavery existed in many societies throughout the years, they were not business-related. Slavery was often connected with enslaved people outside the community, but the development of a powerful ideology of racism, especially during the post-Renaissance period, generated the destructive form of commercial chattel slavery where the slaves were denied every right by legally dehumanizing them. It has been suggested by some commentators that slavery gave birth to racism, just as racism became the excuse for slavery's excesses (Davidson, *The Search* n.pag.). Race and racial prejudice in their modern forms have thus been closely tied with the colonial form of the institution of slavery, to such

an extent that it does not seem possible to separate them. Even though the slave trade was abolished in most colonized countries in the early 1800s, there were new forms of slavery introduced, since the Europeans had a different set of laws and ways of enforcing them. Although abolitionism began in the 1830s, the banning of slavery did not occur until the outbreak of the American Civil War. The declaration of freedom for slaves was formally sanctioned by the 13th amendment to the constitution in 1865, although the North declared the slaves free in 1861. When slavery was finally outlawed in colonial systems, it was replaced by a new system called indentured labour, and other forms such as the convict lease system. African American writers seek to recount these narratives in their works as they revaluate and dismantle Eurocentric prejudices.

Neo-Colonialism means new colonialism, a term introduced by the Ghanaian independence leader Kwame Nkrumah in his 1965 book *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. Nkrumah here suggested that although actual colonialism has ended, the influence of the colonizing power still remained in the colonies such as Ghana, which had achieved political independence. Ashcroft et al. has remarked Nkrumah's arguments about how neo-colonialism was "more insidious and more difficult to detect and resist than the direct control exercised by classic colonialism" (*Postcolonial* 178). By that it means that the economic influence of the former colonial powers still remains, and that the old regimes also had governments that were run by people aligned with the former colonizers and whose interests were at a divergence from their own people. The former colonizers were now using these people, who were part of the native elites educated and trained by the colonizers, to exploit the native people of Africa. Post 1980s, we see the newly emerging superpowers such as the United States continue to influence both politically and economically in this neo-colonial regime. They made a huge influence in the politics and policies, cultures and economies of smaller nations through new instruments of indirect control such as international monetary bodies, through the power of multinational corporations and cartels which artificially fixed prices in world markets, and through a variety of other educational and cultural non-governmental organizations. The term has widely come to be used to refer to any form of control of the ex-colonies after political independence.

The postcolonial concepts **Race** and **Racism** are also pertinent to the study of African American literature. The term "race" was first used in the English language by William Dunbar in 1508, denoting a class of people, but by the late eighteenth century it came to mean a distinct category of people with physical characteristics transmitted through ancestry.

The term entails that the psychological and ethical conduct of people, as well as their thoughts and personality can be associated to their racial origin and an understanding of that origin become crucial in giving an account of the conduct. For the most part race turned out to be relevant to the rise of colonialism, because such divisions of people became necessary for the colonial powers to establish dominance over colonized peoples and so validate their colonial activities. As Ashcroft et al. posits, although imperialism did not purposely create race, it quickly became one of imperialism's most supportive ideas because "the idea of superiority that generated the emergence of race as a concept" simply bespoke "to dominance and enlightenment of the imperial mission" (*Postcolonial* 219). Race thinking and colonialism are thus driven by the same aim to place people in a hierarchy and to draw a binary division between black and white, good and bad. **Racism,** which is the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of individuals or groups based on their race, is central to an understanding of African American theory. The colored people may have been free from physical bondage today, but they are still chained to this prison of racism. As a result of institutionalized racism, it often leads to internalized racism, which is the acceptance of the belief pressed upon the Blacks by racist America that they are inferior to Whites, which in turn leads to intraracial racism, which is the discrimination within the Black community against those with darker skin tone or more African features. As a result of racial conflicts, some Blacks desire to be rooted in their African heritage while some wants to be associated with the Whites. Many postcolonial writers and critics have argued in their writings against discriminations based on race, that racism was socially constructed emerging through social discourses and practices, and that it was not scientifically demonstrable. However, despite the appearance of greater scientific rigour, the stereotypes assigned to inferior races such as the description of the Blacks as primitive and indolent savages had not advanced much. Race and racism therefore continues to hold centre stage even today.

Black Consciousness, then, is one of the earliest forms for cross-cultural studies of people affected by colonization, mainly centred on African people who had been transported, enslaved, and made diasporic as a result of colonialism and slavery. In the nineteenth century, African American intellectuals who had either been born slaves or were the offspring of slaves, settled in the United States and developed a body of texts and institutions dedicated to the advancement and education of their people. In the 1960s it embraced many of the ideas developed by Fanonist thinkers, and in the form of the Black consciousness movement they sought to restore the negative self-image rooted in Black people by their long history of

enslavement and racial discriminations, "by the visibility of their perceived 'difference'" as Fanon has noted (*Black* 109-40). Black Consciousness also made huge contribution to the use of conscientization, which is the gradual awakening of the consequences of one's psychological and social circumstances. Black Consciousness conscientization brought about a reflective cultural awareness and historical redress. Steve Biko has stringently talked about the awful role played by education and religion in the creation and dissemination of a false understanding of the Blacks. In the words of Biko, Black Consciousness has to do with correcting the false images that Black folks have of themselves in terms of culture, education, religion, and economics, and that there is always "an interplay" between the historical past of a people, and their faith in themselves and hopes for their future ("The Definition" 363). It therefore enabled the colonized to build on new social thinking and identity.

Further, the term **Resistance** is another prime concept in postcolonial readings. Resistance movements took place in large forms within European domains as the demand and force for independence and decolonization grew stronger. As a result of the often unequal and manipulative nature of colonial economic undertaking, and the racist attitudes of White supremacy, the drive for political resentment and armed resistance was called for. Selwyn Cudjoe makes a lucid illumination of resistance and literary resistance. Resistance, Cudjoe points out, is "an act or complex of acts" intended to liberate people of its oppressors whether they are slave masters or multi-national corporations or institutions, and literary resistance is "a category of literary writing" which serves as an essential part of an organized struggle for "national liberation" (19). This resistance became the focal point of indigenous demands for autonomy. Although resistance movements were often more violent engaged in armed forces, when it comes to postcolonial studies, we see that it is given more attention to the subtle effects of cultural resistance, emphasising a more specific focus on resistance literature. Edward Said has fervidly talked about the resistance of the subaltern to colonialism in *Culture and Imperialism* through various creative and critical forms of writing back to colonial discourse as a way of producing a counter-discourse to Western power and empire. The effectiveness of resistance is well demonstrated by the term "counter-discourse" which is discussed next.

Coined by Richard Terdiman, the term **Counter Discourse** was meant to characterize the theory and practice of symbolic resistance. Terdiman identifies the "confrontation between constituted reality and its subversion" as "the very 'locus' at which cultural and historical change occurred" (13). Although Terdiman's work exclusively laid emphasis on French

literature, this term has been adopted by postcolonial critics to illustrate the multifaceted ways in which "challenges to a dominant colonial discourse" "might be mounted from the margin, always recognizing the powerful 'absoptive capacity' of imperial and neo-imperial discourses." Postcolonial authors derived the original concept of colonial discourse from Michel Foucault. In postcolonial studies, Edward Said was the first ever to use Foucault's theorization of discourse in his book *Orientalism*, wherein the view of the orient was discursively produced by the Europeans. This led to the counter discourse study that aimed to unravel the stereotypical discursive production of the natives and their cultures, in order to pose challenges to it. Within postcolonialism, "counter-discourse has been theorized less in terms of historical processes and literary movements," and more "through challenges posed to particular texts, and thus to imperial ideologies" introduced and maintained through "texts employed in colonialist education systems" (Ashcroft et al., *Postcolonial* 68). As such, Helen Tiffin has fittingly articulated the significance and unavoidable tasks of "rereading and rewriting" the "European historical and fictional record" as an approach of subverting British canonical texts for post colonial purpose (18).

Decolonization is the method of debunking and dismantling all forms of colonialist power. Early nationalists of the former colonial countries such as India and Africa had been educated by the European educational and political systems. These nationalists as such were modernizers in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that proposed the implementation of the colonial cultural practices rather than its denunciation. Political independence therefore did not necessarily liberate the colonized people from colonialist values. The continuing influence of Eurocentrism privileged the imported over the indigenous such as colonial languages over local languages, writing over orality, and linguistic culture over inscriptive cultures of other kinds like dance, and graphic arts. And so decolonization also includes those institutional and cultural policies that had retained imperial power even post independence. A number of programmes of decolonization have been attempted, notable among these have been those that seek to revive and revalue local languages, such as that proposed in the works of Ngugi Wa Thiong'O. Such decolonizing models are in the forefront because the globalization of the modern world economy has meant that political independence has not resulted in the economic and cultural changes that the early nationalists might have expected. In postcolonial studies, decolonization thus not only means the physical freeing of the colonized people from the colonizers, but also their liberation from the dominating influences

of a colonialist power, the neo-colonialism that denotes the new force of global control functioning through local privileged class.

The first and most important movement in setting up a worldwide awareness of Africa's cultural distinctiveness was unquestionably the **Négritude** movement. It was launched by African and Caribbean scholars and writers in France that tried to advance African universalism. The idea of these critics was that the people of African descent or culture have their own unique artistic and aesthetic qualities, in addition to the unique personality they share in their intellectual, emotional, spiritual and physical spheres of life. These qualities, they posited, are inbuilt to all Africans including the diasporic African communities. The artistic workings driven by these inherent potentials and aesthetics should be taken into account and ascribed value for its own sake and not in association or contrast to its European counterparts. Some of the founding critics of Négritude who first launched and published African journals and works, and who advanced African arts and literature worldwide were Leopold Senghor, Leon Damas, Birago Diop, and Aimé Césaire. The works of these critics also led to the pan-Africanism in Africa. On the whole, critics considered Négritude a nativist and Africanist but also an essentialist movement. Regardless of its essentialist tendencies, Négritude is a significant artistic and literary movement pre as well as post Second World War, with the main objective in disseminating and giving value to African culture, art, and traditions. On the other hand, it also established a precursor of African intellectuals who then stem out into different artistic and literary fields. The Négritude movement was therefore a fundamental landmark in the recount and expansion of Africo-centric arts, literature, and politics.

Contemporary postcolonial and African American novelists today powerfully bring in a contrapuntal reading in their texts. The term **Contrapuntal Reading** comes from music theory, which suggests an open reading that presents a counterpoint to the text and as such allows the disclosure of colonial process and implications. The concept was theorized and elaborated by Edward Said in his 1993 book *Culture and Imperialism* to describe a way of reading the texts by pointing to the unacknowledged privilege of the characters or even the writers that are underwritten by colonial activities. In so doing, the readers problematizes the traditional reading of the text by adding these silenced narratives. By stressing the relationship of the text, its origin in "social and cultural reality" rather than its "filiative connections" with English literature and canonical criteria, the critic brings to light the cultural and political implications that may be fleetingly addressed in the text itself or even

remain hidden (Ashcroft et al., *Postcolonial* 64). Said makes a firm suggestion that instead of reading the text as we usually do, the underpinnings and architectures of the text ought to be looked at, and bring that as a counterpoint to a traditional reading. That is what makes up a contrapuntal reading because it is accounting for two ends of a text. He states that "As we look back at the cultural archive, we begin to reread it not univocally but contrapuntally" (*Culture* 59). Said illustrates his approach as a touch that tries to look at the work of extraordinary writers and thinkers in their context as precisely as possible, while also looking at them contrapuntally, "as figures whose writings travel across temporal, cultural and ideological boundaries in unforeseen ways." As a result, history reopens and challenges what is apparent to have been the finality of an earlier form of thought, and brings it into contact with the cultural, political, and epistemological formations undreamed of by its author and that the latencies in a prior form can suddenly illuminate the present (*Freud* 24). Postcolonial writers offer in their texts a great contrapuntal reading, giving emphasis and voice to what has been silenced and marginalized.

1.5 A New Configuration of Postcolonial African American Writers: Many believe that racism ended with the Civil War, or with the turn of the twentieth century. But the truth is that, the evils of slavery are still present in a tradition of racial favoritism that is strongly built into American law, politics, social behaviour, and most importantly into American psyche. As such, the economic, social, and psychological problems caused by racial discrimination, the difficulties faced by biracial individuals in America, and the attempt to reclaim the African past of lost ancestors have greatly influenced the artistic nature of contemporary African American writers.

The aim of Postcolonialism is to give the marginalized a voice so that it can be heard. Postcolonial consciousness is therefore putting one's thought of experience and resistance into literary writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonial perspectives. And as prominent adherents of resistance, postcolonial African American writers have shown courage and insightfulness in giving voice to the voiceless or rather to the deliberately silenced people, and championing the underdog or those left behind. As Achille Mbembe has rightly remarked, "Postcolonial thinking stresses humanity-in-the-making," the humanity that will come into sight once the colonial forms of the inhuman racial disparities have been stamped out (https://www.eurozine.com). Accordingly, postcolonial thought is a way of thinking that may transcend the debate and discussion of binary oppositions such as of the East and West, of master and slave, colonist and native.

Postcolonial studies thus allow for a wide-ranging investigation into power relations in various contents and the field has provided useful strategies for a wider field of global analysis. Although African Americans live in a postcolonial era, having achieved political independence, there are still plenty of fragments of colonialism. There are tremendous problems and much of the legacy that the American society is dealing with right now still relates to a history of domination, of economic exploitation, psychological ordeal, and artificial borders that were drawn by the colonial powers in a way to serve their own political, economic, and military interests. Having witnessed the bitter moments and difficulties of colonial rule, many of the postcolonial African American writers, be they essayist, theorist, or fictionist, continue to raise their voice through their works largely influenced by their personal experiences. Studies in Postcolonial discourse have increased over the years and more than just a literary trend or critical pursuit, postcolonialism has been perceived as a field of academic specialization.

Excluded from social and economic institutions, African Americans had to live within a society in which the majority was convinced that Black people were inferior to Whites and should therefore be consigned to a place of permanent social, economic, political, and psychological subordination. Literature is an expression of the most detailed and personal consciousness of life and society, which has certain purposes to fulfil, certain thoughts to be examined, and certain plans to be acted upon for the betterment and welfare of humanity at large. The hostility of White racism was a powerful urge to literary activity, as Black writers sought to use their pens to reveal the erroneous White racial ideas by countering those ideas and assumptions. Racism, gender prejudice or any kind of preconception, arises from the belief that homogeneity is natural, but as the postcolonial African American writers argue, literature, and the world in general, cannot be limited by it. The select contemporary writers offer in their narratives a confrontation to the Western imagination, by portraying colored people as their protagonists. In so doing, they break the expectations of a reader accustomed to a Eurocentric canon. Their choice of including vernacular vocabulary further suggests a conscientious representation of their culture and identity.

The works of contemporary African Americans provide a mirror to the issues that Blacks face at the personal and institutional level. They believe in the idea of storytelling, with the hope to make people think differently, perhaps away from all sorts of naivety. Blending interpersonal dialogues and various historical and socio-political documents, these writers bring to light some of the most inhuman practices in postcolonial American society. African

American writers thus made important literary contributions for social ramifications as soon as they landed into the literary scene, and they have only been getting better and bigger. As a result, the last quarter of the twentieth century has borne witness to a profound decentring of the dominant traditions of the literary world. This transformation has been registered at all the levels of reading, writing, publishing, and criticism, backed by a number of national and international awards.

African American writers sought to change the way in which their people saw themselves, so that they could foresee themselves as an empowered people. These writers challenged the imbalance of authority between us and them in America by treating the imbalance as an impediment to access certain kind of freedom which is necessary for African Americans to flourish and move forward in the contemporary era. A lot of the contemporary African American writers brought forth in their writings the psychological concerns alongside the historical and socio-political, which has immeasurably helped not just their community but also the Americans at large to grasp deeper insights into the lives of the African Americans whom they have marginalized for many decades.

African American writers in general have reshaped Africa's national identity over the years and the technique they have employed to do so is analyzing their works through various concepts and theories, without the exclusion of the various strands of Postcolonialism. This perspective shows how the writers urge their readers to change their worldview by calling into question the underlying assumptions about their traditional culture and their colonial legacy. The writers were, and are rigid in their portrayal and confrontation of the demoralizing psychological and social consequences of racism and other discriminations, which deliberately awakens the reader of the need for radical social change in America, and for an evolved world. Post-colonial, African Americans have produced rich and complex literature through their shift toward a more holistic approach, touching upon subjects that are imperative but were largely sidelined by many disciplines and authorities, as well as changing the language and thereby the consciousness of the people. Their literature continues to be rooted in their unique cultural and expressive tradition that is recognized not just nationally but also internationally, which will be intimately examined in the following chapters.

Chapter 2

Projecting Black Social Reality: An Iconoclast's Standpoint

2.1 James Baldwin, the Iconoclast: African American literature, as studied in the first chapter, emerged in the twentieth century with an extraordinary force due to a Negro consciousness. This expression of Black power is vehemently found in the works of James Baldwin, who is one of the most potent litterateurs that the world has ever seen. Illuminating new questions and possibilities amidst taunting life experiences for the succeeding generation, Baldwin served as a spokesperson for the collective struggle in the daily lives of African Americans. Baldwin's texts concentrated on many key concepts that are found addressed in postcolonial studies such as resistance and counter-discourse, by deconstructing whiteness and ill judgements against colored people, marginalized people, and economically underprivileged communities.

Twentieth century literature embarks a quest for reality and the writings of James Baldwin, predominantly his fiction, mirrors social reality at its utmost. Born in 1924 Harlem and living through the Great Depression of the 1930s, young Baldwin was aware of the separation of mankind based on social, economic, cultural, political and racial pressures. Throughout his prolific career, Baldwin persistently brought awareness to complications and did not shy away from questioning various thoughts and ideologies that he believed was worthwhile. At the time Baldwin wrote, one can only do so much with regard to the situation of being Black in America. As he tells Ida Lewis, "it's not easy [as a Black man] to live in a world that's determined to murder you" (91). Eckman has closely recorded in his book about the fury of Baldwin when Malcolm X was murdered in Harlem. He indicated how Baldwin screeched at White correspondence saying, "You did it!" and furthered, "It is because of you – the men who created this white supremacy – that this man is dead. You are not guilty – but you did it!" (241). A writer, spokesman, and often considered a prophet by many, whatever better understanding about the race issue that the Americans now possess, has in some ways been influenced by Baldwin. It would not be wrong to say that Baldwin's iconoclastic intellect remains his most significant legacy in and outside of the academy. With the basic question of humanism, his literary works moved millions across the globe and the subjects he laid emphasis on still remain popular in contemporary times.

African Americans massively struggled for their survival and transformation in America and still lacked certain civil rights. Many African Americans like Baldwin made important

contribution to the movement through literary writings. As the Civil Rights movement expanded, Black American literature was in the midst of a second renaissance, following the Harlem renaissance. The Civil Rights movement provided "more than just subject matter" for the Black American writers (Patil 139). The emergence of Baldwin during this era as a spokesperson of Negro race and a voice of America was the emergence of new awareness in America. His contribution to African American literature began at the time when his precursors Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison were gaining prominence. It was because of writers such as these, in addition to the various movements, that the Black American rediscovered his racial pride and realized that he can defend it.

Characteristically, postcolonial writers create a possibility to find a voice and an identity through the reclaiming of their nation's past, which has been devalued for so long. The voice of Baldwin in the field of literature and beyond was that of the national conscience as laid out by the early intellectuals of the Négritude movement, passionately expressing the urgency of Black demands for an equal life transcending barriers, and restructuring their misrepresented past. He also articulated out of a desperately unhappy childhood in asserting his anguished need for love and a meaningful identity as also portrayed in his fictional characters. Therefore these communal and personal voices came together into a literary instrument of great ethical and stylistic influence.

A complex and an extraordinarily brilliant man, Baldwin struggled out of Harlem to create a series of works that expose the essential racism of America, and the world at large. Even though growing up in a hostile environment with unbounded obstacles come his way as a colored person, and making him lose hope on many occasions, nothing could impede him from voicing out the Black social reality in America. Fiction became a major instrument for social realism, which aligned with the values of global literary aesthetics. Baldwin never separated art from activism, or from social justice. He took every ounce of experience, every journey, and varied relationships as tools for his literary masterpieces. He has written various fiction, plays, and essays including some of the most brilliantly critical writings of the modern day.

An avid reader from a very young age, James Baldwin had a profound interest in literature, a quality that is seen even in the actor-character Leo in *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone.* Baldwin was already editing students' literary magazines in high school. He attended Public School in Harlem, and it was his White teacher Orilla Miller who introduced him to

theatre and literature. And for this, he "never really managed to hate white people" in most cases (Baldwin, *Go Tell* 2). Baldwin commenced the art of writing by the deep urge within him to become a writer and Richard Wright, impressed by the manuscript of his first novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, helped Baldwin in getting the Eugene F. Saxton Memorial Trust Award to complete the novel. He was determined to support himself and develop his talent as a writer, however he had a rough start and suffered six years of frustration which can be seen reflected in some of his fictional characters as will be studied later in this chapter. Baldwin worked in a series of factories, restaurants and offices in New Jersey and Greenwich Village and it is at this time that he developed homosexual affairs, which is also one focus that holds centre stage in his narratives. From 1947 onwards, he began publishing essays and criticism. The initial literary failure and the pressures of his personal life drove him into exile. Baldwin left for France in 1948 with the dream of becoming a successful writer instead of living dead just as the rest of the subjugated Blacks under neo-colonialism. Baldwin felt that the freedom to write without any restraint was an essential prerequisite to be a great writer which he supposed could not be achieved in America. His escape to Paris was also caused by the death of his close friend Eugene Worth who had committed suicide, and having endured similar destitution in New York and feeling threatened by the same glooming fate, he decided to leave America. So basically, he left because he wanted to live. He mentions in an interview with Ida Lewis that in Paris he was in danger of death but in America it was not a danger, "it was a certainty. Not just physical death, [but] real death" (84). Although an expatriate writer, Baldwin remained active in events that shaped American culture. His role in the Civil Rights movement cannot be overlooked. As a self-confessed "disturber of the peace," in the words of Field, Baldwin's keen inquisitive mind shook up and shaped postwar America (37). His own life in Harlem and the life he saw around him in Paris, as well as his beliefs about race and race relations colored many of his novels and inspired a large proportion of his literary works.

The subject of racism has been persistent in most Black writers and spokesmen because it is still rampant and this plague refuses to be effectively dealt with. The most important aspect of Baldwin's life and work is his unrelenting attack upon some of the crucial and recurrent problems of human social life, and basic questions which revolve around dichotomies such as politics and morality, love and power, the personal and the society, black and white. His deconstruction of whiteness is surely commendable, giving a clear outlook of how one can

look and move beyond fear and doubts that often paralyse people, and live outside the projections of the greater society.

Baldwin's activities, opinions, and creative outpourings during the mid 1950s and '60s impacted the attitude of white American society towards the plight of African Americans. Baldwin's work has also been the keystone of emerging Black queer theory, being the foremost Black American writer to overtly talk about his homosexuality. Baldwin also made an incredible contribution to a broader understanding of transnationalism owing to his role as a transatlantic commuter, in addition to his writings on the relationship between Africans and African Americans. Linking private pain with public trauma, Baldwin truly broke boundaries to help shape African American literature. Besides gaining the respect of challenging critics, his books also became best sellers. The rise of cultural studies and gender theory after Baldwin's death in 1987 further gave his work a new popularity, which also led to a re-examination of his later works that were ignored. A recipient of a great number of notable awards such as Guggenheim, Partisan Review Fellowship, Ford Grant, Polk Memorial Award, Hon. Degree from City universities of New York, and Massachusetts, Martin Luther King Medal, Award for *Playboy* Magazine and French Legion of Honor, there is no doubt that his iconoclastic literary works have commanded attention over the years.

2.2 James Baldwin, the Novelist: Many critics and readers are of the view that Baldwin was recognized more as an essayist, nonetheless even as a novelist he has achieved great literary heights. His novels, which were written between 1940s and '80s, are indeed a clear record of the development of his thought about social matters. They also provide a valuable guide for not just the political theorists, but also people in general who have interest in the possibilities of democracy in a society where White supremacy has been discredited and is yet against the abolition of the distinction between White and Black citizens. Some go on to say that Baldwin is neither a novelist nor an essayist, but "a premonitory prophet, a fallible sage, a sooth sayer, a bardic voice falling on deaf and delighted ears" (MacInnes 121). In whatever form Baldwin chose to put his thoughts into written work, be it novel, essay, play, short story, or speech, his message was delivered with such persuasiveness, directness, and Biblical wrath that it captivates his readers and audiences. His intrepidness is typically found coming from his troubled experience in a country that was indifferent towards Blacks. Baldwin unapologetically articulated what his race has been thinking for a very long time.

James Baldwin was not only one of the most gifted Black writers of his generation from the viewpoint of an absolute literary skill, but also a major spokesman of contemporary American literary scene. As his personal experiences in Harlem awakened his deep concern over Black people's interests, Baldwin began to make a considerable contribution to expose the racial injustices that his race face in America by virtue of his brilliant gift in writing. Schorer has rightly opined that Baldwin "commands a powerful and pervasive style, a style that ranges from the subtle, the sinuous, the gently lyrical, to the bold, the denunciatory, the outraged" (1075). He developed varied techniques to reveal the challenges that confronted young Black men coming of age in America, who were determined to reach beyond color and toward a more universal sense of humanity.

As a novelist, Baldwin has a great reputation for successfully taking up the tradition of serious Black fiction that was commenced by his precursor Richard Wright. Baldwin's novels serve as a vehicle for the expression of his thinking, his values, and his general social orientation, as they explore his relationships with the renowned and the ordinary, his homosexuality, his expatriate years in France, his gift for compassion and love, the anxiety that overwhelmed his quest for fulfillment and happiness, and above all his ardent battle against the White society's blindness to Black identity. Eckman has rightly remarked that "The charges he flings at white America generally find their mark in the literate and the vulnerable" (16). Baldwin's works of fiction hence mirror his anguish and concern with artificial borders, and concentrates upon examining those problems and finding creative and genuine solutions.

Each of Baldwin's narratives bears witness to his quest for freedom through awareness and acceptance. Baldwin's literary works were intensely influenced by his personal experiences that his growth as an individual and as a novelist can be examined under three major stages. In his initial fiction writing, we see a young Baldwin attempting to come to terms with his sexual self, as epitomized in *Go Tell in on the Mountain* (1953) and *Giovanni's Room* (1956). In the second phase of his development, he becomes defensive and critical in his treatment of the homosexual theme, such as in *Another Country* (1962) and *Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone* (1968). The third stage of his writing, as projected in works such as *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974) and *Just Above My Head* (1979), indicates his freedom, awareness, and a healing acceptance of his sexuality. Apart from this enlightened view of sexuality that suggests Baldwin's personal maturity, we also see the growth in his treatment of literary themes.

We see that as a man of letters Baldwin worked prodigiously during his forty-year career to explore a broad range of subjects and themes in his literary writings, such as the responsibility that writers carry in heartening the growth of the individual and society, the indivisibility of private and public lives, the necessity to develop sexual and psychological awareness, the importance of identity, of historical past and of color consciousness, the intertwining of love and power, and also the need of reinterpreting the prevalent philosophy of American society in order to keep people away from any mythical account. Pulling down the barriers of race, inequality, injustice and colour, and literally getting in to a government of the people, for the people, and by the people has been the much cherished dream of the Blacks in America. Historical evidence and contemporary reality however provides an indication to the wide gap between the dream and its realization. This critical and theoretical issue that are part of the development of African American literature and criticism are accurately reflected in the works of Baldwin.

Baldwin used his writing to work out the problems with which he was preoccupied. There are several narratives, for instance, about the church in which religious hypocrisy and loss of faith serve as important recurring themes, along with low paid jobs being offered to colored people justifying the famous saying that the Negro is the last to hire and the first to fire. Shaped by the historical events that had taken place, African American fiction cannot utterly be fictitious because history is profoundly engaged in the minds of the writers. This can also be due to the fact that they experience even at present, a modified version of what their ancestors have gone through, such as slavery and the differentiating of Blacks from Whites in varied forms as a result of stereotypes and discriminations. The past is undeniable even in the works of Baldwin as it is the key to present reality. In many ways, the central task of the Black writer is to discover the basis on which that past may be confronted. The central theme of Black writing is as such the recreation of the self and the community, “the rebirth of the black Lazarus” as Bigsby has pointed (5).

Baldwin’s theme is one of the most relevant in the literary world and his style is unsurpassed. The specific basic material from which Baldwin derives his underlying approach is the racial question. Among the basic issues which continue to occupy a prominent place in the arena of American politics even today is that of race relationship because color prejudice is a personal as well as a political reality. The works of James Baldwin continue to shed light on new paradigms of apprehending the color question. Apart from race, Baldwin also explores in his

novels the age-old themes of sexual characteristics, identity, love, and religion but differed quite a lot from his contemporaries, as he takes an iconoclastic stance.

Baldwin has also transcended the common themes of African American literature and represented the issues of multiculturalism that continue to influence the life of contemporary African Americans. Through his fictional works, he stressed on the process of action rather than fixed outcome. Baldwin used his own choice of words, and talked about subjects that were considered taboo at the time he wrote, such as homosexuality, which other writers failed to address and feared to talk about. He always emphasized on the need to speak out against institutionalized and individual tyranny due to the fact that if such issues are left unchecked, it threatens to engulf and subjugate the minorities in the social ladder. What Baldwin does with the English language, language of the oppressor, is laudable. He believed that human spirits have endless possibilities and as a writer, he took full advantage of his platform to pronounce this assertion.

2.2.1 James Baldwin's Projection of African Americans in a Multicultural America: Social forces have been undeniably influential in shaping literature. Understanding and analysing African American life and the milieu in which the authors have lived and worked with varying degrees is therefore necessary to evaluate their literature. Baldwin's novels that have been taken under study, *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone* and *If Beale Street Could Talk,* unfailingly reflect Black social reality in America although they differ in many ways. While the former text touches upon characters that have to deal with situations that are inclusive of upper class people, the later narrative is about the domestic and the everyday life that focuses on mediocrities. The complexity of the first contrasts with the simplicity of the second, and the intellectual, artistic, famous male narrator of the first contrasts with the uneducated, plain female narrator of the second.

It can be said that some of the resentment and anger in the select narratives is generated by the personal experience of the author. These texts give us an idea about Baldwin's artistic brilliance, and his ability to analyse and also deconstruct whiteness, a feature that is of utmost significance in postcolonial studies. Baldwin's art is a metaphoric representation of American realism, and in his exploration of race and chauvinism, imprisonment, White privilege, homosexuality, as well as inter-racial relationships in a multicultural society, these fictional texts provide a suitable substantiation of the way things are.

Since the 1970s, multiculturalism has developed into a policy of most Western nations. In

the United States, it was launched as an official policy in the 1980s. As a government policy, multiculturalism was instigated by settler colonies in several culturally diverse states of the Americas, Africa, and Asia, whose populations mostly comprised of immigrants. Politically, multiculturalism suggests the recognition and promotion of equal respect to the diverse cultures in a society, and to avoid the centrality of any specific ethnic, religious or cultural communities. However, a decline in its importance in Western governments has been observed throughout history due to the resentment of the host nation against the immigrant minority groups and their failure in putting ethnically diverse people together.

The postcolonial critique of multiculturalism stems from its effects on the communal identity of diasporic and ethnically diverse peoples, and also coincides with that of whiteness studies. This is because although the policy of multiculturalism aims at a peaceful coexistence of various cultures that interconnects with one another while also maintaining their individuality, in practice the minority societies are marginalized in the reinforcement of the dominant White cultural group as central. Multiculturalism therefore proposes a more subtle view of ethnic relations that deal with inclusion and exclusion in the narratives of the nation.

The two primary models of Multiculturalism are the Melting Pot and the Salad Bowl models. Multicultural societies like the United States comprise people of different cultures, races, and nationalities. As symbolized by the foundry's smelting pots in which iron and carbon are melted together to produce a single and stronger metal, steel, the melting pot theory similarly enforces the various immigrant groups to come together and to fully assimilate into the host society. However, in so doing, it reduces cultural diversity and causes people to abandon their individuality, their cultural identities and traditions. Owing to its assimilative disposition, the model has been severely criticized, and the proponents of multiculturalism have also rejected the ideal of the melting pot because multiculturalists are in support of the members of minority groups to maintain their distinctive collective identities and practices.

In opposition to the former model that called for a homogenous society, the Salad Bowl model called for a heterogeneous society in which people from varied cultures retain their unique characteristics of their traditional culture while peacefully co-existing. With its open philosophy and goal to construct a more integrated and multiple cultures, the Salad Bowl model exemplifies the essence of multiculturalism. Just as a salad bowl consists of a variety

of ingredients, this model brings different cultures together while also maintaining their freedom to preserve their own unique cultural traits. This model argues against the assertion to give up one's cultural heritage in order for an individual to become members of the dominant society. Some critics of multiculturalism have nevertheless rejected this model on the belief that it can segregate a society through the spread of intolerance and discrimination, in addition to the belief that people holding on to their distinctive cultural characteristics do not find the common ground of mutual identification and also lack the cohesiveness of a shared community.

Baldwin's narratives account the failure of Western multicultural nations in incorporating the principles of multiculturalism, in the peaceful co-existence of ethnically diverse people, by looking at the social structure on which African Americans were based during the 1960s and '70s in America. Long after the Emancipation Proclamation, African Americans in the South were still marginalized and were denied access to good housing, high-quality education and basic services by the host nation. On an average, Black Americans earned half as much as white Americans and were twice as likely to be unemployed. Despite a series of court victories during the late 1950s, such as the Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka in 1954, and the success of the Montgomery bus boycott in 1955-56, African Americans were still second-class citizens that suffered humiliation, inequity, and exclusion in the hands of neighborhoods, businesses, and unions. The community however entered the 1960s with the belief, influenced by leaders like Martin Luther King, that non-violent protests could make a difference, with a growing hunger for full equality. As Hakim has stated, King gave voice to the new mood that "[They] can't wait any longer" and "Now is the time" (102).

The global repute of Baldwin rests largely on his in-depth and poignant interpretation of the nightmarish Black experience. Even while Baldwin maintained that the social and political struggles of Black people in America were not his prime concern as a writer, one cannot deny that the subject of race was one of his most passionate concerns. Baldwin confessed that "one problem obsessed my life" and that problem was undeniably the problem of color in America, which has always controlled "the key to all the other problems" (Mead 69). And truly, whatever failure that the colored people face on general ground is largely shaped by the color of their skin. The confines of their ambition were expected to be set ceaselessly. Although many a time the manifestations of racism are taken for granted, it is

pervasive in the American culture to the point that it incapacitates people of color.

The decade of the 1970s, around which Baldwin's sprawling fourth novel *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone* is set, is known as the beginning of the Post-Civil Rights Movement Era. In a first-person narration, it recounts the central character Leo Proudhammer's maturation and the background out of which his life situation proceeds. With several federal acts of legislation established to protect the rights of all Americans, the 1970s marked the start of a new era. During this decade, African Americans made great steps into politics, academe, as well as business. The Black Americans were rising with the first issue of the woman's magazine *Essence* being published, winning Pulitzer Prize, getting appointed as president in a predominantly white university, and so on. Yet, we see that racism was not entirely removed from the minds of the White folks. The power, anger, trauma, love, fear, hope, and ambition in the select texts have been described by Baldwin with such a personal and yet universal tone to it.

We are first introduced to the character Leo as recovering from a heart attack caused during one of his stage performances. Leo is now a celebrated Black actor, and in his recovery the readers are taken to the major events in Harlem and various other places he had been part of, in flashbacks. We are told of his father who carries a Black pride, his hardworking mother, and his brother Caleb, who was his everything for a very long period of time. Apart from his family, we are also introduced to his friends and lovers, a White lady Barbara and a Black man Christopher, and to various other characters in the development of the plot. Baldwin gives us a poignant narration of being battered by the endless hurdles and dejection as a result of a broken system where colored people often fall victims to. In the symbolic representation of the title of the book, suggesting the protagonist's anticipation to gain his consciousness as he lay unconscious at the hospital, one can also relate to the author's wrath and keenness about how long he has been waiting to board the American train of equality that is non-inclusive of diversity.

Leo is, in many ways, James Baldwin himself. Successful and true to his craft, Leo is nevertheless tortured by a strong sense of loneliness as a result of the loss of his brother to prison, to church, as well as by his own sexual and racial isolation. Clearly, Baldwin's own situation as a writer is at the heart of the novel, for his protagonist functions both as an artist and a spokesman. For the first time it shows Baldwin speaking of Negro militancy as a hope for the future. Hitherto he has been professing love as the only weapon with which the racial

nightmare is to be fought. But here he supports his belief in the strength of mutual existence for both the Whites and non-Whites in America. Divided into three parts, “The House Nigger” mainly talks about life at Harlem, the second “Is There Anybody There? Said the Traveller” recounts the protagonist’s life away from his family and home, and the third “Black Christopher” details Leo’s recovery and his quest for love. *Tell Me* is Baldwin’s most open political novel in that the issues regarding the question of the relation of men to society and to each other are more considerably and explicitly discussed than in any of his preceding fiction.

In the narrative, the failure in embracing cultural diversity is best epitomized in the inter-racial love between Leo and Barbara, who are both conscious of the pressures against their interracial relationship. They are not accepted by their families and by society as well, and because “Fear and love cannot remain in the same bed together,” they are compelled to accept the denial of love which results from an unavoidable resentment born of White prejudice (269). Using Tish as his mouthpiece in *Beale Street*, Baldwin says, “I don’t think America is God’s gift to anybody – if it is, God’s days have *got* to be numbered” (39). Leo’s interracial relationship with Barbara caused him to be battered, as no jobs were offered to him, and had to anxiously watch out for the cops to be there at his doorstep any moment. Though they were in a relationship for fifteen years, Leo saw no future with Barbara for obvious social reasons. “Those who wanted their women black wanted them black; and those who wanted their women white wanted them white” shows the disturbing in-between space that African Americans carry all throughout their life owing to the hostile America as well as their inability to cling to their own roots in totality as a result of changed circumstances and situations (49). The intermixing of multicultures in America makes it a creole society and it belongs to both the Blacks and Whites and as such there should be no issue of race or color.

Of all the frontiers that Leo mentions on the way to the nightcap, the most terrible was the invisible frontier which divides American towns, white from black. Upon reaching the destination and seeing Black men in countless musical comedies, moving in uncanny time to the music, and without a care in the world, it did not only sound like life but also looked like life to Leo and his friends. But when the crowd saw Leo holding hands with a White woman their faces changed. While some women looked at him with a terrible contempt, the men looked at him as though he were a fool. Leo knew that some of the men in the gathering would not scruple to suggest that “If a white woman would sleep with one black man, then, obviously, she had no self-respect, and would sleep with an entire black regiment” (147). Leo

had not yet learned, though time was to teach him, how hideous it is to be always in a false position. African Americans had been formed by the images made of them by those who had had the deepest need to despise them. When asked the meaning of being Black today by Ida, Baldwin replied, “all that money in all those banks was made by me for them” and so, “for me what it means to be black” is “what one has been forced to see through, all the pretentions and all the artefacts of the world that calls itself white” (91). The resentfully despicable attributes to which African Americans had been positioned was the beginning of their history and the very foundation of their identities. The people at the gathering saw only what their history had taught them to see.

Baldwin’s fifth novel *If Beale Street Could Talk* is comparatively less expansive, which further recounts the lives of thousands of Black Americans who are helplessly doomed in the hands of White supremacy. In achieving his purpose, Baldwin makes use of a street located in Downtown Memphis, Tennessee, known as Beale Street, which in the early 1900s was filled with a number of clubs, restaurants and shops largely owned by the African Americans. The title of the book itself is symbolic of the universal cry in quest of an onlooker to bear witness to the evils taking place. “If Beale Street Could Talk” mainly gives an account of the author’s contemplation that if only the street could talk, it would be a total witness to the lifestyle of Americans, and to the sufferings of colored Americans. Again, through the first person narration of a nineteen year old Black girl, Tish, we are exposed to the biased American justice system such as in the false charge on her young Black fiancé, Fonny, who is imprisoned on the evidence of a racist policeman. The private world of Tish and her family are threatened by the larger social world. As both their families fight to secure Fonny’s release, they discover the casual inhumanity of a White world for which the law is merely a convenient cover for prejudice.

Beale Street is narrated in two sections, “Troubled About My Soul” and “Zion.” While the first articulates the adversities of being Black, the second proposes recovery from the troubles of the soul and attainment of spiritual freedom. Structured with a slow unfolding of social and spiritual distress, the narrative gradually gives way to a swift and revelatory clarity. In a multicultural society where there is detestation even within the same Black race, especially meted towards the poor, Baldwin provides a model of selfless courageous leadership through his profound love for humanity. In his own description, *Beale Street* is “about the price we have to pay and the ways in which we help each other to survive” (Weatherby 317). The novel is a profound love story celebrating union at the backdrop of the entrenched racial

bigotry in American society. It presents a fulfillment and consummation of love, hitherto unattempted in any of the previous novels of Baldwin, which makes both the narratives diverse and appealing.

As the American nation face changing demographics within their population, we see that the majority of the citizens by 2020 are people of color. This has prompted the citizens to reflect on the nature and function of the national cultural institutions, and the way the relation between humans, humanities, and the arts is defined. In the recent years, things have taken a positive turn in the lives of African Americans as we see a more inclusive America, however, whether it is in the field of literature, politics, or canon formation, embracing diversities and transcending differences have been problematic in a racist society that demands assimilation into the dominant group. Baldwin's description of Harlem provides lucid insight to some of the extreme exclusivism that African Americans face in America.

2.2.2 Harlem as the Indispensable Setting: Harlem, a neighborhood in the northern part of the New York City, has a long and rich history that dates back to the 1600s and has been home to a lot of races and ethnic groups. Harlem is a densely populated area that was originally a Dutch village largely occupied by the Jewish and Italian Americans in the nineteen century, until heaps of African Americans arrived during the Great Migration in the twentieth century that internationally came to be known as "the Black Mecca of the world" (https://www.cumc.columbia.edu/harlem-hospital/general-information/harlem-and-new-york-city). Initially it was used as farmland that remained for over 200 years, but following the elevated railroads being extended north to Harlem in the 1880s, Harlem began to urbanize and became an industrialized neighborhood.

Most of greater Harlem's residents were Blacks since the 1920s, marking its peak with 98% of the population in 1950. Although throughout history Harlem has been well-known as an African American neighborhood in America, the demographics have changed since 2000, gaining more White residents. According to the April 2020 census, we see the shrink in the Black population. Today Harlem is experiencing a new renaissance in many areas of life, however during the Great Depression of 1929-33 and the de-industrialization of New York City after the Second World War the drop of employment opportunities led to considerable rise in crime and poverty. Harlem had its own share of suffering and been through end number of hardships that will be examined in Baldwin's narratives.

Harlem has been a significant setting in the literature of the African Americans because it was home to many cultural and artistic icons. It was from this particular neighborhood that the Harlem Renaissance was originated, and it was also significant during one of the most important movements in the world history, the Civil Rights Movement. Many important Black figures used Harlem as a platform for social, political, and economic empowerment. Even though contemporary Harlem experiences new growth and gentrification, the history and culture of Harlem is still evident to this juncture. One of the evidences is through literary works. James Baldwin was a distinguished global intellectual, who resided in different cities and towns but Harlem was at the centre of his writing. Although a transatlantic commuter travelling between US and France, he kept an apartment at Harlem that he permanently owned in 1965 and was home to Baldwin especially during the final days of his life. He lived in several apartments in Harlem and Greenwich Village before that, which served as an inspiration in his early works. As the heart of African American culture at the time Baldwin was born, Harlem was a culturally vibrant neighbourhood greatly affected by poverty and violence.

Baldwin had a rough childhood because of his family's poverty and the unpleasantness of his Harlem neighborhood. Although he departed from Harlem at a very young age of eighteen, in every book he zealously returned to the place he had grown up in. Rising out of Harlem, Baldwin witnessed the moral failure of the American nation and of Western Civilization in general, but also the possibilities to revive it. The Harlem that Baldwin remembers was multiracial, and despite its poverty, there was community. But this does not mean that there was no racial conflict. The world from which young Baldwin traveled each day was marked by "extreme poverty and bleakness and by deprivation, denial and repression" (Leeming 27). The racial and economic pressures around him was apparent, where individuals were led to give up their lives rather than bear the suffering just as characterized by Frank in *Beale Street*.

A lot of Blacks who are segregated by Whites lead an impoverished life as represented by the characters who struggle to survive in American society resulting from the unfavourable economic condition. Leo's mother had to work as a maid to make ends meet. Frank then, endeavours to support his family by managing a tailor shop, the result of which turns out to be a failure because as Tish claims, nobody had money to take clothes to the tailor. Most occupations offered to Black people were generally low-paid and tedious. Joseph is a worker on the docks who harbours no interest in the job at all. Similarly, to cope with the problem of

starvation, Fonny works as a short-order cook in a barbecue joint to feed himself. It is a sharp rhetorical expression in the novel that underprivileged Blacks are like the prey of vultures.

Harlem was always a major setting in Baldwin's works, and its people were recurrent in all of his narratives. Although both the brothers, Leo and Caleb, grow up in the same bleak circumstances in Harlem, they face different experiences and so what and how they build themselves out of these experiences shapes the main plot of the novel. From the very beginning of *Tell Me,* the setting of Harlem is uncovered through the physical description of Leo's doctor having a "broad face, with brown hair and blue eyes, a big, aggressive nose, and fleshy lips" that reminded him of a Harlem barber who had sometimes cut his hair (5). As he recuperates in the hospital, Leo recalls how his family would sit around the gas stove in the kitchen during wintertime, and how they would replace the gas with the kerosene stove whenever it runs off because their landlord would refuse to give them heat on account of their delay in paying their rent. Their destitute living condition, with rat-infested home and falling ceiling that almost got the mother killed, is indicative of the lives of thousands of African Americans under pathetic condition struggling for survival in Harlem at the time Baldwin wrote the novel.

Tish explains in *Beale Street* how the place they were residing is not too bad an apartment, as housing projects go, as compared to the other places in Harlem that were far worse than the projects. When Fonny and Tish look for their wedding house, the readers are exposed to numerous babies being born in places with "rats as big as cats, roaches the size of mice, splinters the size of a man's finger" that makes it hard for them to survive (42). Baldwin's representation of the horrifying circumstances of Harlem in his texts mirrors the misery of the existence of colored people. The section of Harlem in which the Proudhammer boys had grown up further heightens this unfortunate living condition. On learning that they got bills to meet at the store, and considering their scarcity and helplessness, young Leo begins to steal in stores that are distant from his neighborhood in order not to humiliate his mother if at all he gets caught. His father, who was a ruined Barbados peasant, was exiled in Harlem which he loathed as "life took place neither indoors nor without, and where there was no joy" (11). He had been laid off from his job, leading to their eviction in a two-room apartment of a defeated building on the edge of the Harlem River, in which all he found were odd jobs for a day or two. This was the place where they stayed their last days as a family together because Caleb was taken prisoner on suspect of almost killing a man, which also led him to quit school. Their mother began working as a maid in the Bronx, who would bring home leftovers from

Miss Anne's kitchen. Leo became a shoe-shine boy downtown after school, and at the weekends sold shopping bags in front of the department stores. They were cold, frightened and hungry in Harlem. The kind of humiliation that the Proudhammers face is part of what it means to be an African American in Harlem, and by addition, in the entire United States of America. The disgrace extends to the father, the man who descended from royalty but is now unable to even protect his children and instead has to accept his own inability. We thus see the agonizing search for acceptance, inclusiveness and love in a loveless, racist, self-centred America. Harlem with its racial segregation and the overpowering barriers faced by young African Americans raised in poverty as such serves as an indispensable setting throughout Baldwin's works. Baldwin's experiences at Harlem had made him deeply conscious of the problem of racial conflict, a conflict that impeccably leads to alienation and loss in the Negro identity.

2.2.3 A Sense of Loss in the Black Man's Identity: The problem of displacement, alienation, and a sense of loss in the Negro identity is an inevitable outcome of colonization and is also intricately woven with the problem of race relations. Because colonialism may be the invasion and dominance of other people's land and property, but as Loomba has fittingly remarked, "it has been a recurrent and widespread feature of human history" (8). Diaspora in some ways gave birth to the circumstance of displacement. The experience in the case of Baldwin's narratives is a result of imprisonment, impoverishment and racial differentiation. Many postcolonial texts acknowledge the psychological and personal dislocations that result from this cultural criticism, and it is against this dislocating process that Baldwin's decolonizing ventures are established. We see colonialist ideology being operated within the borders of American country, wherein African Americans are marginalized. This can be seen in the practice of "othering," a division between "us" and "them."

What stirred the imagination of Baldwin was not just the struggle of Black men to survive in a White world, but also the far more serious question of the "self." Not only his fictional works, but some of Baldwin's non-fictional works also show a growing awareness of the problems inherent in the quest for personal and artistic identity. The sexual, religious, and artistic crises in Baldwin's own life gave rise to a resolute dedication to the search for the discovery of the self. The question of identity is constantly presented to his characters and indeed it is often "a clue to literal survival" as Bigsby has observed (107). Baldwin continually demonstrates his knowledge of the burden of being Black in a white America. In the tension between his Black and White affiliations lies Baldwin's central ambivalence. On

one hand he joins his Black brothers in lamenting the atrocities committed against his people, and on the other hand he is unable to abandon all hope in the White man.

The Black characters in Baldwin's novels are similarly engaged in an inevitable estrangement from both the Black world of his childhood left behind and the White world where his hopes lay, an intense struggle to reconcile two contradictory identities, one as a Negro and the other as an American. He must discover his roots in a hostile country which is indifferent towards colored folks. In Du Bois' hopes "to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American," we see the universal hope of African Americans to belong (*The Souls* 17). The author's sense of utter hopelessness is seen in his characters' frantic questing for reality, acceptance, and identity beyond conventional borders, especially in racial and sexual relations. Baldwin is weighed down by his own alienation as a Negro, by his awareness of the White men's misconception about Negroes, and by his own vision of love.

According to Jan Hadja, alienation is a feeling of discomfort which reflects an individual's exclusion from social and cultural involvement. It is "an expression of non-belonging or non-sharing, an uneasy awareness or perception of unwelcome contrast with others" (758-59). These definitions capture the experiences of Baldwin's characters that are always being excluded and marginalized. Baldwin has brought different characters and subjects to articulate the feeling of alienation and a sense of loss in the Black man's identity. Gay men, for instance, were often othered as unscrupulous sexual predators. Although homosexuality was legally banned in the United States at the time of his works publication, it was a recurrent theme in Baldwin's fiction. One of the reasons that homosexuality occupies so large a place in his narratives is because it is an American fact. Eckman has quoted Baldwin saying, "The only people who *talk* about homosexuality … in this terrible way – are Americans" (32). Baldwin necessitated this subject as he saw no reason in the sidelining and mistreatment of queer men who were committed to this form of love.

In present America, we not only see the legalization of same-sex marriage, but also allowing gay men in the US military to be open about their sexuality, giving them equal employment opportunity. Further, not only are the gay men included in the social, law, and military spheres, but also in politics. This can be seen in Fred Karger's run for the 2012 Republican presidential nomination, making him America's first openly gay Presidential candidate for a major political party. Further, Pete Buttigiei's run for the 2020 Democratic presidential nomination made him America's first openly gay Democratic Presidential

candidate. Things were however not the same in the 1950s and '60s as they are today. There were very few openly gay men in America before 1950, due to legal consequences as well as social exclusion. Nevertheless, there were a few gay men that significantly impacted American history at this time, particularly literature, such as Walt Whitman and Bayard Taylor with works such as *Calamus* and *Joseph and His Friend: A Story of Pennsylvania* published in 1860 and 1870 respectively, for which Whitman was even fired from his job. With gay activist Harry Hay and notable gay writers such as Baldwin in the 1950s, massive counter-discourses were held against laws that ostracized and alienated this particular community.

Baldwin's characters appear to be sexually alienated as a result of socio-economic conditions. In *Tell Me,* art as communication of pain is inexplicably explored for the Black artist. Some of the extensively described theatre-world parties and scenes are an exposure of the perspective of Leo, one of the major homosexual characters in Baldwin's literature. As a young boy, Leo had an incestuous affair with his brother while living in Harlem. But Leo had been initiated into the world of homosexual while working in the Actor's Workshop. His success as an actor considerably alienates him from his roots, and his heterosexual involvement with White Barbara further weakens his unstable contact with his Black community. In his questing for identity, he gets himself a male lover. "Our common situation, the fact of my colour, had brought us together here; and here we were to speak as one" he asserts (98). Here Leo tries to achieve a greater sense of self through his homosexual commitment to Black Christopher. This achievement not only signifies the actor's openness of his sexuality and his willingness to commit and connect with another individual, but above all, his return to his social roots (Nelson 126). His reconciliation with history, through Christopher, sets him to think about his own commitment to his race in particular and to the community in general.

As a child growing up, Baldwin admits that he suffered at the hands of his tyrannical stepfather, David Baldwin, who inflicted on young Baldwin the psychic wounds from which he struggled to fully recover. It is also believed that his stepfather's aggressive attitude towards him encouraged his homosexuality because he not only wished to rebel in every way, but he was also searching for a father's love in a male persona. The anxious restlessness and wrath of his early years shaped Baldwin for the kind of writer he was to become. The sense of loss and alienation in Black man's identity is also portrayed through the question of color

line. Young Leo in *Tell Me* longed to be held in human arms, and desired for human affection, and to tell it all, which very much resembles the author's longing. Even at the point of been taken to the hospital from the theatre, Leo desperately asks his dresser, Pete, to remove his make-up because he feels that no one would recognize him and that he would be lost. This is a strong indication of how robustly he desires to keep up his identity even on situations like this. As Macebuh has remarked, one of the conditions of Black art in the United States has always been that the writer was bound "to attempt to come to terms with his color, and with the often quite fightful implications of this fact" (103). This then, is the agony of blackness, a search for meaningful identity that has led Black writers into "sometimes strange, sometimes exhilarating paths" (143).

Baldwin had an initially rough beginning as a writer. It was obviously exigent as a colored man considering the time of his writing. And he used this experience to paint Leo's initial hardships at Paradise Alley, and then at the Artists' Means Workshop where he serves as a manual labour, painting signs, mowed lawns, and then as artists' model before becoming a winning actor. Leo had to live three miles outside of town in wooden shacks known as Bull Dog Road with about fifteen of the workshop kids. It had been a celebrated artists' colony and Leo could sense that the people in the town disliked him. Leo did not appear to realize that he was colored and this filled them with such a malevolent exasperation, such an exasperated wonder that the waitress at the diner actually trembled as she poured his coffee, and people moved away from him as though he was possessed by evil spirits. The people despised him but they did not dare rid him out of town because of his connection with the Workshop, with the San-Marquands, who were friends with the stars of stage and screen.

Leo works hard to become the great winning actor that he is but still he experiences a sense of alienation for being Black. Colored people like Leo were not expected to even aim for excellence. Leo suffers living in a White world where White cruelty becomes somehow liable for the poverty and anxiety which surrounded him. Baldwin's work questions the agony of poor colored people when even a celebrity like Leo could be racially looked down upon. Anytime and anywhere, Leo's description of the Whites is evil as a reciprocation of their loathing treatment and gesture. A Pizza joint, run by a Sicilian family, was the only place where Whites and Negroes could eat and drink together for the reason that "they had not yet learned to despise Negroes, because they were still bemused by life" as Leo explains (119). He questions the lost humanity of men, and how people can terrorize and kill others in the name of justice, law and order. The conversation between Leo and Caleb shows race conflict

at its peak and the resulting alienation of the Blacks from the Whites: “Are white people-*people*? People like us?” Leo asks, and Caleb answers, “*they* don’t think they are” (281). Baldwin had said to a lot of White audiences since the fifties that one is only white as long as s/he thinks the other is black. Leo is at once a representative character, whose heart attack is a metaphor for crises in the hearts of Black Americans in general. Through Leo’s struggle, Baldwin addresses the conflict within his own mind and within the minds of so many other Blacks in the mid 1960s. Leo’s words towards the end of *Tell Me,* “I had conquered the city: but the city was stricken with the plague. Not in my lifetime would this plague end,” explains the endless cycle of colonialism (371).

Caleb was arrested merely based on suspicion with no real proof of hurting anyone. After his release from prison, Caleb was lonely and sad, shrinking and hysterical, which was painful to watch for his family. As Leo describes, he was “no longer good for love” as the Whites ripped him off love (160). No matter how much colored people like Caleb and Leo think they can fox White men, they are constantly pulled aback and made to feel less. With such traumatic loneliness and a feeling of hopelessness, Blacks never really mastered the audacity to face the Whites. Each time they try and stand up for themselves, they are pushed to the worst case scenario just as Caleb, who is put in the cellar after refusing to be raped in the prison. Leo, then, was hired here and there but led to nothing productive and seeing how everyone except him found the life that suited them, a deep sense of loss and frustration begin to take over his life. The Whites, as Caleb tells Leo, are going to hate them for as long as they live just because they are Black, and this bitter truth has frenzied their minds. Caleb wretchedly furthers how the White policemen take innocent Black members to make them confess to all kinds of things and sometimes even kill them and nobody would care. “If they didn’t need us for work, they’d have killed us all off a long time ago” he validates (47). All these scenes of White hypocrisy witnessed at a very young age make Leo to subconsciously build an image of apprehension and distrust towards the White men’s approach.

The colored people in Baldwin’s texts were the colonized subjects that were figuratively exiled with no established cultural identity. They had to mimic the dominant culture in their desire to belong, which although benefitted them in some ways, it also overwhelmed them by a defeating sense of failure. In the narratives, the condition of exile is found in the characters that transport to and fro between different places, unable to truly find a sense of belonging in both spaces. For instance, the Riverses and Proudhammers’ displacement is representative of the mass immigration of Africans to America since the time of slavery. On being asked at one

occasion if he would be returning back after his few days stay in town, Mathew from Philadelphia replies, "I'm not sure I know *where* I'm going from here" to which Leo adds, "None of us do" (133). This evidently depicts the depressing experience of displacement and exile of colored populace. Mathew represents the contemporary American Negro who is faced with a most confusing dilemma. He does not know where he is going or where his reliability is. And given their situation, he has every right to his confusion. Unfortunately, as Clarke mentions, the Negro writer too has been unable to escape this confusion, "wondering who he is, an American or what?" He is troubled "squaring his art and his sense of reality with the American dream" (271). This confusion in the lives of African Americans is brought about as a result of the individuals who are torn between the culture into which they were born and the culture in which they were called to assimilate. Bhabha's analysis of colonizer-colonized relations stresses their interdependence and here, Baldwin calls for a similar policy.

African Americans were enforced to fit into the melting pot, and therefore had to appropriate the American culture such as their thoughts, language and forms of writing, in articulating their own social and cultural identities. Language is one of the important areas of concern in postcolonial criticism. We see that many non-English-speaking writers choose to write in English because the colonial language has become a useful way of expressing their thoughts and realities that reaches a wider audience. Baldwin has incredibly made use of the dominant language with a great deal of humanity involved in his depiction of certain greyness, such as the feelings of alienation, desolation and chaos. Leo's assertion, "I have lived long enough to see my language stolen," intensely suggests the many things that have been stolen from the Black community (91). In appropriating and mimicking the host country, Baldwin tries to caution his people of not losing their identity. Baldwin fears that the real risk lies in the individual becoming his own jailer or simply surrendering to the violence of experience rather than creating himself, his own language and meaning out of pain.

As a colored man, Leo tries and works hard to lift himself up and prove his capability to stand parallel with the White man. He knows that he got to slow down but he cannot. Barbara had sometimes told him, "*you also have the right to live… You haven't got to prove it*" (57). He is even warned by his doctor to take things slow if he wants to live. Back then, Leo was ashamed of his lack of education and he would read everything his hands could get hold of. He overworked himself up to come to terms with America and its people. With his commitment to Barbara he strived for racelessness, and with his commitment to Christopher, he strived to achieve specific racial identity.

Black people have been expressing their identity through their own language, music and lifestyle. From the time of the Harlem Renaissance, and even the time of slavery to date further back, music has been fundamental in the everyday culture and expression of African Americans. Like a number of African American writers before him such as Ralph Ellison and LeRoi Jones, Baldwin iterated the importance of music in his writing as a metaphor to his emotions. A lot of the fiction as well as nonfiction titles of Baldwin draw on African American music and both *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been* Gone and *If Beale Street Could Talk* are fine examples. It can be generally observed that Baldwin's writings owe much to the Negro folk tradition such as the blues, jazz, spirituals, and folk literature. The messages in the blues songs set the desolate tone that heightens the feeling of alienation. For instance, when his pride is hurt by Saul at the party, Leo gets hold of the piano and plays it while he sings, "*Blues, you're driving me crazy, what am I to do? I ain't got nobody to tell my troubles to*" (78). Music serves as a means of communication for Baldwin's characters when they fall short to express in words.

Another significant subject through which Baldwin addresses the sense of loss in the Black man's identity is the poverty of the characters and the feeling of nostalgia. Until the mid-twentieth century, colonialism continued to bring about physical and cultural displacements as well as relocations of not only the natives but also the colonial settlers in many parts of the world. As such, displacement remained the underlying cause of nostalgia. Even after many years, Leo remains nostalgic about the frightening and confused years when he first met Barbara in the Greenwich Village, where they shared two floors in a falling-down tenement on the East side with three other men. He feels nostalgic about living under one roof as family, taking turns in shop lifting because they could not risk getting arrested all at once. He was also nostalgic about how they raised money to abort her child, their first party at Mr. Frank's, one of the instructors at the League, and how they were intimidated at the presence of important and rich people from the film industry. They called their place Paradise Alley and although they were now comfortable and living a good life, none of it had seemed beautiful back then.

Leo's father was also nostalgic about Africa, whose people "had hurled themselves off slave," and "grateful to the enveloping water and even grateful to the teeth of sharks for making the journey home so swift" and whose people had the belief that death was a return to one's ancestors, a reunion with those one loved (10). He was lonely for his past, lonely for those faces which had borne witness to the past. We find Baldwin's voice when Leo's father

says, “I don’t know what’s wrong with our people. We need a prophet to straighten out our minds and lead us of this hell” (18). There are deaths throughout history for which it seem impossible for the Blacks to forgive the world, deaths to which one never becomes prepared to accept. These memories and hard nostalgia make them, in many ways, powerless to surpass trauma and to overcome the sense of Otherness. On being asked by Auchincloss and Nancy about what can a person do in order to overcome this, Baldwin replies, “you’ve got somehow to break through that thing which divides you and get into each other’s lives” but this, according to Baldwin, “almost never happens… and never at all within the liberal context,” for the reason that “the whole rhetoric is designed to prevent that from happening (66).

Leo would sometimes long for the island which had been witness to his father’s birth instead of the island of Manhattan, as he believes that life would have been much easier for them, and that they would have looked on each other differently. He believes that they would not have been so frightened of entering into the central and valuable facts of their lives and would have known less about vanished African kingdoms and more about each other. Baldwin’s novels, which stress the ambiguity of the American Negro’s status in society resulting from the loss of identity and absence of establishing a clear understanding between the Negro and the American values, are true attempts to understand individual and cultural experiences and interracial relationships. Influenced by the tragic realism and liberalism that dominated American intellectual life in the decades after World War II, Baldwin focuses as much on issues of identity and sexuality as on race.

In conversing with Kenneth Clark, Baldwin states that the part of the dilemma of being an American Negro is that, the individual is a little bit colored and a little bit white, not only in the physical terms but also in the head and heart. There are days, he says, when “you wonder what your role is in this country and what your future is in it” “how precisely are you going to reconcile yourself to your situation here” and “how are you going to communicate to the vast headless, unthinking, cruel white majority.” He furthers that he could depart from this country and go wherever he wish to but at the end of the day, he is an American and “that is a fact” (40). Leo’s certainty about his own social utility as an actor is surely Baldwin’s own confidence. “I could if I kept the faith, transform my sorrow into life and joy” Leo says, and that he might live in pain and sorrow forever but if he kept the faith, he would never be useless. He adds, “I could for others what I felt had not been done for me, and if I could do

that, if I could give, I could live" (62). Here was the universal message that the author was resolved to impart.

2.2.4 Prisons and Prisoners as a Dominant Metaphor: Prisons and Prisoners were a dominant metaphor in Baldwin's fictional texts. Prisoners were not only addressed by Baldwin as those persons put behind bars, but also those who were deprived of their birthright in the prison of racism in America. Baldwin himself was a prisoner because of his race. In all his works as such, Baldwin spoke of the Black man's repression evident in the United States, and the margins which limited Black possibility. Both *Tell Me* and *Beale Street* fictionalize Baldwin's concerns on physical imprisonment during the period 1968-73, and also demonstrate his long considered thoughts on psychological, emotional, and intellectual imprisonment. These texts make us aware of the deadly effects imprisonment can have on African American victims, and also how the prison experience exacerbate their social, psychological, and physical problems.

The United States of America has the highest incarceration rate in the world, because "it incarcerates more men of African ancestry than any other country on the planet" (Hawkins and Jones 403-25). It is recorded that African American men are incarcerated at a rate four times higher than the rate for indigenous South Africans. Several laws endowed the security police with unrestricted powers to arrest Blacks on mere suspicions and political trials, many of whom were charged without any crime. "Between 1963 and 1990, at least seventy-three people died in detention," excluding those abducted and killed by police outside the protection of the security laws (Graham 225). Even among the detainees, White prisoners were much less likely to be physically abused as compared to their Black counterparts. This biased physical torture resulted in their subjection to psychological anguish and these forms of psychological exploitation inflict on the survivor a number of mental health disorders from which it becomes difficult to heal from. Most social service and mental health agencies have over the years ignored the plight of colored prisoners, failing to offer services that address the needs of prisoners or their families, which only prolonged their anguish.

Though Baldwin had not been incarcerated, his brother David had died in jail which served as a model in many of Baldwin's fictional brothers suffering at the hands of the White law. It is also believed that Baldwin was a constant visitor to jails in Europe and America when his former chauffeur was charged with murder. This experience played a significant role in the creation of *Beale Street.* The narrative primarily centres on a young Black couple, Tish

Rivers and Fonny Hunt, where Fonny is falsely victimized by the judicial system on being accused of raping a Puerto Rican woman named Victoria Rogers. A great deal of Tish's story is in her trips to the prison and as such, part of the key to the book is the prison situation. In the process of saving Fonny out of prison, their families have to withstand the extremely wretched phenomenon of racism characterized by White dominance. We find a profound comparison of the prison corridors to the Sahara desert in the narrative. "If you cross the Sahara, and you fall, by and by vultures circle around you, smelling, sensing, your death" for the vultures know exactly when "the flesh is ready," and when "the spirit cannot fight back" (15). Tish says that the poor people who are Black like her are always crossing the Sahara, and the lawyers and that entire crowd circle around them like vultures. In effect, although there are few Whites in the book that are in some ways humane, institutionally the society is shown as thwarting Black hopes with a pessimistic lack of concern.

According to 2014 Census data, there are more young Black high school dropouts in prison than have jobs (https://www.washingtonpost.com). With such statistics indicating that there were more Black Americans in jails than in schools and workplace, the possibility to live in a nation devoid of judgments based on skin color seems far-fetched. A lot of what the African American thinkers envisioned seemed to have very little connection to American reality, at least during the period that Baldwin wrote. Blacks were excluded from the notion of "all men" in the 1776 American independence proposition of equality for all men as they were denied even the basic human rights. Baldwin shows how in spite of having achieved American citizenship, Blacks were yet to achieve the same legal and human rights as Whites. They were confined in the alleged stereotype of degraded criminals and as transgressors against law and order. In the novel, both Fonny and Daniel fall victim to White dominance owing to the racial animosity of White policemen. Fonny was accused of a crime he did not commit, but only because he was the "blackest thing in the line-up that morning" (212). Baldwin rightly says in an interview with Terkel that "What white people see when they look at [Negro] is not visible. What they do see when they do look at you is what they have invested you with" and without a doubt, what they have invested the Blacks with is all the negative attributes, "sin, death, and hell- of which everyone in this country is terrified" (6).

In prison Fonny tries every day to keep himself in a good spirit, but he fails to succeed because he lives with constant fear of this "democratic hell" (152). As pregnant Tish pays her daily visit in the prison, we see the painful moment where each time Fonny has to rise and turn, the door opens behind him. The baby in Tish's womb, who is like a prisoner longing to

be free, is a symbolical representation of Fonny's determination to be free from bondage. Though Sharon had a voice, she could not pass as a singer because to endure and embrace the life of a singer demands a whole lot more than a voice. It is difficult to excel "in this kingdom of blind" where people choose to brush off the beauty and talent of colored people (38). As such, Frank comments that he would rather choose to be boiled alive than to keep his son Fonny at the hands of White folks as he does not, in any way, feel safe with them. And it is expected of him to be upset in support of the appalling outcome of racial hatred that had been poured out to the non-White communities.

Officer Bell's fraudulently convincing testimony, that he saw Fonny running away from the scene of the crime, was enough to incarcerate a poor Black soul. These are stories from a 1968 and 1974 novel but we find them recurring in Black writings every generation simply because they still fall victims to corrupt structure. Preys like Fonny and Daniel feel terrible because they are placed in a fraud situation for no right reason. There are actual murderers, rapists, and thieves outside committing crimes and treacheries and they are inside a prison cell for doing nothing. "Maybe I'd feel different had I done something and got caught. But I didn't do nothing" bewails Daniel (123). The White authorities were simply messing with him because they could do whatever they wish to. And the victims' families back home had to work tirelessly, taking up a couple of menial jobs wherever luck favours, to raise money for the bail and for the lawyer's fee.

The miscalculations of American society are vast as shown in the projection of White and Black characters. Although the murder of a Black kid without any genuine reason by officer Bell could be used to prove his corruptibility, Fonny was always overwhelmed by the strong sense of doubt and fear that the jury will only want to award Bell a medal for keeping the streets safe. This is indicative of the nought believe he has on the White juries and also of the impossibility of the White authorities to take into account the sayings of a non-White. What is even more unpromising and worrisome is the reality that every witness for Fonny is immobilized, isolated or intimidated by the District Attorney's office, the prosecution and the state. Victoria, the victim and principle witness, has a miscarriage and gets insane after losing her baby. Another witness Daniel, who is arrested by the D. A.'s office, is further transferred to a prison upstate. The road to winning Fonny's case is thus blocked with a host of barriers. Given that Fonny is a Black man, the judicial system permeated with racial bias hinders the endeavour for his freedom. Hence, there evidently was little possibility for Blacks to claim legal rights under such an unjust legal system.

As a defenceless Negro, Daniel too is unjustifiably framed by the police for stealing a car although he is incapable of driving. Intimidated by the White policemen for a more serious charge of marijuana found in his pocket, he ultimately enters the guilty plea. Imprisonment exposes prisoners to dangerous individuals and life-threatening conditions, such as violent assaults, drugs, rape, and various sicknesses. Homosexual assault or rape is one quandary that jeopardizes the physical and psychological well-being of incarcerated African American men. The two-year sentence completely destroys Daniel's life and continues to weaken his psychic world even after he leaves the jail because he had to witness cruelties that he had least anticipated for. All these experiences are matter-of-fact portrayal of the exploitative ways in which the American judicial system miserably falls short toward Black men.

Similarly, in *Tell Me,* Caleb is imprisoned for four years on a Southern prison farm under intolerable conditions on false charge of nearly killing a man in addition to robbery. Early in his life, Caleb comes to terms that he has never met any good White man and this contempt is heightened by the treatment he receives from the power structure when he is drawn in by his friends in a store robbery. When he returns home from prison, we find his spirit being completely devastated. "Oh, what they did to me" is what he would utter, his only expression of grief holding his breath (162). Caleb explains how in the prison, the blacker the prisoners were, the harder they were beaten by the White supervisors. They were also fed only with the sole purpose to make them work. When the ringleader Martin Howell proclaims, "Niggers ain't worth a shit," the coloured men were compelled to say, "No, Mr Howell, we ain't worth shit" (180). This, to Caleb, hurt more than the whip and rifle strike. Even in prisons, it is apparent that Blacks were doubly colonized as a result of the artificial borders set forth by higher authorities, caused by racism.

Baldwin wrote at a time when discrimination based on skin color was blatant. As such, he paints the majority of lawyers as White people unwilling to defend Black prisoners. Daniel's lawyer does not prove that his client is not guilty of stealing a car. It was "as rare as snowstorms in the tropics" to find considerate or even intelligent judges (151). When the White lawyer Mr. Hayward tries his utmost to verify Fonny's innocence, there is multitude of interference along the way on the ground that Blacks are not supposed to posses legal rights to defend their lives. As Hayward states, "The truth of a case doesn't matter. What matters is-who wins" (113). And clearly, if Fonny and the other Black victims were White, it would not have been a case at all. Caleb challenging his father about if there was any friendly judge that he knows to help a Black man or if they got money for a lawyer further exposes White

malevolence and the outcry against the destructive misery of the Blacks. Taking all these into account, we see how racial intolerance degrades Blacks to guilty offenders.

Separation from family, friends and community is, in all probability, the most devastating social and psychological experience an African American person can encounter because if we look at their cultural ethos, it is apparent that African Americans have great value for family and friends above all the social relationships they enjoy with other human beings. This ethos is best expressed in the African proverb, "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti 106). These relationships provide people of African ancestry with the emotional, psychological, and spiritual energy needed for healthy psychological outlook. Thus when African Americans are incarcerated, they are being separated from the source of their identity and reason for being, leading to mental health difficulties such as depression and suicide. Adding up to the aforementioned problems, even upon their release, prison records condemn Black prisoners for life.

Prisons and prisoners are not only used in the literal sense by Baldwin, but also metaphorically. For instance, he talks about the imprisonment of Black women, who are vulnerable for sexual exploitation by White men. Tish is often confronted with such harassments. Her experience at a vegetable stand is one classic example, where a young Italian boy touches her inappropriately and the White crowd choose to remain indifferent. Tish's hope of finding aid from the White cop turns unsuccessful, as he himself is a racist holding prejudice towards Blacks. When Fonny comes to his wife's rescue, the cop instead proposed to arrest Fonny on the false account of physically attacking the boy. This testifies to the futility for Blacks to find protection from the law.

Baldwin also talks about how Black people are prisoners of racial inequality in education, economy, social life, as well as in inter-racial love. History has witnessed Blacks' dire conditions in education where they are denied the privilege of proper learning. The real purpose of schools for Blacks is brought to light when the vocational school that Fonny used to attend taught kids to make all kinds of ineffective things such as card-tables and hassocks, instead of imparting them with valuable education. They justify by saying that the kids are dumb and so they are teaching them "to work with their hands" but in actuality, the people who run these schools are only teaching the kids to be "slaves." In most White people's eyes, Blacks are still seen as servile slaves. The kids struggled but "they fell like flies, and they congregated on the garbage heaps of their lives, like flies" (48). Fonny somehow found

sculpture as his passion, but it was only short lived as he was wrongly locked up. The kids had been instructed all their life that they were not worth anything, and everything they saw around them was proof enough. The outcome of this instruction is death, in many forms, waiting to overtake the children.

Malcolm X's famous statement that he does not see any American dream but an American nightmare is true to describe Baldwin's perspectives on America. Both the texts show Baldwin's idea that all accomplices in systems polluted by prejudice are prisoners. Baldwin always denied when he was described as a "spokesman" for American Blacks and instead replied that he was a witness, "Witness to whence I came, where I am. Witness to what I've seen and the possibilities that I think I see" (Weatherby 2). Life for him was a never-ending struggle between Good and Evil, as much inside a person as outside, and that was certainly how he saw the racial situation in America. As Baldwin faithfully records a racial loss of innocence in both the novels, he also does not leave the religious hypocrisy of his time unaddressed.

2.2.5 The Conception of Religious Hypocrisy and Christian Faith: During his high school years, Baldwin divided time between his literary interests with a religious profession. He was brought up in rigid pieties and a revivalist atmosphere having a Harlem store-front church preacher as a father. At the age of 14, he himself became a boy preacher, although after three years he left the ministry because of church hypocrisy. By 1954, Baldwin was no longer a member of any church, but the habits of thought formed over a period of twenty years could not be separated from him or his works. Thus, writing for him at this time primarily became "a means of personal therapy, a medium, as it were, of exorcism through confrontation" in the words of Macebuh (51). It was from his stepfather that he acquired his detailed knowledge of the Bible, which had a massive effect on his thinking and his approach to life.

The church-related subject is apparent to have profoundly colored his prose when he began his writing, and is also seen in most of his fictional works. Through his novels, Baldwin criticizes the lack of humanitarianism, love and compassion in a Christianity whose members are unable to transcend the physical manifestation of religious fervour. Baldwin firmly believed that Christianity has made the Black American stagnant and ignorant of the dynamic forces within himself and the society in general. In *Tell Me*, we see a violent rejection of Christianity by Leo. In *Beale Street*, that rejection is made even more vehement through the satirical presentation of Mrs. Hunt, Fonny's Christian mother. The conception of religion

revealed in both the narratives seems essentially atheistic though Baldwin's early Christian commitment remains. Religious hypocrisy can be seen reflected in the life of Mrs. Hunt who, although could not save her husband, was determined to save her son Fonny. Although it is considered a sin in the Christian context to be impregnated for a lady before marriage, the way Mrs. Hunt curses Tish when she comes to know of her pregnancy, reveals her double-standard Christian belief. She believes Tish to have a "demon" in her that would be a destruction to her son, cursing her that "the Holy Ghost" will cause "that child to shrivel" in her womb (85). Tish's description of the church people as more "respectable" and "civilized" rather than "sanctified" says it all (33). Despite her religious standard of living, Mrs. Hunt failed in many ways to incorporate Christian values.

In Daniel's longing of freedom and to confront his life, his fear of what life and that freedom may bring is also clearly visible. Struggling in this trap, Fonny encourages his friend by making references to the biblical deliverance, "*Didn't* my Lord deliver Daniel? And why not every man?" (127). But what seems perceptible is that not a lot of African Americans have found an answer to deliverance, as articulated by the author. As Christopher tells Ken, the reason so many Blacks come out of the church is because the church is the one thing that the White man "*let*" them have, advising them that it was "the *Lord's* will" for the Blacks to be "toting the barges and lifting the bales" while the Whites "sat… and got rich" (360). He further tells Ken that the Whites like him have not changed at all, except for the fact that they have gotten worse.

Baldwin's close association with the Christian church led to his religious disappointments. As a result of religious pretence, many like Baldwin began to lose faith in Christianity just as represented by his characters. By the time Caleb reaches the age of seventeen, he begins to resent all authority. Having witnessed enough degradation at the hands of Whites, he even becomes sceptical about God. This attitude is manifested when the White policemen detain him and little Leo on the street for a brief frisking, patting Leo all over his body, with every touch humiliating. Caleb ragingly curses, "Thanks, good Jesus Christ… for letting us go home… You *could* have let us just get our brains beat out" (46). Looking at the contemptuous eyes of the two self-important White policemen, whom Caleb addresses as scumbag Christians, Leo hated God for miserable situations like this. Leo's father also has nothing to be thankful to God for. When his sons tell him about how they were stopped by the cops, he is dejected. The description of his hopelessness is creatively painted by Baldwin in *Tell Me* as having a biblical storyline:

> It was as though, after indescribable, nearly mortal effort, after grim years of fasting and prayer, after the loss of all he had, and after having been promised by the Almighty that he had paid the price and no more would be demanded of his soul, which was harboured now; it was as though in the midst of his joyful feasting and dancing, crowned and robed, a messenger arrived to tell him that a great error had been made, and that it was all to be done again (50).

Although hateful towards his religion initially, Caleb gradually shields himself from the abuses and injustices suffered by the Blacks by taking refuge in Christianity unlike Leo. And this trait of Caleb is certainly the author's very own. Caleb finds his peace by submitting his will to the God he so desperately hated, although his brother Leo is lost in all the confusion and chaos around him. "Caleb was found, but I was lost" Leo asserted (299). Caleb could put away all his rage and resentment but Leo could not.

Despite all the hatred that he encountered in Harlem, Baldwin could not completely lose hope in man's capacity to love. In an interview with James Mossman, Baldwin confesses that he is not a believer in any sense, for which any church would throw him out but that he is "one who believes in love" (48). Despite the hostile environment he grew up in, it can be said that the values of love and goodness that Baldwin's mother tried to instil in him did not go in vain, as it was for this reason that Baldwin never entirely lost his faith in mankind. "The first Christian I knew was my mother" he says who somewhat really made him believe that it was more important to love each other and love other people than anything else (Baldwin, *Go Tell* 2). An independent man who followed his own path, Baldwin's values were Christian, and his language shared the moral theories of Christianity and liberalism. Baldwin's experience of a religious epiphany at a very young age and his appropriation of the tradition of English language and writing style enabled him to bring forth a great deal of his consciousness into his works. In the postcolonial context, Baldwin's texts can be contrapuntally read.

2.3 A Contrapuntal Reading of James Baldwin's Texts: Baldwin provides a contrapuntal reading, enabling the emergence of colonial arguments that might otherwise remain hidden. Truth obsesses Baldwin and for this, Eckman has quoted Kenneth Clark's remarks that "Jimmy is terrifying" because "he demands of anybody who comes in contact with him a look at some aspect of truth" and "confronts you, not just racially, but with the human predicament" (26). Baldwin was greatly shaped by the age in which he lived, by the bitter struggle of his early life such as the pain of being Black and poor in America, the

responsibility of supporting his younger siblings in Harlem, and his religious conversion. All these paradoxically led to his successful career in writing as his novels grew out of this disillusionment, with hopes for interracial unity and with a personal longing for acceptance. About his novels, Langston Hughes remarks that Baldwin was “a straight-from-the-shoulder writer” writing about the troubled problems of this troubled world “with an illuminating intensity, that should influence for the better all who ponder on the things that books say” (“From Harlem” 10).

As the colonized subjects were Othered, the masses had no other awareness to know otherwise. Contrapuntal reading thus called for the idea of looking at colonialism and literature simultaneously, to take into account both the perception of imperialism and the resistance to it. Baldwin interprets his texts contrapuntally by incorporating different perspectives altogether. He not only relates his text with itself but also with other historical or biological contexts. Baldwin universalizes his anguish and pain through the narration of his own depressing brutalities, while also accounting his tireless effort in bringing about constructive social changes in America through resistance. Essentially a moralist, Baldwin has continually spoken about racism as a moral problem and gradually related it to social forces of other kinds. He is primarily “an institutionalist” says Gibson “who has been critical of the society almost exclusively in regard to moral affairs” (3). Baldwin becomes the timeless voice of mankind through his evocation about the unending ruthless facts of the human condition.

The binary opposition is the most extreme form of differentiation possible. One of the most shattering binary systems kept alive by imperialism is the invention of the concept of race. Much contemporary postcolonial theory has been directed at breaking down various kinds of binary separation in the analysis of colonialism and imperialism, and Baldwin took an urgent responsibility to help the Black Americans have their rights as a full citizen recognized. In both his professional and personal life, Baldwin served as a representative for the exiles and outcasts by barriers of race, sex, and class or “who turned away from safety and chose the honorable path of tearing down such barriers” (Leeming xiii).

Baldwin’s ideas differed quite a lot from the other African American artists, although they aimed for the same goal. This rings true in the character portrayal of Leo, who holds difference in opinions to other luminaries at the monster rally. He knew that they disapproved of him in many ways, just as they knew that he disapproved of them but he believes that

although their intensities and apprehensions were contrasting, they had been brought together in the rally through their common situation which is their colour, and they were to speak as one for they were all generally responsible for something greater than their differences.

Baldwin was constantly maturing in his imagination as can be seen in his later works such as *Tell Me,* which clearly indicates that a more positive socio-political consciousness is beginning to surpass the moral preoccupations of his earlier writings. Although a very different plot and storyline in totality, both the narratives focus on the barriers, misconceptions, and poor judgments based on racism and the psychological, social, political, and economic impact it can have as a result. There are good deals of adversity, but Baldwin also talks about the growing lifestyle of Blacks living in contemporary America as demonstrated by how the characters cope with adversities and come through with courage undaunted and hopes unsullied. Even in the midst of dejection, even though she had a lot to watch and take care of, Leo's mother was determined to bring her family to witness better days. Leo remains adamant that the daylight does not come for everybody and it does not come on time. Although certainly it took them a little more time, they all gradually stumble upon a better living. Baldwin's novels allow and inspire an understanding about how racial conflict in Western societies can be studied and reconstructed. The ideal America that Baldwin longed for may not fully be realized even in present time, but the force of warnings he laid as a true Black spokesman distinguished him from the rest, and helped the American nation from drowning in the downpour of racial violence.

Baldwin vehemently wrote against the boundaries which limit Black possibility. However, his affirmation that he is a lover and consequently an optimist shows how he desires to exterminate prisons of racism with the potency of love, communion, and courage. "To have been where we were, to have paid the price we have paid, to have survived, and to have shaken up the world the way we have is a rare journey" says Baldwin (Lewis 86-87). And this is the Black social reality. Regardless of the frequent darkness of his vision, one will always discover the tone of optimism, order, meaning and hope in Baldwin's works. Not only does the impending birth of Tish and Fonny's baby in *Beale Street* constitute the familial bond, but it also signals the birth of new America. Even amid chaos, Baldwin strived to bring in new possibilities guarded with optimism.

2.4 New Possibilities Amid Old Problems: If we study Baldwin's essential contribution to Black writing, we find that he made it possible for Black American writers to learn how

American society can come to peace with its history. It is partly Baldwin who taught African American writers to look beyond race and to refrain from falling into the trap of stereotypes. As a man who has explored and questioned every dimension of race relations in the American context, Baldwin provides his ability to examine and evaluate the problems confronting the American nation. Baldwin's literary works not only address the changing dynamics of the continuing severe racial and identity crises but also provides possibilities to cope with such eventualities. His works explore the endless potentials of language, of thought, of spirituality, and of mankind.

Even when Baldwin is critical of something, it is always safeguarded with love. An appraisal of the novels and essays of Baldwin clearly reveals the search for love as one of the most pervasive themes. Baldwin attributes much of America's problems today to lack of love and empathy. Baldwin has always had a quarrel with America about the standards by which it appears to live. "People are drowning in things" he says, "I think the great emotional or psychological or effective lack of love and touching is the key to the American or even the western disease" (Mead and Baldwin 60-70). Baldwin provides a positive model for expressing the possibility of outliving one's childhood prejudices and fears, and how there can be calm after the storm, while also transmitting for a supportive human relationship irrespective of social and racial background.

In all his works, Baldwin's primary concern was with social change, in the sense of transformed realization of the individual, the individual responsibility regardless of their color to unitedly root out racism. As Leeming underlines Rosalind Davis' statement, James Baldwin knows it all, he knows "how blacks live, love, and struggle; as they relish the good times and endure the bad times that constitute their lives" (326). Baldwin sees racism as a stumbling block to knowing the self and obstructs one from seeing reality and achieving freedom. His aspiration of moving towards a raceless country is given creative imagination in his novels. The possibility that he brings through his literary works is the significance of love and union, the ability to demystify stereotypes and misrepresentations, the ability to come together irrespective of race, color, culture and differences in bringing about positive social changes as can be seen in the eventual successful intermingling of Black-White characters. When Tish says that the White folks looked at them as though they were zebras and that although "some people like zebras and some people don't… nobody ever asks the zebra," it is indicative of the way Blacks are often silenced and hence misrepresented (17). As a result of which, Baldwin challenges his people to start speaking up for themselves in order not to be

manipulated. Joseph's words that they can no longer let these White folks "get away with this shit" anymore as "they been killing our children long enough" speaks volume (221).

For Baldwin, the motivating force and means for overcoming the existential abyss between individuals is standing for what is true, with love. At the heart of his own work is a Christian belief that grace is a gift of suffering and that love has the power to remove the primitive space between the self and its perception of itself, between the individual and the group. As Bigsby recounts, "Racial and national categories, though real and though reflecting a symbolic heritage, exist to be transcended," for he is convinced that society clings so desperately to rigid sexual or social definitions, more from a need "to project a sense of order" rather than from a belief that "such distinctions contain any real sign to the nature of human possibilities" (106). Leo's relationship with Barbara shows the transcendence of racial love, a kind of love that survives the humiliation and suffering to which they were subjected to because of the social power structure. As Leo remarks, "Barbara and I, no matter what happened, would always love each other and always be able… to look each other in the eye" (307). We also find that the Riverses relationship with Mr. Hayward leads to a successful bailing out of Fonny.

Baldwin's vision of love is not only restricted to America, but encompasses mankind as a whole. His perseverance upon this particular emotion is convincing. The Riverses in *Beale Street* represent community, the only prospect of survival in a hostile White world that cannot see humanity in blackness. It affirms love not only between a man and a woman, but love between members of a family which may demand extreme forms of sacrifice. The Riverses also represent Baldwin's private hopes and of the hope of all those in bondage that are forgotten. They are the strong, determined, and hard-talking blues people who refuse to be the kind of Black folks that Whites demand. Through the power of their love for each other, they overcome the Whites' power to oppress. The Riverses represent the Black power as they speak and function out of Beale Street's long and terrible history.

Speaking of Black power, we also see the Black pride that African Americans carry in this hostile milieu which is again another possibility that Baldwin discusses. Black Christopher was called Black not just because he was Black in colour but in pride and in rage just as Leo's father, who was Black in many ways. Although young, little, and colored, Leo always had his head held high and maintained his pride, a quality he may have acquired from his father, and a quality that greatly direct to Baldwin himself. When asked by Saul what he

considered his qualifications were to become an actor, Leo confidently replies, “I think you’re looking at them” (75). Looking back to when he was asked by Charles on the train about what he wanted to become when he grows older, Leo was confident at a very young age of ten that he wanted to be an actor. Although just a manual worker, Leo nonetheless saw the possibility of becoming an actor on the stage and began to nurture his passion. At his first ever path to success, which was a play performed with Barbara for Saul San-Marquand, young Leo comes to realize a very important lesson that his future did not really matter to the San-Marquands at all. When he says, “My future mattered, really, only to me” it powerfully indicates one’s strength of mind to excel in life (109). Leo was unapologetically spirited, and his creator James Baldwin was no different. He was not only small and thin, but he was Black. And as such, he was always the scapegoat although there were other small students like him at school. Nonetheless, though he was “hounded and bedevilled” in the words of Randy Douglas as cited by Eckman, he was impenitently himself and still “the best writer at 139” and nobody can deny that (48).

Baldwin’s depiction of Saul and Rags as hypocrites and arrogant people is representative of the White liberal establishment with which Proudhammer, his ethnic brothers, and those few struggling Whites such as his friend Barbara and Konstantine Rafaeleto must cope in their quest for survival. Life is unquestionably hard even for some Whites in America, or elsewhere, but the color of one’s skin should not be the determining factor for hardships. The colour of skin is used as an excuse to mistreat the Blacks, and there is no logic involved in this mistreatment. Baldwin was often told how terrible it was to be Black in America, and therefore in order to survive such reflections, he says to Terkel, “You have to really dig down into yourself and re-create yourself” and that “you have to decide who you are, and force the world to deal with you, not with its idea of you” (5-6). And this is what the Proudhammers and the Riverses do in the narratives.

People like Madeleine had to work for not so great directors like Saul in the Workshop only because they got families to take care of. Tish sometimes gets anxious because no one can take the animosity that the Whites throw on Black folks forever. They are somehow trying to fix the mind to get from one day to the next and this is exactly what she does to get Fonny out of prison. When Tish cries for Fonny and longs for his freedom, she is the Baldwin voice expressing his life’s search for love to free him of the bondage of society’s taboos, “a lover whose presence could allow him to give birth not only to his art, but to a self free of the need

to be a prophet," "a spokesman liberated of the need to be anything other than a human being" (Leeming 325).

Leo Proudhammer becomes an actor, converting passion into art and thereby escaping the definitions forced upon him by situation. His brother, Caleb, having been savagely crushed and humiliated, turns to the church. Black Christopher, then, becomes a Black rebel. Baldwin thus contemplates the possible alternatives which confront the Black American, the ways in which rage can be sublimated, evaded, or used. Tish, who is portrayed as "the bearer of grace and hope for the future," as symbolized by her venture into childbirth at the novel's end, is walking home with a bagful of art supplies for Fonny to start again with his creative work (Cooke 200). This optimistic ending accounts Baldwin's hope that change is possible so long as individuals persevere and withstand stormy weathers.

In her analysis of racism as a problem of fantasy and not a problem of knowing, which will be specifically studied in the fourth chapter, Friedlander poses the query of overcoming the fantasy of race. Friedlander talks about how W.J.T. Mitchell argues that not only has our recognition and understanding of the erroneous status of race failed to make "racism" "go away," but it has also aggravated our false confidence that, by "knowing better," we are not implicated in the problem. Mitchell proposes instead that we "see through" race in a different sense, as "something we *see through*, like a frame, a window, a screen, or a lens, rather than something we *look at* (107). The way to "see through" is exemplified in Baldwin's narratives through the presence of certain empathetic White characters like Barbara who is willing to transcend color line and social borders. She firmly holds that the advices she get from people does not really seem to have anything to do with her because if she had taken all the advice she was given, she could not be friends with Leo and that she would not be able to share the table with colored men. She furthers that she would just be another dried out Southern belle, looking for a rich husband. And sometimes, her career as White artist tends to be compromised as a result of her friendship with Black artists but Barbara does not find it problematic. Furthermore, Ray Fisher did not care about color line in offering a role to Leo about the ignorance of Americans. Through White voices like Fisher and Barbara's, Baldwin instigates the world to try from both ends to co-exist and live a life in agreement that does not have anything to do with being Black or White.

The little girl's song about deliverance at the monster rally "*Deliverance will come. I know it will come, He said it will come*" is both painful and liberating (86). Listening to her sing at

the protest, Leo questions himself if deliverance would ever come because it had not come for his parents, for Caleb, for him, for Christopher, for the little girl, and for all the thousands of people who were listening to her song. Leo wanted deliverance for others even more than for himself because he always felt that whatever he has experienced and achieved could have no meaning unless it could help to deliver them, and this is undoubtedly Baldwin's way of seeing things for he also wanted to deliver his people from this inhumane treatment more than he wanted for himself. But the price for this deliverance, "this most ambitious of transactions," as Leo says, could only be found "in a wallet which I had always claimed was not mine" (87). And here we find for the first time that Baldwin steps out of love as the only solution to this deliverance but to be a part as an American, to claim the wallet of his, his right as a citizen, and make a change. Blacks were in need of the freedom that citizens of a country get to exercise. "My honour, my intelligence and my experience all informed me that freedom, not happiness, was the precious stone" Leo declares (349). On being arrested by the police in support of a complaint received from an old couple who saw Leo coming out of a White lady's place, his White friends come to his rescue, accusing the man behind the desk of being a racist, and threatening him of losing his badge. Baldwin illustrates the possibility of an easy and beautiful life in America, had the citizens held the ability to see beyond racial boundaries and had America comprised of more people like that of Leo's friends.

Baldwin is an embodiment of the nation's experience as well as his own. Talking of Whites and Negroes, writing about them, he shifts between the first person narrative and the third. Growing up in a culture that is neither all White nor all Black, he assimilated both parts. The trouble with America according to Baldwin is that, "it is integrated – although no one will admit it" and he strongly holds that this is no longer a White world or a Black world and he is not sure whether he has learned it yet but one thing he is sure about is that, "If we do not manage to live together, we won't manage to live at all" (qtd. in Eckman 240). Leo says that he would never be able to leave America as he is part of this people regardless of the bitter judgement he carried. It was a trap, a very cunning trap as Leo would describe. No matter how different and daring the options and possibilities of Black men are from the White men's, those were not to be decoded by looking only into America's limitations.

As mentioned earlier, Baldwin's works and ideas resonate even to this day. The American psychiatrist Dr. Bruce D. Perry talks about how humans fill their "reward bucket" with various sources of reward every day and how many a time people use some of the less healthy forms of reward to fill that void (64). Contemporary world, Perry says, is

"relationally impoverished" (255). Dr. Perry makes a similar point as Baldwin that the most powerful form of reward is "relational." A healthy and a positive connection with people is "rewarding" and "regulating" (64). Baldwin vehemently believed that the problem of race could be solved through the better understanding of the two races. "To me, the key to the salvation of America lies in whether or not it is able to embrace the black face. If it cannot do that, I do not think the country has a future" asserts Baldwin (Mead and Baldwin 70). He has accurately articulated about racism, violence, and cynical indifference that characterize modern society, and especially the contemporary values that are dominant in America. What Baldwin wished to discover was not just a reality but also the potentiality of man.

The dominant presence of racial prejudice in terms of the black/white binary in American society reminds us of a rainbow nation which remains void as a consequence of the non-inclusive of the color black in the rainbow. Baldwin is of the view that it is entirely up to the American people and its representatives about whether or not they are going to deal with, and accept the stranger whom they have traumatized and misrepresented for so long. He says, "If I'm not a Nigger here and you, the white people invented him, then you've got to find out why" because the future of the country depends on "Whether or not it's able to ask that question" (Clarke 45). Taking Mr. Hayward as a mouthpiece in *Beale Street*, the author promises to all the African Americans that they will win, and that they will have their freedom. "No, it will not be easy. But neither will it be insurmountable as it seems to you today" (116). This is an apt statement in the development of the African Americans in America today, as will be looked at in the following chapters.

Baldwin has played a remarkable role in the flourishing and proliferation of African American literature, with most of the contemporary writers either being tutored or inspired by this iconoclast. The legacy that he left behind is celebrated even today. The present writers are by and large the generation of leaders in African American studies, and it is with this current generation that this field shall rise or fall and the chapters to be followed are proof enough to validate the growth as they lucidly illuminates some of the most essential subjects. They seek to encourage a true proliferation of ideologies and methodologies, rather than to seek uniformity or conformity. James Baldwin deserves close attention because he profoundly contributed to the evolution in Black writing through his groundbreaking and iconoclastic standpoint.

Chapter 3

Collective Memory of Slavery and Post Trauma of African Americans as Represented by Colson Whitehead

3.1 A Brief Theorization of Postcolonial Trauma Studies: The study of trauma is a significant field of study because trauma seeps into all parts of life, echoing throughout different generations. Colonialism is in itself an inherently traumatizing force, and considering what the trauma of slavery did to thousands of Africans, postcolonial trauma theory is inexplicably applicable to the African American experience. Much of the arguments concerning trauma studies is Eurocentric, and has overlooked the experiences of people who were once colonized. The Holocaust was unquestionably horrific nonetheless traditional trauma studies have always maintained this particular experience as the model for all understandings of trauma and in doing so, they have homogenized history and generalized the trauma of all humans under one umbrella and this understanding, in the words of Craps et al., is "dangerous and presumptuous" (907). By specifically focusing on the African American experience, we get to see a new way of examining their trauma. Colson Whitehead does this by merging an entire cultural experience into the epic journeys of a young girl, Cora, and two young boys, Elwood and Turner, in *The Underground Railroad* (*TUR*) and *The Nickel Boys* (*TNB*) respectively.

Although developmental traumatology is a very young discipline, we see various organizations and systems coming up in contemporary times to address various aspects of trauma. Removed from all the cultural, social, and geographical circumstances against their will with no ties to their past, Africans were given an awful life. In the course of developing the historical Underground Railroad into a paradigmatic fantasy in *TUR,* Whitehead acquaints the readers with a story of a young escaped slave, and her challenging flight to freedom. Compressed not only into one specific time and place, Whitehead allows the readers to re-examine the oppression and trauma that has been enacted upon colored people throughout American history (Erue 2). With *TUR,* Whitehead became only the second writer of color and sixth writer ever to win both a National Book Award and a Pulitzer Prize for fiction. Its follow-up *TNB* also examines American history, the ongoing racism, sadism, discrimination of the American judicial system, and Blacks' revolt against injustices. And so, while the former accounts the Whites' colonial power over Blacks through slavery, the latter focuses on the post trauma faced by its descendants.

Trauma theory was conceptualized in the 1990s by Cathy Caruth, Geoffrey Hartman, Shoshana Felman, and Dori Laub. Although trauma theory has provided a deep understanding into the connection between human misery and cultural representation, postcolonial critics have brought to light its failure in cross-cultural ethical engagement, as it always brings to attention the suffering of Whites and disregards the particularity of non-White traumas, and called to decolonize it. In *Decolonizing Trauma Studies: Trauma and Postcolonialism,* Sonya Andermahr moves beyond a Eurocentric trauma paradigm, bringing in influential critiques by Bennett and Roseanne Kennedy, Stef Craps, and Michael Rothberg, to name a few, that called for "a radical re-routing of the field" (1). There are other traumatic experiences that do not follow the representation of traditional trauma studies that have narrowly worked with the Holocaust and its intergenerational trauma, such as the experience of racism that neither fits the "classical" nor the "historical" forms of trauma because "unlike structural trauma, racism is historically specific" yet, "unlike historical trauma, it is not related to a particular event" (Craps 32). Such forms of trauma based on race that are historically entrenched in slavery and colonialism therefore defy the traditional form of trauma that is clearly Eurocentric and single sided. In his critique of the Caruthian theory, Craps argued that if trauma studies sincerely seek to have any optimism of abiding to its promise of moral usefulness, then the social and historic relations must be taken into account, and that traumatic histories of marginalized groups should be placed alongside the histories of socially dominant groups, in order that any sort of biasness may be debunked.

Rothberg presents the proposition to rethink trauma as "collective, spatial, and material (instead of individual, temporal, and linguistic)." Further, in Rothberg's words, early trauma theory presupposes "the completed past of a singular event—while colonial and postcolonial traumas persist into the present" ("Decolonizing Trauma" 228, 230). So while Holocaust trauma studies take on a more definable period of history, and a clearer historical sense of victims, executors, and responsibility, postcolonial trauma studies deal with the prolonged, growing damage of many years' repression, which is again not a thing of the past as it is experienced even at present. This is because 'post trauma' simply denotes a mental health condition that takes place as a result of trauma, of any kind, with symptoms such as nightmares, anxiety, and flashbacks.

In *What Happened To You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing* Dr. Perry expansively talks about trauma and the four-layered interconnection of the brain. Perry is of the view that the majority of brain growth and organization effectively takes place in the first

years of life and as a result, early life experiences have an extremely powerful impact on how an individual develop (78). Studies have shown that 30% of mental health disorders among children and 45% among adults have been a result of adverse childhood experiences. Studies further show that this childhood trauma can lead to an increased possibility for major depression, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, schizophrenia, and other psychotic disorders of the brain. Perry's organization of the brain, as illustrated in the diagram below, will be used as a reference in examining the subject of trauma.

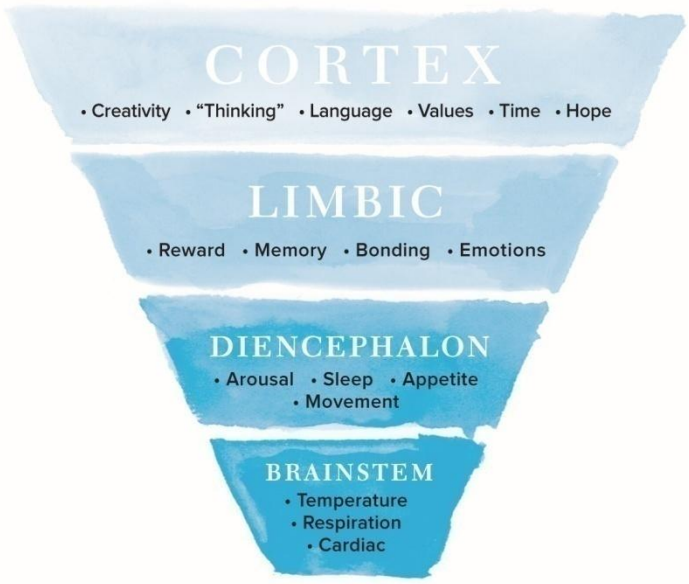

Fig. 1 Hierarchical organization of the human brain (Dr. Perry 27).

The fact that human beings are relational and communal, we are neuro-biologically cognizant and connected to each other. Many centuries of internalizing the trauma of colonization, segregation from one's own land, people, and family, varied forms of violence, fear and anxiety, African Americans have inherited and transmitted this trauma across multiple generations. Looking at the community of the African Americans, trauma can be clearly traced back to the time of slavery. The colonizers created disconnected and traumatized individuals rooted to marginalization. Perry's organization of the brain will be specifically studied in the following sub-topics, but the most significant point that he makes here is that "the more threatened or stressed we are, the less access we have to the smart part of our brain, the cortex" (86). Perry thus discusses about how to get into the cortex, where rational communication is possible.

Taking into account the traumatic event of American slavery which extended to over hundreds of years, we see how the descendants of the slaves not only inherited their

ancestors' trauma but also experienced new forms of traumas. Postcolonial Trauma theorists call for an all-inclusive trauma studies by distinguishing the universalized factors of traumatic events and considering the particular kinds of traumatic suffering that takes place, and how it is represented in the works of literature. They challenge to bring together the vast fields of Postcolonialism and Trauma theory to understand how trauma theory is pertinent to the postcolonial experience.

Collective memory is the recollections of a shared history that members of a group having experienced it, hold on to. As Ron Eyerman mentions the words of Maurice Halbwachs in *Cultural Trauma*, memory is always "group memory," both because "the individual is derivative of some collectivity, family, and community," and because "a group is solidified and becomes aware of itself through continuous reflection upon and recreation of a distinctive, shared memory" (6). In *Cultural Trauma Theory and Applications,* Alexander et al. has pointed out Bernhard Giesen's assertion that collective memory provides both individual and society with a "temporal map," that unifies a nation or community through time as well as space, and specifies "the temporal parameters of past and future" (5).

In the select novels, the narrator acquaints us with past events, and relating them by use of memory. In most cases memory is regarded as confusing, presenting events selectively as the narrator remembers them. But this is not the case with Whitehead's novels for the author takes on a sequential narration, making meaning of the events that the characters experienced within the temporal process that shows authority in their narration, and allows the reader to make sense of how these events have changed the characters' ideological and psychological perspectives. Whitehead skilfully manipulates focalization in the novels that takes the reader through the narrators' personal thoughts and feelings.

The memory of slavery in many ways shaped the experiences of Black folks in relation to Whites. Slavery is one of the most coerced of human servitudes as it is maintained by brutal force (Erue 3). If we look at the enslaved Irish in the US, they are now far removed from where they were 400 years ago but this is not the case for the Africans in America. As Whitehead merges the many hundred years of traumas into his characters' experiences, with exacting reference to slavery and the Jim Crow Laws, we see how they typify African American trauma in their journey to freedom. He talks about the movement of Africans as he delves into the historical realities, such as the colonization of Africa by the European countries, the enslavement and violent displacement owing to racial bigotry, in addition to the

physical and mental abuses the boys at the reform school are subjected to in the name of education.

Cathy Caruth's formulation that trauma narrative must be considered as leading to increased indeterminacy, denying the prospect of any improvement, stands in contrast to psychiatrist Judith Herman who views trauma narrative as therapeutic, allowing psychic integration and eventual resolution of trauma. The writings of Postcolonial writers also demonstrate that trauma itself instigates a strong need for narrative in order to come to terms with the aftermath of colonial wounding. Their works posit that the injustices of colonialism produce an agitated state, in which trauma must be brought to light through narratives. They strongly hold that narrativization is empowering not only to individuals but their communities at large. One common characteristic that writers of trauma share with regard to healing is communion, addressing trauma, and regulation. These are the key to bring people together in close and safe union. In the case of the African Americans, a better recognition and understanding of the pain and trauma of slavery can efficiently bring about its end. Being vigilant of what and how certain things are transmitted to the next generation is imperative.

Whitehead has, till date, written seven books of fiction and two books of nonfiction, and exploration of race and history have been a key subject all through his works. The thin choices of the slaves at the Randall plantation and the boys at the Nickel Academy is heart wrenchingly portrayed, as Whitehead turns these subjects of national disorder into an unforgettable masterpiece. As these fictional texts recount the trauma of slavery, they also present cogent articulation of the post trauma in contemporary America amid the reverberations of American racism.

3.1.1 Historical Backdrop of American Slavery: The history of slavery cover numerous cultures, nationalities, and religions, as the institution of slavery has been functioning since the civilization of Sumer in Mesopotamia, and other olden civilization such as ancient Egypt, China, and India. Although slavery has existed in diverse parts of the world under dissimilar systems, the Atlantic slave trade was clearly an unforgettable heinous act in the history of mankind. However, having said that, slavery in any form was an inconsiderate operation. The Dutch, French, Spanish, Portuguese, British, Arabs and a number of West African kingdoms highly participated in this trade. Slavery was extensive in Europe during the early Middle Ages and by the sixteenth century, it began to beat the Arabs in the export traffic, with its slave trade from Africa to America. And it is here that the history of American slavery began.

Some of the earliest slaves were believed to be Native Americans, but when some escaped and many died from various diseases, Africans were preferably replaced owing to the fact that they possessed strong and stout physical traits. Slaves were shipped to serve in the new British colony called Virginia, when twenty Africans were carried in a Dutch ship to Jamestown in 1619, which marked the first slaves to be brought in America. As the new nation was born, the slave trade too flourished.

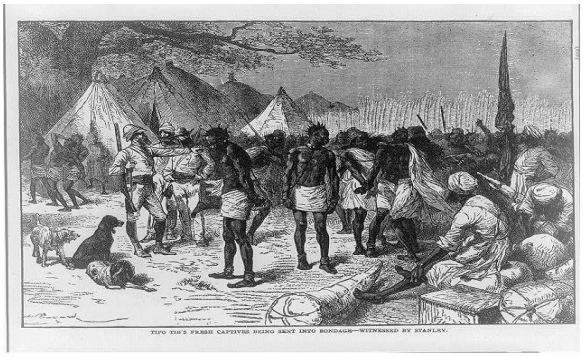

Fig.2 "Tipo Tib's fresh captives being sent into bondage – witnessed by Stanley." *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division*, 1971, https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98510178/.

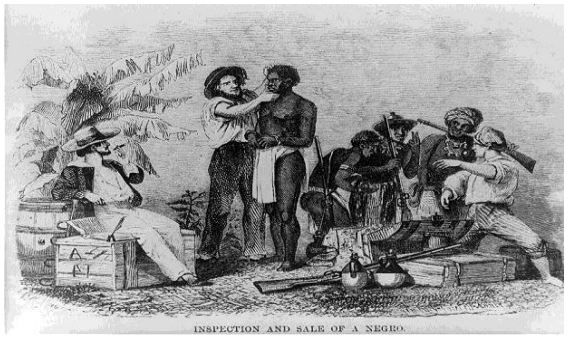

Fig.3 "Inspection and sale of a Negro." *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division*, 1960-1980, https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/98510180/.

African Americans constitute the second and third largest racial and ethnic groups in the United States respectively, most of who are descendants of enslaved people. Slavery became a major part of the economy of all the colonies. One cannot fathom the cruelties embedded on the slaves whose complete submission were called for. Escape or resilience only led to death. A runaway slave was likely to be recaptured or killed in the north just as in the south before the American Revolution. Worse, even after a slave was liberated, he was marginalized. In the north, the freedmen gradually became vocal activists for the abolition of slavery, challenging white Americans to live up to their words as scripted on their documents, preamble, and bill rights. Due to the parochial concept of White supremacy, they were treated as second-class citizens. The Naturalization Act of 1790 limited US citizenship to Whites only, and only White men of property could vote. These state affairs were however ameliorated by the Reconstruction, development of the Black community, contribution in the great military variances, the eradication of racial segregation, and the Civil Rights Movement. These journeys however had been challenging.

One erroneous belief about slavery was the thought that Africans were easily chained, placed on boats, and were taken to the Americas. This is true to some extent, however the colonizers

were also fearful of the diseases and strong resistance in Africa and so it was not as easy as some perceived it to be. The colonialists dominate either through coercion or consent, and as Whitehead writes, "White men eat you up but sometimes colored folk eat you up too" (*The Underground* 54). Trade is a two way proportion, and African nations fought each other in the past and the victorious nation, upon capturing their enemies, would enslave them and were traded to Europeans along the West Coast. The captured were then shipped across the Atlantic Ocean. Some of the natives in Africa allowed this consent because they thought colonization was beneficial to them. The dominant class ruled with the consent of subordinate masses and this bourgeoisie was hegemonic because it slyly protected some interests of the subaltern classes. The Atlantic slave trade reached the climax during the late eighteenth century, and it has been recorded that "Europeans made more than 54,000 voyages," typically carried out by such African states as the Fante and Ashanti (https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part1/1narr1.html). History informs that over the centuries, about ten to twelve million people were shipped as slaves from Africa to America where the large majority ended up in the American South.

This pathetic and unpleasant journey could take weeks and even months depending on the place of departure and arrival of the slave ship that made it impossible for many to survive. The ships were not only a physical suffocation for the slaves as huge numbers were tightly packed with scarce food, but also a mental exhaustion as many had to go through an entirely different experiences. One of which was to witness the dead bodies of their fellow slaves being simply tossed into the ocean, a psychological torment which was hard to recover from. As a result of humongous deaths in this horrific voyage, fresh captives were a must to keep the system working. The survivors became a mere property who could be bought and sold like any commodity. Where Africans came from and went to after this excruciating cruise changed over time. Hook has firmly put emphasis on Ramphele's statement that the "onslaught of political impotence" "state repression" and "economic dependency …" have created such confusion on the self-image of Black South Africans that some even began to believe that "they deserved the oppression they suffered because of innate inferiority" (24). A number of displacement, alienation, trauma, and predicament in African American identity formation, were thus a clear result of slavery.

Fig. 4 “Print, A Slave Auction in the South.” *Harper’s Weekly*, July 13, 1861, p. 442, http://cprhw.tt/o/2CfDV/.

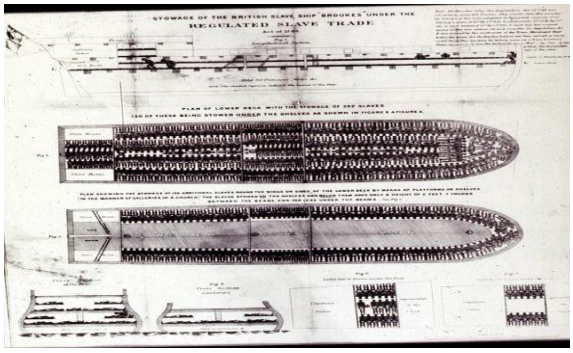

Fig. 5 “Stowage of the British Slave Ship Brookes under the Regulated Slave Trade Act of 1788.” *Slavery Images: A Visual Record of the African Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Early African Diaspora*, http://slaveryimages.org/s/slaveryimages/item/2553.

Further talking about the myths of slavery, not all African descents were enslaved and even among the enslaved, not all of them were ignorant and illiterate. Over the years we have noticed that the slaves were not given the due appreciation for the valor and intelligence they possessed. There are a number of unjust misrepresentations about Africans in general, which is a result of an incorrect understanding of their history.

There were various kinds of slaves but the majority of the African slaves in America were directed to work on plantations. European colonies highly depended on them to produce their food. Comparatively, those working on the plantation had less freedom than the household slaves, as they were more likely to be sold or transferred. During the first years of slavery in the 1600s, it is observed that Africans relatively experienced a high level of racial tolerance from their White owners, such as the time of Phillis Wheatley, where they could freely wander, get educated, and buy land as well as their freedom. In some cases, slaves were freed having proved themselves in court as Christians.

By the 1700s, slave owners began buying more female slaves to reproduce at higher numbers to generate more profit. As Roberts states, “Female slaves served as both producers and reproducers” during slavery (25). Enslaved women were perpetually raped and impregnated and according to the law, all children born of slave women were added as slaves to the property of their owner regardless of whether the children were fathered by White or Black men. Several southern colonies knew that slavery was wrong, and yet they could not refrain themselves from the huge profits. As the number of slaves added to the colonies, more Whites began to separate themselves from Blacks, which exacerbated racial discrimination. By the 1750s, the Blacks were more attached to America than their ancestral home because

the majority of them by this time had been born of colonies, having biblical names instead of African names. They had decided they wanted to stay, yet still yearned for freedom. To achieve freedom and expand their civil rights have been the driving force behind their participation in the Revolution. They joined either side of the war, i.e., the Patriots who rejected British rule, or the Loyalists who supported it, as they were promised freedom. Initially, both sides were fearful of slaves' revolt and so the slaves were used as labourers, skilled workers, foragers, and spies. It was only when they lacked in manpower that they included Blacks to fight for them. Much of the increasing number of imprisoned slaves fighting for the British force was seen after Dunmore's Proclamation, and later Philipsburg Proclamation, which promised protection, freedom and land to any slaves who left their owners and joined the British Armed Forces. The Black regiment of Rhode Island, the Continental Navy and Royal Navy signed African Americans for the same reason, freedom. But the reality seemed far from these promises as many were put back into slavery after the end of the war.

After the abolitionist movement, many European countries limited their use of slavery in their homelands but they relied heavily on slaves to build their empires abroad. The invention of cotton gin in 1793 revolutionized the cotton industry in the US but also drove up the demand for slaves in the Deep South in the domestic slave trade. This invention is distinguished as an unintended causal of the American Civil War. At this time, there were more than four million slaves working in the US, and the main political concern of this war was the expansion of slavery to the West. The Southern states left the union to form the Confederacy upon Abraham Lincoln's Presidency in 1860, as they were mainly centred on the continuation of slavery while the Northern union fought for its end. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation issued on January 1863 bettered the status of some 3.5 million Africans from bondage to freedom. Hereon, although slaves were working throughout the South region, if they could escape to the North, they could be legally free and so a number of slaves escaped via the Underground Railroad. In the Deep South, liberation was made difficult especially in plantation areas. Two decades following the Revolution, northern states gradually abolished slavery and by 1840, all African Americans in the North were almost free. Although slavery was practised, numerous slaveholders were inspired by revolutionary ideals, the urge of liberation by Methodist, Baptist and Quaker preachers, to free their slaves, in addition to the changing economy where less slave labor were needed as a result of globalisation and modernism. In June 1864, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was abolished. The remaining

slaves were freed by the 13th Amendment of 1865. The Union also began control of the Confederate states in 1865 and the slaves in those areas were formally free.

For African Americans, the end of slavery brought new hope to take control of their own lives and economic prospects. Even so, many freed slaves struggled with inequity, and the conflict with racial bigotry was a bitter reminder of the dark past. As Dutchet has opined, the abolition of "slavery" did not by any means imply the abolition of the "slave trade" (32). And clearly, throughout the US, the daily lives of many African Americans were indifferent in freedom than they had been under slavery. And though anti-slavery sentiments were widespread through various movements such as the Enlightenment movement during the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, the Clapham Sect in the nineteenth century, the colonies and emerging nations that used slave labor continued to do so. The three Reconstruction Amendments that addresses the abolishment of slavery, citizenship rights and equal protection of the laws for all persons, and voting rights of citizens, were also gradually destroyed by state laws and federal court decisions throughout the late nineteenth century, jeopardizing their prospect of the American Dream. Starting in the 1870s and '80s, some states further passed the Jim Crow Laws that limited the rights of the Blacks, as it enforced racial segregation in the Southern states. The laws were upheld in 1896 in the case of Plessy vs. Ferguson, in which the US Supreme Court laid out its 'separate but equal' legal doctrine. This law institutionalised economic, educational and social disadvantages for the colored people in the South, which was gradually overruled by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Slavery, for the premodern forebears, was like "poverty" as Ryrie says, "an undesirable but inescapable fact of life (1). The problem that remains in contemporary America is that, the descendants of slaves get to witness its unquestionable presence taking shape in different forms. As indicated by Corker, there are today, "27 million" victims of modern slave trade worldwide (1). For the first time in history, major leaders from diverse religious groups met at the Vatican on 2nd December 2014, to sign a shared commitment against modern-day slavery, calling for the elimination of slavery and human trafficking by the year 2020. The slaves contributed to the making of American culture and identity but regrettably, even after many years' struggle and perseverance of prominent leaders like Martin Luther King and others, African Americans still fall victims to modern slavery in America.

Richard Wright talks about how the crowning development of the industrial West has given America the most powerful civilization the world has ever known. But he also does not shy away from stating how split up America is in almost every imaginable way. He says that "it has given us millions of wrecked lives, millions of oppressed… anti-Semitism, anti-Negroism" and "spectacular crime, corruption, violence, and a singular disregard for the individual" (199). Stripped of the opportunity to partake in the culture of the New World, the Negro was constantly brutalized, reduced to a creature only meant to work in the fields. The Negro was made to feel that he is a Negro before he is a man. Many of them knew that their hope was fruitless owing to the fact that racial segregation deepened and increased with time. And clearly, writers write out of their experiences and what they feel and see around them. As such, the economic, social, and psychological problems caused by slavery and racism, the difficulties faced by biracial individuals in America, and the attempt to reclaim the African past of lost ancestors have greatly influenced African American literature and culture.

3.2 *The Underground Railroad* as a Neo-slave Narrative: As stated in the first chapter, contemporary writers have creatively altered the traditional forms of slave narratives and developed new type such as the neo-slave narratives, which are for the most part classified as novels usually depicting to a large extend the experiences and the aftermath of slavery in the New World. First coined by Ishmael Reed, the term has now different descriptions. Ashraf Rushdy has described neo-slave narratives as "Contemporary novels that assume the form, adopt the conventions, and take on the first-person voice of the antebellum slave narrative" ("Slavery" 3). For Arlene Keizer, "many writers move so far beyond the traditional narratives that their works are not bound by that frame or reference" (3). Nevertheless, neo-slave narratives have enormously contributed in retrieving the past and influencing the way we understand the present.

The legacy of slavery was equally important to developing accounts of the beginning of Black music, spirituals and the blues as with literature. Eyerman has termed the memory of slavery by African Americans as what Foucault would call a "counter-memory" (17). The thriving of slave narratives gave voice to generations of Blacks who, despite being written off by White southern literature, still found a way to contribute a literary legacy of huge collective significance to the United States.

Although African American writers were at first reluctant to write fiction about slavery due to the pressure they felt, their turn to fiction in the 1850s reflects their creative independence.

They refused to be the typical Blacks that White supremacy demanded, and went on to author imaginative writings. The impact that Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had on the slavery debates further led to the refusal of granting White abolitionists the sole authority to tell their stories. There are various forms of neo-slave narratives such as the historical novels seen in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, palimpsest narratives or pseudo-autobiographical slave narratives such as Octavia Butler's *Kindred*, narratives that trace family history to the importation and enslavement of ancestors, or genealogical narratives such as Yaa Gyasi's *Homegoing*, and narratives that adhere to the form of traditional slave narratives usually written in first person from the perspective of an enslaved person such as Sherley Anne Williams' *Dessa Rose*. Of course the neo-slave narrative is not limited to these forms alone, and can be expanded.

If we look at the similarities and differences between early slave narratives and the neo-slave narratives, we see that they represent similar experiences of bondage and the fear of death, while also representing the possibilities of freedom. Neo-slave narratives often share similar structures to slave narratives such as the beginning often addressing the memories of childhood, describing the various injustices of slavery, the failed attempts to escape and the many challenges faced in the process and then finally achieving the long-desired successful escape. Both forms of writing have their own limitations and strengths. While the former gives us clearer first-hand information owing to the fact that the narratives were recounted in an autobiographical form, from people who were actually enslaved and lived during the antebellum period, they lack certain literary freedoms that the contemporary neo-slave narratives enjoy. In the latter, the material may not be as authentic, owing to the fact that they are projected in a novel form by writers long removed from slavery, by re-envisioning the slave's experiences in America. Therefore, these historically dissimilar ideas of human subjectivity share unique representations.

The conventional slave narrative was confined to the author's first-person narration but in these neo-slave narratives, a third-person omniscient narrator typically describes the simultaneous actions of a socially and geographically diverse cast of characters. Just as Jonathan Culler argues, an omniscient narratorial position makes possible "the portrayal of a broad range of characters" who does not know each other but "share an artistic connection" (48-49). *The Underground Railroad* achieves this effect by breaking the narrative into different parts. Usually taking enslaved man or woman as their protagonists, contemporary

writers re-tell the slave stories because even if slavery is over and done with, the remnants of slavery are still close by.

Margaret Walker's *Jubilee* ushered in a new awareness of neo-slave narratives, producing novels marked by a more self-conscious structuring of historical issues. While slavery and its legacy were a living issue in the South, its exploration and in particular its fictionalization, was constrained both politically and emotionally. Although *Jubilee* did not have the same kind of historical distance from its subject as the later novels, because it was based on the oral history of the last generation of slaves transmitted by the author's grandmother, Walker however introduced the idea to write history from the bottom up by focusing the reader's mind through the eyes of the slaves themselves. It also established some of the crucial themes that would mark the writing on slavery that followed, especially the theme of the enslaved woman being commodified. The orality of folk history informs the possibility of few of those enslaved who actually rebelled and succeeded. Whitehead's Cora joins this rebellion of Williams' Dessa Rose, the heroines of Walker's *Jubilee* and Morrison's *Beloved,* to name a few, who perfectly embodies this narration, by debunking the White construct of slaves' place and entitlement.

Slavery as a subject has laid productive force on the arty standards associated with the novel form, and taking inspiration from the traditional slave narrative, Whitehead has created a work of fiction from it. While *TUR* is not a firsthand account, the reader can follow Cora's journey as a slave as though she were telling it from a firsthand perspective. Ron Eyerman writes in regard to the slave narratives as been "central to the construction of a counter, collective memory and in the constitution and resolution of cultural trauma" as they tell a story "which identifies heroes and villains, giving voice to pain and faces to perpetrators" but more importantly, "they turn victims into agents and tragedy into triumph" (42). Slave narratives serve as a historical reminder of what has occurred in the United States, and couple centuries later, Whitehead has taken the narrative conventions a step further by developing a literal railroad, from which the protagonist escapes. It holds the influence of the traditional slave narratives with a touch of modern-tale fictional slave narrative. Presenting a female protagonist in a way provides a gendered discussion of neo-slave narrative that describes Black women's sense of humanity, identity, and epistemology during a time when they were required to be silent and submissive. The elation this text brings, in celebrating women who made fools of those who belittled and scorned them, is remarkable.

One of the most obvious novelistic features in Whitehead's work is its use of dialogue. Certainly, dialogue was a devise used since the early slave narratives. Fearing that the gradual recognition of the farm in Indiana would attract a target, Mingo started harassing the farm with his own notions about colored advancement. It took him many years to purchase his family's freedom and according to him, attained the unattainable, but not everyone has the ability to do that. But it seemed to Lander that "Sometimes a useful delusion is better than a useless truth." That a slave can escape slavery is itself a delusion, to find a place of refuge for the Negroes is another, because every minute of their life's suffering has argued otherwise yet here they were. Lander proposes that America "shouldn't exist, if there is any justice in the world, for its foundations are murder, theft, and cruelty" but "Color" which is the only thing they have in common, "must suffice" and that they "rise and fall as one" (*The Underground* 285-86). Lander's eloquence enthuse Cora to keep fighting for what is right. Her actions model the response Whitehead hoped his readers would mimic, not only when reading the novel, but when observing the writings of African Americans at large.

Lander's words also find echoes in Steve Biko's Black Consciousness Movement. Blackness, for Biko, was not simply an issue of skin colour, but it was also a form of solidarity and resistance to control, a collective form of optimism and security for Black people. The interconnectedness between the consciousness of the self and the emancipatory programme is of paramount importance to Biko. Hook opines how Turner pointed to Biko in bringing forward "the re-discovery of self-consciousness as an objective force within the process of liberation" in the expression of self-consciousness as a motive of uprising. As a kind of politics, "blackness," as Hook says, was thus both an intellectual and emotional reinforcement "for the establishment of a militant collective resistance" that would allow "a viable political unity between apartheid's *others*" (24-25).

While for some writers slavery serves as an additional touch to their fiction, for others it is the driving force for their literary creations. It is obvious to see slavery as a central point in African American creativity, taking into consideration the lasting impact it had upon the Black lives. We see how the characters find themselves haunted by the conditions of slavery having experienced it, and some by their collective memory even without the experience because the present is deeply shaped by the past, just as how the sorrow songs of his ancestors strangely stirred Du Bois ever since he was a child, songs that "came out of a South unknown to me, one by one, and yet at once I knew them as of me and of mine" (*The Souls* 177). Fictional writings enabled freedom to the slaves which slavery in reality could not.

One of the remarkable things about contemporary narratives of slavery is the innovativeness that the authors convey in developing varied modalities to tell a story that, according to Rushdy, "many acknowledge as the most difficult in their careers" ("The neo-slave" 90). *The Underground Railroad* is an inventive piece of storytelling, wherein Whitehead has brilliantly presented an allegory of the Underground Railroad, for he wanted it to be like the slave narratives that he read, with "a very matter-of-fact contemplation of all these weird and horrible things that keep happening" and in his words, he also had the thought about, "What if the Underground Railroad were a real train?" (https://www.nytimes.com). Following the tradition of the neo-slave narrative and with an emphasis on the historical Underground Railroad, Whitehead has innovatively presented the anxiety, humiliation, and the trauma of the slaves.

3.2.1 A Fantastical Paradigm of the Historical Underground Railroad: When Mabel escaped, the slave catcher Ridgeway shared rumours of the Underground Railroad, which was said to be operating in the southern part of the state, and as impossible as it sounded, Old Randall ridiculed it. But Ridgeway was resolved that the sympathizers would be rooted out and brutally punished. The Underground Railroad, which was formed in the early 1800s and reached its pinnacle during the 1850s, is an important part of American history which is irrefutably caused by slavery. A lot of the lesser known facts regarding this railroad are not included in textbooks. Whitehead, with his allegorical representation appends to this historical subject.

To think that the Underground Railroad is a train railing north along underground rails is a myth. For it was neither underground nor a railroad. It is a loose network of houses and people who helped navigate slaves escape to freedom in the decades before the Civil War. In the *TUR*, the railroad is described as a "gigantic tunnel" that must have been "twenty feet tall," wherein "The steel ran south and north presumably, springing from some inconceivable source and shooting toward a miraculous terminus" (65). And the readers are to accept this new reality that the author has created, the constructive paradigm.

The seeds of the Underground Railroad were sown in 1526 when Spanish settlers brought the first Indian servants from Africa to Georgia. Most slaves in the south were believed to have been unfamiliar with the term as much as it was in the north because although slaves had been escaping ever since they were brought to the New World, this network began to emerge only in the nineteenth century. While the number is often debated, it is generally estimated

that about hundred thousand people risked their lives in this long and perilous journey in achieving freedom. Although the act of harbouring fugitive slaves put these conductors in grave danger, they persisted in freeing enslaved people.

Singing was one of the few opportunities of self-expression permitted to slaves by the slaveholders. The slaves found a voice through music that enabled them to encode and decode secret instructions, to make their way north where they might find freedom. Without a proper map, unable to read and write, and in the thick of tight securities, escaping was challenging for the slaves. The popular folk song "Follow the Drinkin' Gourd," first used by a conductor on the Underground Railroad called Peg Leg Joe, was a coded song used as a guide for the slaves while on the run. The line "when the firs' quail call" is being referred to the winter season, "follow the drinking gourd" meant to walk at night keeping the north star in sight, and "left foot, peg foot" refers to trees that had been marked with charcoal and mud drawings leading runaway slaves north (http://www.followthedrinkinggourd.org/). Former slaves put out a triumphant escape by simply following the North Star, the drinking gourd. Furthermore, in order to protect themselves and their mission, secret codes were created such as conductors, being referred to the free individuals who led the fugitives known as cargos, and the safe houses used for hiding places were referred to as stations. The term Underground Railroad referred to the entire system which consisted of many routes called lines. The following images are glimpses of the Underground Railroad and tools used to restrict slaves.

Fig. 6 "The Underground Railroad/ Chas. T. Webber." *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division*, 1893, https://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3a29554/.

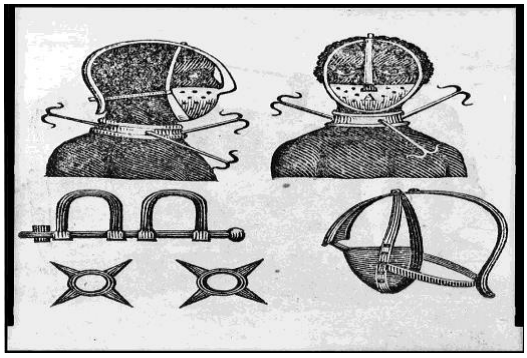

Fig. 7 "Iron mask, collar, leg shackles and spurs used to restrict slaves." *Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division*, https://www.loc.gov/item/98504457/.

Involvement with the Underground Railroad was illegal and therefore, life-threatening. The Underground Railroad was not run by any organization and therefore these conductors included people of both Black and White races, both abolitionists and former slaves who once escaped via the Underground Railroad, such as William Still, Harriet Tubman, John

Parker, and Jonathan Walker. While not wishing to discuss every escape and incident at length, let it suffice to talk about some such as Harriet Tubman's, and few others worth mentioning. Tubman's courage and success became the talk of the plantation that planters in Maryland offered a 40k dollar reward upon her capture, which was the highest bounty ever. The Whites tried to break her spirit but Tubman was never submissive. After she reached the Free states, Tubman made nineteen trips back to the slave plantations and helped hundreds of people escape slavery. Tubman went on to become an American abolitionist, humanitarian, and an armed scout and spy for the United States Army during the Civil War. The first woman to lead an armed expedition in the war, she guided the raid at Combahee Ferry, which liberated more than seven hundred slaves. She was active in the women's suffrage movement until her death, becoming an icon of American courage and freedom.

Unfortunately, not all runaways and conductors succeeded in their venture. Walker, a sea captain for instance, was imprisoned for trying to transport runaway slaves to freedom in the Bahamas. Because slaves were considered properties, freeing them was viewed as stealing owners' personal property and hence, he was branded with the letter S.S. which stands for Slave Stealer. However, those who managed to find freedom went on to tell their stories. Other slaves who escaped via the railroad were Henry Bibb, Anthony Burns, and Josiah Henson. Born into slavery in Kentucky, Bibb went on to become a well known activist. But before that, he made several failed attempts and made his first successful escape in 1837. It was a painful escape, as projected in his narratives, leaving behind his friends, relatives, and his wife with their baby daughter who knew nothing of his plans. Bibb was recaptured time and again on being betrayed by people and struggled against a lot of obstructions that wounded his will. He escaped through the Underground Railroad to Canada with the little money he managed to find. Guided by the unchangeable North Star by night, and the thought that he was fleeing from a land of oppression, whips and chains inspired him to keep moving forward.

There were no distinct routes along the Underground Railroad that slaves followed. It was a loose network and as such slaves reached their destinations in different ways. This was but one advantage because it made it harder for the captors to find them. The fugitives were not only scared of being caught, but also of starvation, threats presented by their surroundings such as the scorching heat in summer and the cold in winter, as well as the fear of being eaten by hungry wild animals. Not all slaves travelled north, some like Bibb went as far as Canada

to avoid US jurisdiction because the slaves heading north were still not safe owing to The Fugitive Slave Act. By the end of civil war, more than twenty thousand African Americans had resettled in Canada, which was certainly not free from racism but provided better opportunities. But gradually the Act came into effect. While it resulted in the unjust capture and death of countless African Americans, ironically it also had positive effects its legislatures had never intended. Many people in the north who hitherto had cared little about slavery turned against it, and led to the expansion of Underground Railroad routes.

Born into slavery in Beaufort, South Carolina, Robert Smalls went on to free himself, his crew, and his families during the Civil War. His profession as a longshoreman and later a wheelman provided him enough knowledge to commandeer a Confederate ship, CSS *Planter*. Michael Moore says that his great-great-grandfather, Smalls, "had freedom on his mind" (https://youtu.be/LEakos-a-4k). He had the money, had negotiated with his wife's master to buy their freedom, and when opportunity came he seized it. Both he and his wife had agreed that if for some reasons the effort failed, they were going to blow the boat up because they knew the consequences of being caught. To do this under all the conditions in the middle of the night was a life or death scheme and the emotions had to have been traumatizing. But they succeeded. He could have simply used his comfortable life to maximum advantage. Yet he went back and signed up with the army. Considered the first war hero of the civil war, Smalls' dedication helped prove to President Abraham Lincoln to accept African American soldiers into the Union Army. After the war, he returned to Beaufort and became a politician, even winning election during the Reconstruction era. Who knew that a slave could live to see a life like this. As an enslaved person, he was denied education although he desperately wanted, and so after he was free, not only did he educate himself and his daughter, but also went on to create the first free compulsory state wide public school system in South Carolina. He wanted the freedom of all enslaved Africans and this is one major legacy he left behind.

The Blacks were not supposed to even think of freedom, and so even their subjectivity was colonized (Erue 4). Yet, the desperate longing to be free from narcissistic owners was a common feeling that the slaves had in general. It could take them decades to save the amount needed to pay for their freedom and so escaping became the only option. When opportunity stepped in, they availed themselves, heedless of the whip and many more danger that awaits them. In the narrative, Caesar wanted to escape as soon as possible although Cora suggested waiting for the full moon. Mrs. Garner had obviously sown the seeds of Caesar's flight in

many ways, but the attention she brought to him of the Underground Railroad was distinguished. Caesar was good with his hands and therefore sold his handsomely crafted bowls on the open area. To Caesar's disbelief, Fletcher, a White man, approached him one Sunday and suggested a plan about selling his crafts during the week, from which they might both profit. Fletcher was a man who detested slavery but having been sold down south had severely distorted Caesar's attitude towards the Whites. He warns Caesar on reading signs and newspaper in the open place, because Negroes' ability to read and write was intimidating to the Whites. As the teamster tells Cora, "… the only thing more dangerous than a nigger with a gun, was a nigger with a book" (273). Although their bowls did not sell, their scheme to freedom blossomed. Escaping was too big an idea, which took Caesar months of planning in his head and Fletcher was a helping hand to let it truly live.

Saving her last meal for the Hob women, and after sleepless nights, Cora finally meets Caesar by the cotton and began their venture through the tall plants, "their fear calling after them even if no one else did" (55). They had six hours for their disappearance to be exposed and only one or two before the patrollers reached where they were now. Lovey, who knew they were up to something all this time, secretly followed them. Whatever reason(s) had made her run, they were unable to send her back. The most direct route to Fletcher's farm was only through people's land, and it was unsafe until the family put out their lamps. Most slaves followed the black water, as there were no helpful Whites this far south, no underground railroad waiting to rescue a runaway nigger. This idea allowed the trio to get as far as northeast until attacked by four hunters. Caesar had to fight them like he had struck many a White man before in order to survive. Lovey howled as the two men dragged her into the darkness. When Cora was attacked by a young boy of twelve, she battled and fought for even the days she could not when the men brutalized her. When the boy pulled Cora to the ground, she reached out and smashed the boy's skull with a rock she could get hold of, and repeated her assault. When reflecting later on the scene, Cora concludes that she feels no guilt because it was necessary for her escape. The deep injustice of slavery thus leads innocent Blacks to commit acts of violence themselves with apparent apathy. Caesar and Cora were murderers in the eyes of the county, and Terrance's reward to find them was exceptionally enticing that it attracted all kinds of patrollers. It was Cora's first time out in the world and every mile away from the plantation was an achievement.

When the station agent gave them two choices, with one train leaving in an hour and another in six hours, it is apparent that the slave's choice had always been, "Anyplace but where they had escaped" (67). Looking at the tunnel, Cora was reminded of the African bodies working as fast as their strength permitted in making this place. As they depart, the station agent Lumbly tells her, "If you want to see what this nation is all about," "Look outside as you speed through, and you'll find the true face of America" and clearly, "mile after mile" there was only darkness (69). This is symbolic of the country's dark and uncertain circumstances for African Americans. Now, more than ever, Cora was resolute to prevent anyone from snatching this freedom away from her. But no matter how far Cora escapes to, with all the talk of Negro uplift and civilizing the savage, it is the same hungry place it always was and although the chains were of new manufactures, they accomplished the purpose of chains. Although Cora loses people she becomes attached to while on the run, her first escape via the Underground Railroad paved her way to liberty.

After slavery was abolished in the US, The Underground Railroad sought to exist and became history. The descendants of former slaves take immense pride looking back at the growth that their ancestors have made over the years. It is a wonder to understand some of the things that the slaves have experienced and achieved. It is however a belief that "all Americans can be better by understanding the fullest sense of American history" and give due recognition to the specificity of the experiences that the slaves have gone through (https://youtu.be/LEakos-a-4k). Young African Americans can, in people like Smalls and Tubman, derive pride and help to drive their aspirations forward. And fictional characters like Cora are a gentle reminder that debunking the narcissism of Whites is possible when they root out the thought of Black inferiority. We see Cora as a non-conformist through a number of instances such as taking beatings for Chester, the audacity with which she holds on to her little garden, and above all, the courage she could muster in order to escape via the Underground Railroad.

3.3 Conceptualizing "Home" in Antebellum and Postbellum America: The feeling of homelessness and a desire to belong that struck most colored people from the antebellum period through the postbellum and beyond was an absolute cause of slavery. Throughout history, African Americans failed to make the mainstream America a home as they were deferred from the opportunity to belong. The forced movement of millions of Africans was something its descendants were badly affected from. Most of the slaves knew only the country they were displaced to serve, and had no choice but to adapt there. But to call America "home" with all its coldness was unworkable. Whitehead illustrates the ways in

which the bonding of a family, a sense of belongingness, a place to call home, and heritage, were all distorted by slavery. The characters in search of a home must flee from bloodthirsty humans through an endless labyrinth of dreadful impediments. Through their own movement in the narratives, they witness the pluralized African American experiences, and bring together their own history of forced relocation.

The narratives chronicle the quest for a home and how racial bigotry serves as a barrier to achieving this dream. Cora had to wrestle with different places and circumstances because the Randall plantation was overly distorted to be called "home," although she had been born there. The irony of considering Randall "home" is expressed by the slave catcher, upon capturing Cora, "You don't have to be afraid, Cora. You're going home" (187). A traumatic life on a Georgia plantation around 1850 that was home to a number of slaves is sensibly portrayed by Whitehead, before the thrilling escape through different states of America by the female protagonist. Old Randall had been an important member of planter society but the Randall brethren were the true pioneers, carving out a life in Georgia. After James died, the slaves of the northern and southern halves became one plantation under his brother Terrance.

The omniscient narrator in *TUR* recounts how the Dahomeyan raiders kidnapped the men first, and then returned for the women and children. Cora's grandmother, Ajarry, was passed between slavers for cowrie shells and glass beads. In Ouidah she was among the eighty-eight human souls sold for sixty crates of rum and gunpowder. Chained from head to toe in exponential misery, she tried to kill herself twice on the voyage to America, once by denying herself food and then by drowning. However, the sailors who were well versed in the schemes of chattel rescued her both times. The traumatic separation from family was common in slavery and despite their efforts at the auction, her family was purchased by Portuguese traders leaving her on her own. She knew nothing about the ship's fate, as she had only imagined all her life that her people worked for kind and generous masters up north, and that the slaves somehow bought their way out of bondage and lived as free men and women.

In America the idiosyncrasy was that, slaves were considered as things along with carts and horses. They thought best to kill old people who would not survive a trip across the ocean. Finally having landed on the Randall plantation, Ajarry was bought for two hundred and ninety-two dollars and clearly life was no better than the arduous journey. Having sold and resold many times, her price fluctuated. She took a husband three times when the first was sold to a sugarcane estate in Florida, the second died of cholera, and the last had his ears

bored for stealing honey which eventually led to his death. Ajarry bore five children by these men. Although Randall rarely sold the little ones back then, the slaves knew where and how their children would die. Ajarry's only child that survived was Cora's mother, Mabel. To escape the boundary of the plantation was impossible. Ever since Ajarry was kidnapped, she had been commercialised, until her death. Whitehead takes the universal trauma of the plantation further by changing the historical timeline, and placing across three generations.

Cora is exiled from the community of other enslaved people when she is sent off to Hob, a place on the plantation where crippled and strays and slaves who had lost their wits were kept, a place where women's bodies were violently used. No worthy man paid her notice after the day Cora was raped by four men, given the cabin she called home and the stories of her psychosis. Cora became a stray when her mother Mabel suddenly disappeared but the little garden she left Cora to tend to underlines a sense of home and the significance this garden brings, from which she grows vegetables, is the connection that Cora shares to her mother, grandmother, and to other African ancestors about whom she knew nothing. It gives her the opportunity to take ownership over something, and becomes a symbol of possibilities.

The Hob women were seven that year and most planters could not tell one slave from another, "even after taking them to bed" (79). This is one fine illustration where the Whites homogenize the identity of Black culture. Lucy and Titania, who worked in the kitchen under Alice, never spoke. While the former chose not to, the latter could not because her tongue had been chopped out by a previous owner. Two other women took their own lives that spring. Hob had slaves been driven to mental instability due to the conclusive trauma of slavery, but others like Nag, with whom Cora tended to the cotton, had been relocated over politics. Lovey arrived on Randall when she was five years old with her mother Jeer, who had been born in Africa and loved to tell stories of her childhood. Being the eldest at Hob, Mary rendered a maternal feeling even after the loss of her five children, some of whom died and some others were sold off when they were old enough to fetch water. Hob was for a long time a home to Cora just as it was to the rest of the women, until her escape. We find a paradoxical element here because although the Hob women were exiles in this unsafe place, the place nevertheless provided them with a kind of protection.

New slaves were quickly warned against the Hob women and so Caesar barely had the chance to speak to Cora. He once managed to tell her to come to North with him because Cora was considered a good luck on the prospect that her mother was the only person to have

escaped the plantation. It was an idiotic dream to Cora because she thought enduring life at the plantation was the only way for survival. For a slave to walk in the darkness at night in search of the Free States was unattainable. But Mabel had. When the news broke, the hunters walked into the swamp with dogs that had been bred for generations to detect nigger scent across whole countries. But both the dogs and their masters came up empty. Nobody had escaped the plantation before as the fugitives were either betrayed by friends, or misinterpreted the stars. But of Mabel, there was no sign. Mabel's escape, in a way, instilled in Cora the plan of discovering a better place to call home.

The slaves were accustomed to routine tortures but few fortunate ones such as Caesar and Ajarry's second husband had a more homely environment on account of their liberal owners until their displacement. Ajarry always enjoyed the stories her husband shared from the Bible. Caesar had been born on a small farm in Virginia owned by an old widow, Mrs. Garner, who did her bit in helping her slaves learn how to read and write. In her ability, she prepared them for the liberation that awaited them, for she had assured to free them upon her death. The way in which Black slaves lived a more cherished way among their White captors can at times be confusing just as it was to Ethel who thought that "a slave was someone who lived in your house like family but was not family" (192). When Mrs. Garner passed away, Caesar and his family were sold off by her niece, each leading to their own destiny. An auction in Savannah led him to Randall. In their efforts to create a home, which for the most part fails owing to their untimely dislocation and exile, African Americans at large occupy an in-between space, a space which is neither their host country, America, nor their birth place, Africa. Cora has never been to Africa and therefore to call it a home was flawed too as she had no personal ties with her heritage. Eyerman asserts that much more than a cultural resource, Africa is "more than a spiritual home," and whether or not one actually returned there in a physical sense was "probably less important than its symbolic meaning as homeland, beyond slavery and outside history" (167). Although Africa gives Cora a sense of warmth, her only lived experience of the continent is through the stereotypical scene acted in the history museum, in which she later works, to amuse the White voyeurs.

Although the Black Americans desired to belong in the dominant culture, the White superiors always found ways to detach them. One early example is found in Hall's presentation of the merging of "color" with "intelligence" laid down by Kant in his presentation of a "Negro carpenter," who was "*quite black* from head to foot," and therefore was a clear substantiation

that “what he said was stupid” (34). In the deepening social discussion on slavery and the slave trade, this hypocrisy gradually comes to the centre.

The socials, which was mainly arranged by the proctors to encourage healthy relations between colored men and women in an attempt to undo the damages done by slavery, was one of the times in which the escaped slaves felt at home. Playing their music as freemen and not chattel was still a cherished newness. The daily doom and gloom have made the slaves incapable to think of anything positive about the White owners and this is what colonization has done to their psyche as many freed men continued to be enslaved by their painful traumas. In Cora’s search for home, the different parts of America are exposed. Caesar, who now worked in the machine factory, was distrustful of the government but Sam was hopeful and so they decided to stay in South Carolina for good. Just when the Blacks living in South Carolina begins to feel a semblance of freedom and safety, they discover that they are being subjected to forced sterilization and to the study of syphilis treatment. “We have to tell them they’re being lied to. They’re sick?” Sam protests but clearly, “Will they believe [a Black man] over their white doctors?” (122-23). Colored women were still domesticated and controlled, and when they thought they knew liberation, the doctors’ knives proved them otherwise. The irony that the white figures in the museum scenes are dolls, while the black figures are real bodies, validates the commodification of Black bodies. With little, or rather no legal or social power to protest for the injustices meted out to the colored people, the professional body snatchers came for them for the experimentation, given that neither did they post sentries over their dead, nor did they knock on the door of the sheriff, because even if they do, they knew no sheriff and no journalist would listen to them.

Although Cora escaped the brutality of the plantation, she is always on the run. We also learn that being free had nothing to do with chains or space because on the plantation, Cora was not free but moved at liberty on its acres, but now although free of her master she had to sneak around a den so tiny she could not stand. Her border is only that of a world in which she is enforced to work and required to exist in the smallest amount of space. With no choice, she had to hide in the attic of Martin and his wife, who was reluctant to take Cora in, due to the equal punishment laid out for those providing refuge to runaways. Notwithstanding the morning hour at his home, Martin spoke in a whisper as his neighbor’s son was one of the night riders and even with the termination of the slave trade, the merciless patrollers were the law. Their expanded powers permitted them to knock on anyone’s door for random inspections and making immodest advances. Having been in the nook for four months, it

became a home to Cora in a strange way reading the few books that the host provided, including the Bible, in the little ray of light the hole in the wall produced. But this too fails to justify the concept of home when the regulators searched Martin's house, and on the second time dragged Cora out on finding her. Among the crowd was Ridgeway, claiming Cora in light of the Fugitive Slave Law, and upon winning he shackled her ankles and tied it through a ring in the floor of the wagon. As they pulled away, she saw Martin and Ethel been tied to the hanging tree, complete to pay the price for helping a runaway slave.

Due to the massive dislocation and exile, African Americans often failed to trace their ancestral lineage. The paradox is that, this form of hostility gave way for the development of new kinds of kinship among the colored populace living in America. The Valentine Farm best represents this concept as it is by far the closest thing to Cora to call home but this too is short-lived when she is obligated to be on the run again. Cora's notion of home as such is directed not to a particular place, but is the act of being on the run. The place was owned by John Valentine, one who strongly holds that Blacks have a legal right as American citizens to be in America. The farmhouse served as a schoolhouse on most days and a church on Sundays. On Saturday evenings the farm got together for a common meal and leisure activities. White people took Valentine as one of theirs owing to his light complexion and with this advantage, he went down to the county and bought parcels for his Black friends, and the former field hands who had come west, as well as the fugitives who had found a "home" on his farm. Around hundred souls lived at the farm in Indiana, where the pickaninnies were called as children. There, Cora has her own room, which was an unlikely gift from the farm after all her detention centres. Although Mingo advocated staying in Indiana, he wanted a severe reduction of the runaways like Cora because while the farm's recognition made the place into a symbol of colored uplift, it also became a target. But the community was determined to stick as one. As Mingo and Lander took turns to speak at the gathering, there came a chorus of rifle fire, screams, and a mad scramble overtook the meeting hall. It ends with a bloody war when Ridgeway and other Whites descend on the farm and kill the people living there. Afraid and doubtful of whether she was going deeper in or back from where she came, but also trusting the slave's choice to guide her, Cora stood to escape once again.

The slaves had been assimilated to a shared tension beyond their regular bondage. Their occasional few hours break from work such as the rare birthday celebration or the socials, drive out much of the ill feeling. They feel a sense of inclusiveness and could face the morning labour with their spirits somehow replenished, by a fond night to look back on and

the next get-together to look forward to. On days like this, a slave will be lost in that fleeting joy of liberation but soon comes the overseer's call to work, the reminder that she is only briefly a human being across the eternity of her servitude. As Cora says that in "liberty or bondage," "the African could not be separated from the American" and America is very much for the Blacks as it is for the Whites (156).

The concept of Home was never homogenous, and for the slaves, home was more than its physical form. As a result of the variety of enslaved living conditions and lived experiences, home took many forms. Thomas H. Jones, while writing of his life in slavery, expressed his certainty that enslaved individuals shared a natural and a keen longing for home, that "no one can have … such intensity of desire for *home* and home affections, as the poor slave" (23). Although the concept of home that the Nickel boys experience differs to some extent from that experienced by Cora or the slaves, the sense of exile and otherness they face at the reform school is not much of a difference, and here the concept of neo-colonialism established by Kwame Nkrumah rings true. Whitehead brings to light the lasting impact of slavery by addressing the fact that African Americans still fall victims to racial prejudice, racial sadism, and racial segregation. Set in the fictional Nickel Academy in Eleanor Florida, the author has taken into account the narratives of Elwood and Turner roughly hundred years after the end of slavery and right after the end of Jim Crow laws. Whitehead drew upon the institution of Arthur G. Dozier for Boys, which remained segregated till 1968 although the Supreme Court in 1954 declared the segregation of public schools based on race illegal, following the Brown v. Board of Education, which further went on to illegalise all institutional forms of racial segregation and discrimination by President Johnson through the signing of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. In *The Nickel Boys,* Whitehead takes inspiration from the former Dozier students, now known as The White House Boys, who came forward in the early 2000s to share their painful stories of physical, mental and sexual exploitations.

Elwood grew up in Tallahassee in the 1950s and '60s, and lived with his grandmother, Harriet, after his parents fled to the West on account of racial inequity. Like the Richmond Hotel kitchen, where his grandmother works as a cleaning woman ever since she was fourteen, Mr. Macroni's cigar shop where Elwood later begins to work after school, rendered a safe home to Elwood until he was approached by Mr. Hill with the opportunity to study at Melvin Griggs Technical. It was an African American college near Tallahassee, and the prospect to study at free of cost was a delight to both Harriet and Elwood. But nothing good was expected to come easy for colored folks in the presence of racist Americans as made

clear by his inability to attend the college upon the false charge of robbery. Apparently, the car driven by a Black man that gave Elwood a lift on his way to college was a stolen car, and like the myriad colored folks before and after him, Elwood is stopped by the police officer with his gun drawn yelling, “Only a nigger’d steal that” (42). In the aftermath of his arrest, Elwood is sentenced to a reform school, the Nickel Academy, a place that would break him both physically and mentally for as long as he lived.

When Elwood first stepped in, he develops a homely feeling judging by the way the place was kept, and seeing the boys play merrily. “This is a school, and we’re teachers. We’re going to teach you how to do things like everyone else” the Superintendent Maynard Spencer assures (48). But he soon realises that it is not what it appears on the outside. Elwood sees the interiors of the dorms to be comparatively worse than the exteriors, a symbolic indication of the hypocritical temperament of the institutional system. Elwood and the boys had to acclimatise to the new place as it was their home till they graduate, which rarely happened. They had to adapt to communal showers with ice-cold water that has a sickly, sulphuric smell, and to old oatmeal with heaps of cinnamon to mask its stale flavour for food, and to sleep in a room crammed with sixty boys. The food that the boys received on the day of inspection was supposed to be their daily meal. But sadly, the eggs, fresh juice and pears were only given to the students to come clean before the state government. The place was a literal prison disguised as an institution.

There were four tiers of students at Nickel, namely, the Grubs, Explorers, Pioneers, and Aces. The students had to level up to the rank of Ace in order to graduate. Elwood, a Grub, had to earn points by listening to what his supervisors say, or make him do, and perform well in studies from the educational instruction the boys receive every other day. But this too proves to be mere words, as grades had nothing to do with a student’s ability to graduate at Nickel. The problem was that, even if the colored boys avoided trouble, Nickel was calculated in such a way that trouble reached out to them and found ways to degrade their state of mind. Nickel manipulates the boys into submission by creating this illusion of upward mobility. Instilling in the boys a sense of false hope, of graduating early by listing them a number of formalities, was a way to refrain them from fighting back. In his efforts to graduate two times faster, it becomes apparent to Elwood that the school’s hierarchal system is rather faulty and that the White supremacy would not allow the fruition of his hard work. Because to investigate the scene such as who was at fault or who started the fight and why, was not part of the White men’s job. Their job was to keep the colored boys in check all the time.

Elwood's purpose is twisted from the first days at the dorm when he steps in to prevent a fight, but not only did he receive a hard blow from Mike, he was also fetched by the supervisors at 1:00 a.m. to the torture building along with the other boys following the fight. It was one such place that bent the boys both physically as well as psychologically. When his legs are whipped till it tears up, it becomes visible that a place where even a small misdemeanour leads to unruly retributions can never be called home. At the infirmary where he is sent to after losing consciousness, he meets Turner, the boy who would deliberately eat soap powder to avoid the routines at Nickel. As the novel progresses, we see that their time together blossoms into a moving friendship, which provides them with a kind of a safe haven.

The magnitude of the color of the skin to racist Americans is parodied through the back and forth placement of Jaimie at Nickel, who was half Mexican. On his arrival, he was put in with the White kids but after getting so dark working in the lime fields, he was reassigned to the colored half. Having spent a month in Cleveland dorm, he was again sent back to the White camp by Director Hardee having noticed his light face among the Blacks. From the segregated campuses of White and Black students, to directing the colored students to the more threadbare items, and to the harsher punishments laid before them as evidenced by how "the white boys bruised differently than the black boys," to the biased treatments at the infirmary, and furthermore to the selling of Black students' supplies, the school with more than six hundred students was flawed in all areas (66). These segregationist practices also highlight the pervasiveness of slavery in contemporary America. Elwood had never been much of a crier, but each night he imagined what the place that he had to make a home of held in store for him, tears rolled down his eyes.

While Whitehead is adamant in exposing the reverberating racism, he also lays emphasis on the gift of friendship and union. The inclusiveness that Elwood receives from Macroni, Turner, and Mr. Hill, underscores the importance for marginalised people to find such purpose and hope. His comradeship with Turner serves as a strong source of resistance that later unites an entire generation of former Nickel Boys who come to work together in voicing out their unspeakable distress to the world.

On Turner's recommendation to Harper, the supervisor of the Community Service, Elwood is asked to join the team. Although it is only for a few hours a day, he finds it enlivening to belong to something and to be around Harper who believes in the equality of both races. Elwood becomes a part of unloading the various goods to local shops that are actually meant

for the school by the government. The school's administration, however, sparingly feeds the students and sells the rest to nearby stores for profit. Although Elwood and Turner are aware of the shady work they do for Nickel, it was a sweet escape in the company of each other, and in the little freedom they enjoy especially when they are left on their own owing to Harper's personal affair. Elwood also learns about the school's nefarious history from its newspaper, *The Gator*. The school puts the young boys to work in the pretext of reforming and restoring them to the community with purpose, but in reality they were making money from the boys' labor and the boys were gaining nothing from it. Elwood tries to keep track of everything about the outside world to memory, while also documenting Nickel's unlawful practices in a notebook with the hope of exposing them someday.

The school declares the missing students to have run away when their families ask the authorities about their whereabouts. But in actuality, they have been murdered. Two boys were run over by trucks and these deaths were never investigated. Terming the atrocities committed by Spencer and his workers as unlawful, Elwood insists the boys to stand up for themselves unlike the old days but visibly, such efforts are ineffective. The optimism, with which he shares about how his lawyer Mr. Andrews may well help the boys with regard to the brutalities at the White House, is no more than a fantasy to Turner. He disregards the idea because he holds that one "can change the law" but "can't change people and how they treat each other" reminding him that he is already lucky enough to have survived the beatings as some students don't (105). Elwood attributes Turner's cynicism to the lack of having anyone outside of Nickel to support him. This is the sad reality as the suffering that some boys like Turner endure at Nickel is indifferent to the world outside. Still then, Turner points out that this does not keep him from seeing reality, insisting that his friend should also learn to survive Nickel by mimicking the rest, in putting his own safety first since the school is an "obstacle course" (82). Elwood's optimism, that he manages to gather from few empathetic people he crossed path with, could only do so much as his prospect of getting back home shatters when the lawyer escapes with their two hundred dollars. Because parting ways with Elwood was so difficult for Harriet, she tried her best along with Macroni to bring justice to his case by hiring a young, kind, and an optimistic White lawyer. However just as the good old officer at the court who "sent a vibration" being "a white man," the lawyer too with all his goodness was a White man in the end (45). Whether it is the antebellum or postbellum period, African Americans were clearly denied the prospect to belong.

For all the efforts of Jim Crow America to deny him the power of literacy, Elwood keeps striving. Whenever the sell is slow at the cigar shop, he would spend time reading *Life*, the magazine from which he discovers about the Civil Rights Movement admiring the protestors in the picture as heroes. His keenness with the Movement is inspired by the speech of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at Zion Hill Baptist Church, a record his grandmother gifts him on the Christmas Day of 1962. Dr. King's notion that the Black is no less than any White person keeps him encouraged while facing racist authorities at Nickel, whose purpose is to make him feel inferior. From a very young age, Elwood witnessed the persecution of the Africans by "the white sin of slavery" and how they were humiliated and kept low by segregation, resulting from the misguided thinking of the majority of the Whites (11). Nickel had shown him the things that were not mentioned in books.

Aware that their books will be handed over to Black students at Lincoln High School, the White students scribbled racial insults into the margins of their textbooks such as, "Choke, Nigger! You Smell. Eat Shit," which Elwood had to witness every year (29). The new history teacher, Mr. Hill, a young Black man who has participated as a freedom rider and marched in multiple rallies, persuades his class to erase those hateful phrases. Although a simple act, it instigates Elwood to actively resist even the smallest forms of racism, unafraid. After Mr. Hill emphasizes the importance of working against injustices to the class, linking the events that had happened a hundred years ago to their current lives, Elwood decides to take part in the Civil Rights movement by protesting at the Florida Theatre, which still refuses to let Black people in. Reading James Baldwin's concept that "*Negroes are Americans and their destiny is the country's destiny*" from the book *Notes of a Native Son* that he receives from Mr. Hill, helps Elwood understand his reason of being a part of the Movement better, that fighting for equality would benefit America at large (37). He even starts to pen down this idea to local and activist newspapers, under the pseudonym Archer Montgomery. Although a strong supporter of the movement, and has herself participated in the Frenchtown bus boycott of the 1950s, his grandmother would not allow Elwood to take part in such activities, for she had seen her father die in prison after refusing to step out of the way of a White lady on the sidewalk, her husband being killed while trying to protect a dishwasher from three White men at Miss Simone's bar, and her army son-in-law escape when his ideas about equality did not fit into the life of Tallahassee. This substantiates that "it was one thing to allow someone to kill for you and another to let him live next door" (71). As much as she wants to see a change, she no longer has hope in the White supremacy, and having being deferred from the

idea of home, deferred from the promises inscribed in America's documents of equality and opportunity to all, she would not again risk getting separated from her loved ones whatsoever.

For the Blacks to be fully included into the mainstream America was a thin possibility when new forms of slavery are relentlessly incorporated. The Nickel Academy operates outside the law. This is made obvious when Trevor Nickel obtains the position of the school's director simply because he was actively associated with the Ku Klux Klan. This also further elucidates the institution's serenity in going against the law by segregating its students. Whitehead also exposes the school's history of sexual abuses as made evident by Trevor Nickel who used to spy on the boys as they showered, in addition to the psychologist who would pick dates. Boys like Clayton Smith were taken to Lovers' Lane and sexually abused by supervisors like Freddie Rich. Regardless of the institution's racist and abusive patterns, they become hard to eradicate when they are deeply entangled with the very history of Nickel, besides the fact that not everyone has families or people fighting for them, which further highlights this subject of homelessness.

The Nickel school is meant for juveniles with crime records but the Black boys are exiled to the place for petty reasons such as for accusations by White supremacist or simply fighting for their rights. Jaimie, who was in charge of the dorm reassignments, was exiled on ground of beating an old rummy senseless when he haunted the railroad yard and stuck his hand down the pants of one of Jaimie's gang. Elwood was falsely accused of car robbery. Some boys were exiled for truancy and some because their parents did not want them. The annual Christmas Fair is the only time the students loved at Nickel, where all the boys receive gifts irrespective of their colour. It gave them a sense of home, and for once they get the feeling of boys from nice houses in nice neighborhoods where the nights are nightmareless. Despite the segregated campuses, Nickel was sometimes like being at home where older siblings warned the younger ones about a parent's black mood so they could take precautions. When one of the supervisors was poisoned and rushed to the hospital, the boys had to warn each other of the jeopardy to look out for and this is one fine example. But in no way did Nickel validate the concept of "home." Post Nickel, a lot of the boys joined the armed forces, a natural option as they got no home to go back to.

Like Elwood, Turner has personally struggled with merging his worth and purpose with the racist society as well as in his effort to belong to the White world, which in many ways had made him a pessimist. Staying at Nickel for the second time, Turner has no anticipation to

make a home out of it in the face of racial bigotry. Although he does not mention why he was sent to Nickel at first, he does tell Elwood of his second punishment which resulted from an argument with a White man at the bowling alley in which he worked as a pinsetter. After he was rebuked by the old Black cook of not having any sense of self-respect and always "shucking and jiving" for the White people, which actually was his endeavour to be a good employee, Turner became mean to them (95). It once led to a dispute with an angry White man one day, and although Turner escaped unharmed, he gets so exasperated that he takes his anger out on his aggressor's car by throwing a cinder block through the man's window a week later, which resulted to his arrest. Turner is well aware of the school's unbelievably bigoted place but Elwood remains unacquainted, for which Turner testifies to him about the school's secreted policies. Because the White men's sons held the old ways close, even post Nickel, the racism and fear and disappointment further painted Turner's life. Because their slave owning ancestors have passed down this brutal practice, they were well aware about how to keep a slave in line, and how to take the Black man away from his family only to afflict him until all he remembers is the affliction.

Looking past the school's property line and seeing the free world outside, it was expected of the boys to think of freedom, to run away, to write their own story for once. But most often, escapees were captured and mentally brutalised before having them killed. Dreading for the rest of their lives ever since they laid feet at Nickel, it was "crazy to run and crazy not to run" (146). Even while escaping, they saw no Negro drivers on the street to get a lift from, and bringing the evil of racism to light it is no surprise that not many Negroes owned cars in this part of state, which made it even more difficult to flee as it was impossible to walk up all through the miles. "Tonight or not at all" Turner instigated and although Elwood's back and legs were in great pain as they had been sliced by Spencer and Hennepin, he ran anyway (198).

Elwood's fortitude to expose the school and the conviction to voice out against inequality comes to bear when he decides to hand over a letter outlining the school's sadistic and fraudulent policies to one of the inspectors during the school's inspection. But when he was caught, and awaited his death, Turner came to his rescue. They found ways to escape, given the long planning and preparation they had for this day. Taking hold of the Grayson boys' bicycles, they were heading home at last. Elwood was willing to go wherever Turner instructed and when it was safe, he had the thought of putting it all down on papers again. Turner, for his part, thought of the train they would take up north, to be his own man, be his

own boss. And even if they find no train, he was resolved to crawl on his hands and knees. The place had worn them out and they longed for inclusiveness. But once again, this proves futile for Elwood when the Community Service van was after them. The boys had to leap off the bikes and run through the tall grass and weeds. With the first shotgun missed by Hennepin, Harper pulled the trigger next and Elwood was shot. Turner could not help but keep running. He hid out in the railroad yards and although he made a safe escape, he struggled to make a safe home out of anywhere.

On visiting Elwood at the Nickel, his grandmother would tell him that it would be a whole different thing by the time he comes home for the reason that Lyndon Johnson was carrying on President Kennedy's civil rights bill. However, nothing much seemed to change even with the passage of time. After his childhood home, Turner had lived in New York City for the longest. America was still a mess in all its racial revulsion and the garbage strike was a strong metaphor. When Denise complains about the strike, Turner highlights his belief that America is an essentially dirty place and it is fine for the rest of the city to see the kind of place they are living in. The growing problem of gentrification in New York City, the prison disguised as school, all justifies how mainland America still denies African Americans with the hope of a home.

3.4 Traumatic Experiences of American Slavery and its Aftermath: With each new generation, the African Americans were destined to face new forms of trauma, in light of socially constructed racial hierarchy. The traumatic experiences of colored people have been overlooked and often left unaddressed for a very long time as the definitions of trauma had been constructed from the experiences of dominant groups in Western society. Michael Rothberg's essay "From Gaza to Warsaw" challenged this hierarchical and exclusivist approach to accounting collective traumas, the "either mine or yours" approach, and painfully pointed how "Collective memories of seemingly distinct histories—such as those of slavery, the Holocaust, and colonialism—are not so easily separable" (524). Colonization and slavery were extremely vicious across many generations, which generated confused and traumatized individuals. As a reflective process, trauma links past to present through remembrance, imagination and representation. A lot of postcolonial trauma theorists have accentuated the thought that getting away from physical trauma does not automatically end an individual's psychosomatic anguish. The trauma of slavery is carried on in varied forms and Whitehead has shown how.

3.4.1 Historical and Cultural Trauma: There are certain characteristic traits shared by African Americans that result from transgenerational transmission, and this includes the inherited trauma and fear. What we understand and take things in from preceding generations, we pass them on to the next. This is central to understanding trauma, especially "historical trauma" as Dr. Bruce Perry opines (126). Historical trauma is a complex and collective multigenerational trauma experienced by a society that share specific culture, race, or ethnicity. Cultural trauma is a related concept experienced by a group of people as a result of horrific events to which they have been subjected to, leaving a deep-seated mark on their memory and identity. In the context of African American community, historical and cultural traumas are resultants of the lasting legacies of colonization and slavery.

As Ron Eyerman examines the ways in which African American identity was formed after slavery, he looks specifically at African American history. Where the touchstone of the term trauma tends to focus specifically on the individual experience, what happens within cultural trauma is a loss of group identity he says. As opposed to psychological or physical trauma, which by and large entails the experience of immense emotional anguish by an individual, Eyerman considers cultural trauma as "a dramatic loss of identity and meaning," "a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion" (2). Whitehead unfailingly represents this constant tearing of social fabric through three generations' lived experiences, reminding the harsh reality that each time African Americans reclaim their identities, it is further exacerbated through legal mandates. By incorporating historical events and situations, while also depicting his characters' experience beyond colonization and into a postcolonial world wherein they witness multigenerational trauma, Whitehead seeks to articulate the historical trauma African Americans have faced and continue to face.

Eyerman has analyzed and defined the significance of cultural trauma in reference to African Americans by stressing on the collective memories of slavery in his book *Cultural Trauma*. He argues that it is not only the direct experience of slavery, but also its memory and its reconstruction in the minds of later generations that constitutes cultural trauma. This is because forced servitude was not something directly experienced by many of the contemporary Blacks. The experiences were mediated through storytelling, newspapers, media, or literature, which came to be essential to their attempts to build a collective identity in the United States. These books, newspapers, and advertisements, slowly worked their way

into the minds of the people and shaped their view of the world. In America, that view of the world was White-centric for a very long time because no Black voice existed and even if it did exist, it was not heard, and even if it was heard to some degree, racial discrimination did not stop to exist. M. Salomon simply wanted the exploiters to give him the "chance to live like a human being," on being asked what he would do if he had eighty thousand Negroes in France in *Black Skin, White Masks* (Fanon 157). This sums up the condition of Blacks living along racial tensions. Existing in a world defined by their blackness was a constant trauma.

As dreams of full citizenship and cultural assimilation were overturned for the Blacks by the 1880s, the meaning of slavery appeared as the position of an identity conflict. From what we see, one of the former slaves' major drives for migrating after reconstruction was the fear that slavery would be re-established. In the trauma of rejection, "slavery was remembered as its memory re-membered a group" and it was in this context that the recollection of slavery was articulated as cultural trauma. Cultural trauma always engages a "meaning struggle," a wrestle with an event that involves identifying the "nature of the pain, the nature of the victim and the attribution of responsibility," referred to as the "trauma process," when the collective experience of social crises becomes a crisis of meaning and identity (Eyerman 16, 3). In this process, intellectuals, who in this case are the public leaders, abolitionists, and even writers, are central in making the allegations clear and representing the interest and desires of the affected to a wider public.

The visions and hopes of the slaves were limited by their race, and some like Caesar had grown up believing in the idea of choosing their own fate freely at the hands of kind owners only to realize that it only meant a slow death. Michael possessed the ability to recite long passages like the Declaration of Independence, and when his former master got fascinated by the abilities of South American parrots, he reasoned that if a bird could be taught limericks, a slave might as well be taught to remember. Soon afterwards, his owner grew bored and sold the boy south. By the time Michael got to Randall, the extensive afflictions completely destroyed his senses. In both the narratives, a single character's experience is expanded to symbolize the larger cultural process. Whitehead presented these characters, born into a period of colonization and created within them a symbol of representation, which has been frequently neglected by the United States.

Whitehead takes the disturbing Tuskegee syphilis experiments and the forced sterilization of African Americans of the twentieth century, and aligns them with the expedition of the

protagonists. Whitehead has created a fiction that derives from history in every respect, creating an altered chronology to tell his story. The Tuskegee tests, which was conducted between 1932 and 1972 by The United States Public Health Service in collaboration with the Tuskegee University about eighty years after the abolishment of slavery, was a clinical study in which African American men were deceived into believing that they were receiving free health care. The fact that even after the antibiotic, penicillin, was discovered for the treatment of those infected, they were not treated leading to more deaths. It is recorded that the patients' wives were infected with the disease and numerous children were born with inherited syphilis (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuskegee_Syphilis_Study). Whitehead presents these trials in the novel through the deliberate sterilization of both the sexes, which was one of the ongoing experiments at the colored hospital in South Carolina. Just as the doctor reveals, the reason for these experiments was partially the result of white American anxiety over potential slave revolts, because America has by now imported and bred so many Africans that in many states they have outnumbered the Whites and as such, emancipation is impossible. This anxiety of losing their dominant privileges has plagued the mindset of many white Americans throughout its history. When slavery was finally abolished in the United States, this anxiety played itself out in the 'separate but equal' legal segregation.

At the plantation, the slaves contemplate on their lack of identity as they had no Birthdays and even if they did celebrate occasionally, it did not seem like the thing to remember as they felt pointless to know the day they were born into the White man's world. This is the inherent trauma that they carry. At the schoolhouse, it was impossible to understand Howard's speech as he favored a pidgin of his lost African tongue and slave talk. Half language, as Mabel holds, was a lucid indication of the plantation as the Africans had been stolen from different villages speaking different languages. They were restricted to use their native language with the intention to obliterate their identities and to repress rebellions. The slaves were whipped for speaking their native language. Not only is their choice taken, but their claim to any personal identity.

It was easier for Turner to repress his emotion chiefly because he has tried a couple of times but failed miserably each time he tried to speak up. The idea of a collective social support that the boys could render to each other amid racist brutalities had always been dismissive to Turner and instead advocated for a fierce kind of individualism because the unfortunate truth at Nickel was that there was nobody else other than the self to render help in order to get out. But Turner grows weak in his own idea when he develops a strong closeness with Elwood

and had to take up the challenge of delivering Elwood's letter to one of the inspectors, when Elwood misses the chance to deliver it himself. Spencer later comes to know of this and throws Elwood into solitary confinement even after the state has banned this act in schools. Overhearing the supervisors discuss Elwood's death, Turner once again comes to help his friend because he no longer wanted to operate as the staunch individualist that the school has designed for him, rather fighting the injustices that have suppressed him for long. But this turns out to be one of his biggest regrets in life for it is here that he loses his friend for lifetime. And so through Turner's journey, it becomes obvious that despite their efforts to better their circumstances, the White colonial power mentally harasses them to the extent that they grow to be contemptuous and cynical toward any hope for positive change.

The Blacks in general have been discouraged multiple times. The sense of defeat that Elwood face when the government inspectors report his letter to Spencer instead of paying heed to its context is only a representation of the many failures on the part of American government officials towards the Black Americans. At the solitary confinement, even Dr. King's hopeful words, "*Throw us in jail and we will still love you… and one day we will win our freedom*" seemed a far cry for Elwood (172). Elwood neither understood the notion to love them despite the tortures, nor did he have the will to execute it. He waited for better days since he was little, but they never appeared.

Upon seeing the Community Service van racing toward them, which was their only get away from Nickel, Turner comes to recognize that everything about the school has always been out to get him. The hypocritical nature of Nickel once again comes to bear when Elwood is fabricated as a dangerous runaway when news about his death broke over the local press. Each time Turner is focused on his healing, he is reminded of Nickel's inordinate power over him. Losing Elwood once again to White tyrants leaves a scar on his psyche so deep that was beyond repair. Even the idea of dying alone scared Turner for he knows that his last thoughts would be of Nickel and he does not want to endure on his own. These are incidents that have happened in the past, and are unfortunately seen even in contemporary America.

3.4.2 Physical and Sexual Trauma: The psychological disorders such as anxiety, dissociation, substance abuse problems, and PTSD are common responses and symptoms of trauma. Record has it that African Americans are three to five times more likely to experience trauma through violence and victimization than Whites. Double colonization is best elucidated in the demographic that shows that Black women are even more likely to develop

a form of devastating anxiety from a traumatic event than men, and comparatively for a longer period of time. In *Soothe Your Nerves*, Dr. Angela Neal-Barnett talks about how anxiety and fear exact a great toll on Black women's physical, emotional, and spiritual lives (7). As Neal-Barnett discusses, there is not a single plain answer to the causes of "debilitating, life-controlling anxiety" because they are multifaceted and entail a combination of "biological, psychological, and social/environmental factors," called the "biopsychosocial" by some psychologists (15). One of the major causes of anxiety and fear in the Black women's lives is unquestionably sexual assault.

Raping served as a gizmo to terrify Black women at the plantation from resisting and as a reminder that they were properties. Silence was the only technique they knew to escape from further punishments. This conditioned compliance, which is the result of deeply rooted trauma, went on to define every decision and relations in their lives. When Cora was gang-raped by Edward, Pot and two others from the southern half who dragged her behind the smokehouse, nobody intervened even if they heard or saw as there was no way out. And "who would hear [their] appeal? There were no judges here" (Whitehead, *The Underground* 13). The witnessing of violence, known as co-victims, is believed to may have the same effect as the victim of violence. The highest number of co-victimization, according to Neal-Barnett, appears among Black women that further exacerbate their anxiety.

Physical and sexual traumas are important psychological contribution to the development of anxiety in Black women. The result of these untold traumas colored most of their view of life, always keeping them in a state of high anxiety. As the slaves sang and danced, be it at Randall or Valentine farm, Cora never participated. She was anxious that somewhere when the music stops, she might suddenly be next to a man unknown of what he might do. Men had put a fear in her all these years. No matter where Cora lands up in, she has to persistently work through her daily associations with the people who have so intensely oppressed her since her birth. Whitehead further demonstrates this explicit trauma through Cora's movement to North and South Carolina, in which she gets a glimpse of what life for an escaped slave is like. She learns that there is no free state as such for people like her because the Free states in America had its personal approach of colonizing the Blacks without having to own slaves.

On the plantation, Cora had seen men hung from trees and left for birds and animals, wound cut up open with the cat-o'-nine-tails, bodies roasted on pyres, feet and hands cut off to

prevent escape and stealing, and she had done nothing. But when Terrance smashed Chester's shoulder and head due to the single drop of wine staining the cuff of his white shirt, Cora bent over Chester's body as a shield and took the blows for him. Far worse was the merciless lashing Connelly gave her the next morning under the whipping tree. Connelly was one of Randall's first hires, the same man who had whipped her grandmother and mother. It was customary for slaves to observe the runaway slaves' gruesome demise as a moral instruction. When Big Anthony escaped twenty-six miles before he was discovered by the constables and returned him in an iron cage, he was roasted in front of them all with the smell filling all of the area.

The confusing part of human's psyche, as Dr. Perry brilliantly explains, is that the subjugated felt most comfortable when the world was in line with his/her worldview. He says that "the most destabilizing thing for anyone is to have their core beliefs challenged" and further brings in the remark made by the psychologist Virginia Satir that "*we feel better with the certainty of misery than the misery of uncertainty*" (179-80). Disbelieving for long about her escape amid severe punishments that awaited escapees, and her survival from Georgia trip, Cora was skeptical of the great things happening to her. Seeing the chains at the Underground Railroad, she feared Fletcher had conspired with Terrance from the very beginning to betray them. Being subjugated and poorly treated all her life authenticated this view. Even though it was toxic and ghastly, she was comfortable to things that were familiar. Even upon the news that Terrance Randall was now dead, Cora is constantly anxious given that land is property, somebody is definitely going to auction the plantation and the slaves, and thereby she will be property again. Thus we see that the slaves cannot imagine freedom even when they are free. Even the song that Royal sang in order to lighten her mood drew her back to the Randall cruelties, where Connelly used the song as a signal to go back to picking cotton after a whipping, and such a bitter thing cannot become a means of pleasure to Cora.

Cora and Caesar not only needed to keep better guard over their thoughts, but also adapt to their new ways of life, starting with their new identities as Bessie Carpenter and Christopher Markson respectively. They also would have to learn how to walk like freemen because a free Black "Walks different, talks different, carries himself different" as Royal would say (261). For Cora, her first elevator ride at the doctor's offices which were on the tenth floor of the Griffin was a wonder. The anxious talk of colored people at the hospital was understandable, because for most, this was their first visit with a doctor. On the plantation the doctor was only called when the slave remedies, which are the roots and salves, had failed and a valued hand

was near death. Dr. Campbell's examination on her body was painful and made her ashamed. The doctors monitored their physical well-being with as much dedication as the proctors who took measure of their emotional adjustments.

Both Caesar and Cora were introduced to better condition and they could not be happier but even if Cora tries to put the plantation behind her, the painful scar on her mind was hard to pull through. This newness was clearly a potential intimidation to Cora. The appearance of a woman blubbering incoherently near the schoolhouse, "My babies, they're taking away my babies!" instantly takes her back to the plantation as this lament of the mother over her tormented offspring was a routine there (105). According to Dr. Perry, "input from all of our senses" primarily comes into the lower part of our brain and even if it does eventually get to the higher thinking part of the brain, the cortex, it takes a while (26). And so until it get there, we have a complete threat response. One of the first things that happen when the stress response is being activated is that "systems in the higher parts of the brain, including our ability to tell time shut down" (28). What Cora was experiencing here is that the incoming signal matched against previously stored experiences and in this case, the matching process connected the woman's cry near the schoolhouse to that at the Randall plantation.

As Hall has mentioned, David Hume's assertion in suspecting the Negroes to be "naturally inferior to whites" colors the psyche of most Whites, which in many ways impact the colored populace (34). Cora always had the inferiority complex of not being enough as she had been treated as a commodity all her life. "We know it, but don't say it" and even "if we say, we don't say it for anyone to hear" "How big we are" says Cora (163). This inferiority and a strong sense of helplessness are also found in *The Nickel Boys.* Considering the trauma of subjugation, of losing family links, of inward powerlessness and wrath, and of a sense of unimportance, this Black inferiority, anger, and distress seemed so justified.

The fact that Spencer, or for that matter the White supervisors in the Nickel Academy, abducts the Black boys at one in the morning and force them to the torture room unquestionably adds a sense of constant fear to their already depraved routine. It was a way to coerce the boys to passively give in to their dominance. The fact that the boys are not willing to talk to each other about this shared anxiety further isolates them from one another. Since the chances of realizing their objective in getting out of Nickel were less, it was best for the Black students to make it alive to the end of their sentence. This too, however, is not guaranteed owing to the flawed system, in which the White tyrants are constantly breaking

them bit by bit. The fact that Turner lives in a dirty flophouse on 99th Street after Nickel, that he earns his General Educational Diploma (GED) only as a full-grown adult, and that he is mentally unable to amend his past justifies how badly Nickel defeated him in the name of education.

From the beginning of the narrative, the ignorance of the state government towards duplicitous authorities is highlighted. The state had been ignoring the voices of former Nickel Boys, until a team of archaeologists from the University of South Florida unearths the secret graveyard on the grounds of what used to be a reform school. It is only then that the public and the government turn all ears to their stories. Because the bodies were largely unidentified, the state of Florida was ordered to reopen investigations related to the infamous institution. The very fact that nobody believed in the existence of a secret graveyard, or was not even willing to listen, demonstrates the impossibility for people of marginalized racial group to speak up for themselves. This is the reason why it took the victims many long years to expose the dark sides of Nickel. Having identified 36 out of the 43 dead bodies by the archaeologists from the official cemetery, Boot Hill, they later come to know that even the reason of their deaths has entirely been due to physical violence.

The experiences that the boys faced at the torture building, also known as the White House, infused a physical pain that could be psychologically felt even generations later. Elwood's initial uncertainty about what exactly happens in there, with nobody actually willing to tell him, is confusingly tormenting. Waiting outside the room for his turn, he could hear the number of lashes the other boys were receiving and on learning that Corey, the victim, received more than his bully, Elwood comes to realize that there was no system at Nickel whatsoever. The beating room, with its bloody mattress and pillow covered by the stains from all the mouths that had bit into it, had a gigantic industrial fan to cover the boys' screams. Elwood loses consciousness before completing the count, and is eventually sent to the infirmary.

The memory of trauma, according to Anne Whitehead, is not subject to "the usual narrative or verbal mechanisms of recall" but is instead organized as "bodily sensations, behavioural re-enactments, nightmares, and flashbacks" (115). And clearly, the beatings of the Nickel boys at the White House had not only scarred the boys' bodies, but had deeply destroyed their personality. This is made obvious from the way Elwood's shoulders sank when Spencer appeared. The more routine his days, the more disruptive his nights were, troubled by broken

thoughts that weakened his spirit. Elwood had been ruined in his submissiveness to keep out of trouble. He was like one of the Negroes that Dr. King spoke of in his letter from jail, "so unworried and sleepy after years of oppression" that they had adjusted to it and "learned to sleep in it as their only bed" (132). More than the whipping or the callous actions meted out at Nickel, the thought that he had stopped fighting, damaged him.

The fifteen years championship of the colored boys at Nickel's traditional boxing match is the only time they feel acquainted with justice and self-importance, as they are able to benefit a rare moment of triumph over the White people that often overpower them in all other areas of life. But even this success is cut short by cruel despots like Spencer as can be seen when he tells Griff to deliberately lose the fight in the third round with Big Chet, failing which, Spencer threatens to take him "out back" (103). It was a place behind the laundry building that the superintendent sometimes take the Black boys and chains them to the oak trees with iron rings affixed to them before whipping them dead. And unfortunately, this becomes the poor fate of Griff when, having won the first two matches, he was decided the winner. In the match, Griff beats up the White boy without mercy, as if punching his way through the wall of a prison cell. Fifty years later the forensic examiner noted that his wrists were broken and physically tortured before killing him. These are injustices that people fail to recognize and the author has called for the urgency of being cognisant. Although most of the boys who know the story are now dead, the iron rings remain to bear witness to those who cares to listen. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has formulated that trauma has three key aspects, the "three E's" which are "the event, the experience, and the effects" (Perry 102). Post-traumatic Stress Disorder is about the effects and what the Nickel boys struggled with, even after they are far removed from Nickel academy, was PTSD.

3.4.3 Psychological Trauma: Psychological trauma first appeared in a postcolonial context in Frantz Fanon's 1952 *Black Skin, White Masks* in which he shares from his experiences the historical critique on the dehumanization on the human psyche owing to the effects of anti-Black racism under colonial domination. Fanon's personal failed attempts at confrontation epitomized the trauma of colonialism not only for himself but also for other colonized people.

Picking cotton had not only ruined their hands for delicate works, but the evil involved in the institution of slavery broke the spirit and psyche of many slaves. Half the slaves at the plantation did not know their family. They were always anxious of what the next minute of

their lives would bring. None of the Randall men was that bright because the place had undone them. They would joke around and act big during the day, but when night comes they wept, nightmares and miserable memories taking the best of them. Steve Biko has remarkably stated that "the most powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (*I Write* 68). The internalization of self-depreciating identities is a sly political method of oppression and this is exactly what the colonizers, here represented by the White slave owners and White authorities, exercised. When her first husband was sold off, Ajarry showed no sign of grief, which is visibly a sign of psychological inclination of trauma, having been there that many times. Despite her new found joy and freedom, we find Cora constantly haunted and traumatized by the Randall past, as slavery had stricken heavy on her memory. She thought of the time Connelly had put out Jacob's eyes for looking at words. Though he lost Jacob's labor, Connelly gained the eternal fear of the slaves in learning their letters. Just as Cora who no longer has to worry about racist owners at the plantation for learning words, after his escape Turner too need not worry about racist teachers at Nickel whipping him for little mistakes. However, despite umpteen efforts they both cannot move past the darkness they have physically escaped and the fact that discrimination continues to influence their daily life makes it even harder.

Nickel has finally been closed down, and in recent years some of the former students organized support groups, reuniting over the internet and meeting in diners to do their bit, digging through decades to apprise the rest of the world about the ruins and artifacts of their days at Nickel. "Each man with his own pieces" "Reassembling those fragments into confirmation of a shared darkness" (6). Living now under the name Elwood Curtis as a way to honor his friend, Turner would refuse to participate in any such activities because he finds it worthless to return to such traumatic experiences they had endured at the hands of ruthless White disciplinarians. Nickel's aftermath shows how certain psychological wounds persist no matter how hard a person tries to repress his memories. The fact that the former residents of the Valentine farm still trembled when they recalled the moment when the community was attacked is a further justification.

We also see how little courage the Nickel boys could muster in their fantasy of poisoning one of the staff members. No one dared to bring up Spencer's name even when they all longed for his death, which indicates the fear that the superintendent had instilled into their minds. Although they well knew of the risky consequences, Jaimie demystifies this fear and poisons Earl, who is soon rushed to the hospital. Dr. Cooke attributed the incident to Earl's bad

health, but the boys knew that it was Jaimie's doing. This small victory over a dominant White, gives Turner a fleeting sense of celebration.

Psychological studies show that a child who has suffered immense abuse is apparent to live a life of constant anxiety and fear, even though the child is no longer exposed to the threat. Their analytical skills begin to deteriorate as a result of trauma. Looking at Chickie Pete many years after Nickel, Turner simply can insinuate that his former classmate has been through hard times. Pete was good with trumpet, and could have been a professional player if things had been different. This makes Turner reflect on what the Nickel Boys could have accomplished in life had they not been through a great deal of trauma at Nickel. They could have been doctors curing diseases, or even run for Presidency but they were denied access to even live a simple everyday life, with their only focus being to survive the moment. Although they recall their time at Nickel, they would both deliberately leave the most traumatic moments of their shared history unaddressed. This again is a psychological sign that they are still struggling to mentally process the things that has happened to them.

Turner once read a story about a man who drove to Spencer's house with the intention of beating him with a leather strap but upon reaching his house, the man could not gather enough guts to get himself in. This infuriates Turner as it does not makes sense that the man had to go through so much trouble and yet not follow through with his plan. But this evidently shows that the childhood fear still kept close and the boys have never truly escaped Nickel because it was deliberately designed to "bend [them] all kind of ways until [they] were unfit for straight life, good and twisted by the time [they] left" (165). As the colours of the ambulance flash across the mirror behind the bar, where he was at with Pete, Turner sees himself haloed in a red light that marked him as an outsider, as someone who does not belong in the free world. Suddenly, he feels as though everyone saw this light around him, thinking that he and all the former Nickel Boys will never figure out how to be normal again. The boys were sent to the school and exiled. A school where you could see the boys "going in" but could not see them "coming out" (6). The boys were taken back to Nickel each time they hear the smart snap of leather. They were aging and even then, the institution was not far off.

Hypervigilance is another attribute induced by trauma that results in a fight-or-flight response as explicated by the psychologists. This is best exemplified by Turner as he makes an escape from the Nickel academy. Turner was determinedly hypervigilant to fight back and assault the cab driver if he makes a move on him. As he makes all the planning in his head, we come

to know that being triggered by his past association with violence, his brain sends the signal of threat that makes him geared up to respond to this threat. The constant unpredictability at Nickel, with the commonly unruly pain, threat, and fear, Turner naturally developed a sensitized stress-response system.

Unlike the other former Nickel boys who publicly embraced their dreadful experiences and openly shared their stories, Turner never talked about his psychological trauma even to his wife Millie. And markedly, "Unexpressed emotions will never die. They are buried alive and will come forth later in uglier ways" as can be found in the writings of Sigmund Freud (https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/422467). Evidently, Turner's consequences of bottling up his feelings causes him to suffer even more as symbolised in his frequent nightmares that wakes Millie up. The way trauma returns in these forms are suggestive of "dissociation," as Anne Whitehead remarks, a disorder which was emphasized by the American Psychiatric Association in their diagnostic category of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (115). This line in the narrative, "Sharing a link with your family was a way of saying, This is where I was made. An explanation and an apology," implies that these men have in the past been unable to explain why they behave how they behave, or succumb to mood swings like Turner, which are all fuelled by their complicated pasts (7). By holding onto his emotions, he is unable to move on that leaves him gutted.

It is only when the archaeological investigation unearths the school's secret graveyard that Turner decides to revisit, realizing that the entire experience is not resolved in his mind as he would like to believe. He comes to realize that he cannot always run from his past and this in a way advocates that confronting trauma is one efficient way to cope with excruciating memories. But this has not always been easy for the boys. Dr. Perry makes a noteworthy point that the resilience that one demonstrate and build should not be a resilience in the "Nerf-ball" sense but the ability to get back to the "baseline" after a trauma (190). And this, he says, is influenced by many factors but first and foremost by one's connectedness. Turner is able to get back to the baseline of his trauma through his connectedness with his wife, his former classmates, and the Nickel boys at large.

The night where Turner spends hours crying as he tries to explain his past to Millie, things that he has been running from all his life, is moving. We come to know that after having survived the gunshots alone when escaping with Elwood, he had to survive by hiding in railroad yards for several nights and when chance prevailed, he took a train to north making

his way to New York City. Millie also learns that her husband was actually named Jack Turner, who had been living under his friend Elwood's name ever since he returned to Florida, and obtained a copy of his birth certificate and applied for a Social Security card several years later. Millie could finally connect the dots as to why certain aspects of Turner's personality seem off, such as walking out of movies with no explanation when a scene of violence took him back to Nickel, and his intense rage about cops and the criminal justice system and predators because even in his calmness this darkness crept up on him. Millie could also relate to some of the pains Turner have been through, having grown up as a colored person in America herself who had to undergo the "routine humiliation" that it was hard for her at times to remember how bad it used to be (206). The relentless efforts that most Whites put into bringing them down without actually realising that it could leave a permanent psychic scar is inhumane. Turner's confrontation of his painful memories suggests that though it is possible to survive life without ever addressing trauma, it eventually becomes mentally and emotionally draining to actually live life.

Although after all these years' silence, and unsure of whether he will be arrested for having escaped, Turner was determined to go back to Nickel, to address his trauma and find his friend's grave to give him a proper burial. Imagining alternative scenarios or confronting trauma through narrative can serve the possibility of a cure in the context of PTSD and in the words of Marc Auge as mentioned by Anne Whitehead, even survivors have "a duty to forget" in order to live again and not just survive, in order to find faith in the everyday again and "mastery over their time" (121). On hearing that all the boys at the press conference are White, Turner comes to speak out for the Black boys. The conference was held for the former Nickel boys to testify their most painful memory, demanding from the state a formal apology and a memorial, while the sheriff of Eleanor also talks about the findings in the grave sites. Preventing them from having a normal regular life, they come out conquering even though it took them many long years and plethora of agitations.

Literature is one perfect area to present, re-present, and dramatize trauma in its multidimensionality without actually asserting to any particular descriptions. The significant adherence in postcolonial studies as stated by Craps is "to make visible the creative and political" rather than the "pathological and negative" in trauma literature, and in opposition to what Luckhurst terms "the injunction to maintain weakness and melancholia" (qtd. in Visser 11). Without negating the long-lasting impact of trauma, postcolonial trauma studies reveal that resilience and development are achievable in the after effects of traumatic experiences.

And this is clearly demonstrated in the understanding of Nickel boys. The former Nickel boys' ability to recognize their traumatic past and consoling each other that they are not alone, is a sanguine message Whitehead puts forth that trauma can be acknowledged and confronted.

Slavery was both a benchmark of progress and a resource in further development. Visser has maintained that decolonizing trauma theory has been a major mission in postcolonial literary study ever since its first engagements with trauma theory. He argues that "openness to non-Western belief systems and their rituals and ceremonies in the engagement with trauma" is required in order to achieve the remaining major objectives of "the long-standing project of decolonizing trauma theory" (7). African Americans had to go through tons of quagmires and adversities as a result of the downfall of humanity. Because America is still so divided, it becomes socially acceptable to marginalize the subalterns, indicated here by the Black folks. Particularly choosing to write about the traumatic experiences of the African people and their descendants who were forcibly relocated to America as slaves, Whitehead has taken multiple events and transformed them to fit his narrative expression, and in so doing, he arrives at the purpose of decolonizing trauma theory.

3.5 Ridgeway as the Quintessence of American Narcissism: Characterized by entitlement, exploitation of others, self-righteousness, lack of empathy, and arrogance, Narcissistic Personal Disorder is a psychiatric diagnosis that is often referred to as the most difficult of disorders to treat. White narcissism is based on an ideology that was born from the appalling nature of slavery. In owning another human being as slave, and unfeelingly abuse and indiscriminately kill them, it made him feel a sense of mighty superiority. Slavery and Jim Crow are the institutionalisms of White narcissism, and just as slave trauma, the legacy of slave ownership has been a generational transmission.

A tall, heavily built, and resolute slave catcher in *TUR*, Ridgeway was only fourteen years of age when he took up with the patrollers. Although he was young for patrol, the increase in the business especially after its authorization got him in. In North Carolina, they stopped any Niggers they saw even if they knew were free, simply to afflict the Black population. These self-important patrollers would force entry on the plantations and ransack their properties. When Ridgeway was eighteen, he began to work with his father at Eli Whitney's. The lines, "in another country [the patrollers] would have been criminals, but this was America" sums up in describing the nation (76). As someone who had never traveled far before, the farther

north Ridgeway got, the hungrier he became into catching slaves. After his first trip to New Jersey to capture Betsy, a slave girl that belonged to a local planter who made it all the way to Trenton from the Virginia tobacco fields, there was no turning back for Ridgeway. Unlike his father who liked his Indian talk about the Great Spirit, Ridgeway preferred the American spirit, "the one that called us from the Old World to the New, to conquer and build and civilize" and to "lift up the lesser races. If not lift up, subjugate. And if not subjugate, exterminate. Our destiny by divine prescription – the American imperative" (221-22). Such defensive and offensive statements that Blacks are prejudiced, slaves are properties, or justifying their misdeeds, simply imply White entitlement. In full narcissistic cry, he held that slaves were rightfully theirs. For every slave Ridgeway brings home, several others discard their full-moon plans and he believed that the slave that disappears is a notion of hope to other slaves. To unruly captors like Ridgeway, allowing that to happen meant accepting the flaw in the imperative which he strongly refused.

The slave mothers would tell their children to be mindful of Ridgeway, and the slave masters would ask to send for Ridgeway. There was not a chance to escape after landing at his sight. He headed north whenever constables sent word upon having captured a runaway from Virginia or North Carolina. The fugitive trade in the south was uncomplicated as compared to the north where the initiative of the colored community came together to expose the hunt. Ridgeway joined a circle of slave catchers and together they spied on runaways for days, hiding outside places of work until opportunity announced itself, breaking into the Negro shelter at night to kidnap them. After his father's death, Ridgeway had to return south. The plantations were bigger down south, and as such the bounties were higher, and there was less meddling from the lawmakers and abolitionists. At Randall, Mabel's disappearance nagged at him longer than it should have. A sense of insecurity overtook his competence and on returning, he was charged to find the woman's daughter and this ignited a new obsessiveness in him. This racist, narcissistic behaviour that characterises Ridgeway is apparent to have its roots in the history of colonialism.

For Ridgeway, the little Black boy Homer, whom he had bought for five dollars and drew up emancipation papers the next day, would not leave his side because he has seen enough to know that Blacks have no future in this country. When Ridgeway was commissioned by Hinton to return one of his escaped slaves Jasper, he also wanted to get a sense of Donald's workings of the larger conspiracy but happens to find Cora by chance. Upon her capture, Ridgeway tells her about the hideous deaths of all her acquaintances. Jasper is shot dead on

the way due to his endless singing which irritates Ridgeway. The names of the dead were as important as the names of the living as every name was an asset, a profit. Cora tried to escape twice but failed each time. When Boseman put his fingers to her lips, Cora knew that the man was drunk, and in his carnal desires, she decides to persuade him to unshackle her with the hope to run away. But in the process, Ridgeway knocked him to the ground. To see chains on another person and be glad that they are not his own, was the good fortune permitted to a Black person. Luck has it that the young Negro from Tennessee town who took notice of Cora's chains when she stopped for supper, came to her rescue along with three other men with guns. The image of colored men with guns was an idea too big to fit into her mind. Before she left with the rescuers, Cora jumped on Ridgeway's back and suffocated him with her chains on her wrists. Cora's escape for ten months was insult enough to Ridgeway. He once told Cora that both she and her mother are the best of African race, as the weak ones die in the slave ships. "You need to be strong to survive the labor and to make us greater… But we can't have you too clever [and] so fit you outrun us" (223). To him, they are a line that needs to be extinguished. And after what happened that night, the White man's thirst for power has led him to tear down whatever has stood in his way with absolute ruthlessness.

A lot of what African American writers like Fanon and Du Bois have posited align with the characteristics of the narcissistic personality disorder as recognized by modern psychology. Blacks in general were made the objects of hate, the 'Other' in Bhabha's words. There are signboards written "Whites only," or ideologies suggesting that Black women's hair is undesirable, and notions like this add to reinforce a sense of inferiority in the minds of colonized Black people. A narcissistic society like America has "high crime rates… as people take whatever they feel entitled to" (Barry et al. 10). With American racism and narcissism coming together, there is a constant urge to take full advantage over the Others.

The fact that the Whites perform such atrocities towards the Blacks is also an indication of their insecurities. Studies have shown that narcissists have an immense sense of insecurity inwardly. "The whites were right to be afraid" because as Whitehead writes in *TUR*, "One day the system would collapse in blood" (172). Ever since the Blacks were lifted from Africa, the White slave-owners had a constant fear of violent rebellions. Whitehead takes inspiration from American history, and the tension between the northern and southern states in the narrative that threatens to tear the country apart over slaves' counter attack, the fear of Blacks' population outnumbering the Whites in some parts of America, and the fear of Blacks' education, are all a clear indication of the insecurities that White folks carry.

For postcolonial literary studies, defining the aftermath of colonial trauma only in terms of limitations, oppression, and misery becomes problematic because the premises of social activism, recovery, and resilience in varied forms are obscured. However, while Whitehead talks about racial progress, he also unfailingly addresses its limits. He gives an optimistic and realistic end to his narratives. In his words, "wherever we go, we're still in America, which is an imperfect place. That's the reality of things" (https://www.nytimes.com). If anything, the texts written by the African Americans are accounts of their excruciating experience and efforts to make sense of a changing and conflicting world. Whitehead's narratives are a clear indication that no amount of accomplishments can exempt the racist Whites from race-based discrimination. He says, "I carry it within me whenever I see a squad car pass me slowly and I wonder if this is the day that things take my life in a different direction" and furthers that "a lot of energy is put into perpetuating the different means of controlling black people" "under slavery, under segregation and now under whatever you want to call this contemporary form" (https://time.com/5615610/colson-whitehead-the-nickel-boys-interview/).

Whitehead brings to light through the narrative of the Nickel school that if there was one, there were "hundreds of Nickels and White Houses scattered across the land" (148). Whether it is the "Freedom Trail" where captured runaways and their accomplices were hanged, the "Secret Graveyard" or the "out back" where the Black boys were mercilessly lynched and buried, the nightmarish "plantation," or the "Hob" where enslaved women were sexually assaulted, or even the "White House" where the boys were taken to at midnight for punishment, it is apparent that the entire system of White supremacy is designed to make Black people believe of their hopelessness in rebelling against them. They speak to the larger issues of American history and the ways in which history is transformed, and outright ignored by American society. Exploring how a racist history works its way into contemporary America, Whitehead brings to light the fact that laws are far from reality because despite the official changes, racial bigotry still run rampant throughout American communities. This is undoubtedly a part of American reality but not the only reality.

Waiting for his grandmother in the kitchen at the Richmond Hotel where she worked, Elwood would wonder if at all he will see a Black client sitting at one of the tables in the dining room. Although disappointed by the fact that "it's one thing to tell someone to do what's right and another thing for them to do it," and even after three years the only colored people he saw in the dining room carried plates or a mop, Elwood remains expectant about the future (18). Precisely, as Turner arrives at Tallahassee for the conference many years later, waiting for a

server at the hotel's dining table, he unwittingly fulfils his old friend's wish. Just as the famous remark made by Du Bois, "The chains are still clinking, the coward and the traitor are still at large… Our enemies smile. So do we. We have progressed," this sight of Turner is a classic symbolic indictment of the evolvement of African Americans (*The Souls* 69).

Although Whitehead remains hopeful of the future, he still doubts to be around racist communities and one can completely understand where these doubts come from, but again there are other dimensions to it that people often overlook. Some of which are the voices raised by Blacks in America in the form of violent protests and uprisings as in the case with the murder of George Floyd, which would not have been possible twenty years ago, or in the various top institutions headed not just by African American men but also by women, and many such examples, which will be further studied in the fifth chapter. Even amid untold prejudices and miseries in America, there have been positive changes disseminating through generations, and the social, political, educational, and representational dynamics transforming in the face of new millennial Negro and these are also subjects that both readers and writers should lay emphasis on. Blending history and fiction, but with an altered time and space, Whitehead grounds the readers into some historical reality, while also showing the ways that the characters' experiences in the novel are definitively postcolonial, and incapable of representing only one singular space or time.

In talking about the millions of men who have been ruined by trauma, inferiority complexes, anxiety, hopelessness, and debasement by focusing on two classic works, Colson Whitehead has shown how contemporary literary writings revealed anew the utter importance of slavery, a reassessment of how slavery's history has been and should be, and how to move past a disturbing history. The collective memory of slavery and its representation was a key factor in the struggle to construct a new groundwork in the African American lives. Accordingly, contemporary African American intellectuals at large sought to discover and organize cultural resources to reconstruct collective identity by rewriting their collective memory. Individual identity is certainly negotiated within this collectively shared past, and this will be studied next in the works of Yaa Gyasi.

Chapter 4

Identity and Race in a Changing Society: A Postcolonial Psychoanalysis of Yaa Gyasi's Fictional Texts

4.1 A Psychoanalytic Formulations in Postcolonial Studies: Over the years, the depressingly cruel psychological impacts of imperialism on colonized people have been witnessed. Without apposite understanding of the psychological issues behind race and racism, it becomes impossible to constructively revolutionize a society filled with racial prejudices. Postcolonial studies is concerned with how the social and psychological remnants of colonialism still connect the colonized and the colonizers to their past. Postcolonial psychoanalysts have shown that these traces and transmissions are both political and psychological and call upon numerous trans-disciplinary confrontations.

The long-established disregard for race in the field of psychoanalysis continued until the turn of the current century, which deferred the reading of race through the psychoanalytic interpretation. The goal of Sheldon George and Derek Hook in *Lacan and Race: Racism, Identity, and Psychoanalytic Theory* is therefore "to reimagine race through Lacanian theory" as well as "to reconceptualize the Lacanian psychoanalytic subject" through the largely ignored categories of "race, racism, and racial identification" (2). There was also less clinical work apart from Frantz Fanon's in the 1950s, which gives a rigorous analysis on the psycho-physical harm caused by colonization. Karima Lazali is of the view that Fanon's untimely death in 1961, and the shortage of subsequent clinical research in this field, resulted in an absence of studies on the lasting and wide-ranging psychological effects of colonialism. It therefore remained a largely unexplored and unknown territory (4). As mentioned by Fanon, the distinction of "the black subject" from "the normative white subject" of psychoanalysis was because the particular pathology of living as a colonized and racialized subjects "had not been accounted for – even theorized – by the Freuds or Lacans of the world" (qtd. in Greedharry 138).

Derek Hook has also intensely uncovered the different ways in which both mainstream and critical psychologists have ignored to study the psychopolitical constancy of racist desires in *A Critical Psychology of the Postcolonial* and how these desires have shaped the body, emotion, and psychology of the colonized Black self. As Hook articulates, unless psychologists engage with and develop the ideas of the bodily, sexual, and unconscious, then the various aspects of postcolonial racism remain unchecked, and thus unable to grapple with

the psychological dimensions underlying "the psychic life of colonial power" (7). Likewise, many forms of postcolonial study have ignored or rejected the psychological analysis of racism and colonial power in the past. Critical social psychology has been defined in multiple ways, but the general consensus they hold is that it challenges social institutions, values, and practices that adds to inequity and subjugation. Of the theoretical resources taken as the underlying foundations of critical social psychology, postcolonial theory remains notably absent, and there lies the setback because much postcolonial theory is explicitly psychological both in its concerns and resources. Postcolonial theory provides a means to reintroduce essential forms of psychological critique into social and political psychology.

Hook has rightly elucidated that if it is from those who have experienced colonization, subjugation, and displacement that we learn our most enduring critical lessons, then "a critical psychology" that makes no valid engagement with the theory or analysis of the postcolonial, is "no critical psychology at all." Similarly, he furthers, "those contemporary ideas of political transformation" that avoid the psychological, and invite no subjective effects, or no identities of change, do not "prove effectively political at all" (41).

Greedharry underlines Fanon's argument that the psychoanalysis of the man of colour cannot be ventured from a merely individual perspective, not because he is not a fully individualized, or psychologically complex whole, but because "his world is… psychically influenced by the colonized-colonizer relationship" (137). One significant facet that Fanon added to postcolonial and race theories is his employment of the psychoanalytic formulations to address the social injustices and to also bring about consequential changes. A psychiatric specialist, Fanon draws upon the ideas of traditional psychoanalyses and adapts them to relate it to Black people's experience. Hugely influenced by Fanon, Lazali brings together the various disciplines of psychoanalysis, history, and literature in an attempt to determine "the invisible role played by politics," and of treating the politico-subjective "matter" of coloniality in Algeria (6). According to Lazali, it is a totality and cannot be contained by isolated disciplines and because "History seizes, literature writes, and psychoanalysis reads what resides in the blank space of the text's margins," she blends the three disciplines together (7). And although she speaks in the context of Algeria, it is apt in the discussion of the Blacks in general.

Steve Biko, like Fanon, offers a way of organizing a politics of the psyche through the Black Consciousness Movement, which called for the psychological and cultural liberation of the

oppressed as a necessary requirement for political freedom. Biko considers, "mental emancipation as a precondition to political emancipation" (*Black* 29). There are certain ground rules within the writings of Biko that may appear obsolete today, but it is necessary to reread his texts as a contrapuntal reading, a way in which these texts are studied in and out of their history and placing it to work against a new set of political and psychological concerns. Homi Bhabha, likewise, invokes a series of psychoanalytic ideas in his reformation of that classic social-psychological concept of 'the stereotype.' J. M. Coetzee and Chabani Manganyi further make wide-ranging references to psychology in recounting the processes of apartheid racism.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, which this chapter heavily draws upon, Fanon attributes his discourse to the Negro of the Antilles, but taking into account the circumstances of colonialism and racism, it can be applied to the Negro of Africa at large. In the same way, although Hook's historical frame of reference is that of apartheid South Africa, it nevertheless provides a means of recreating the field of postcolonial studies. As Mbembe and Posel has cited, "South Africa's political history" has been inevitably connected to "global developments" and that the struggle against apartheid was always a universal struggle, closely associated with "the revolutionary ambitions and aspirations of the world" (283).

The arrival of postcolonial studies in the 1990s spurred a new interest in Fanon. *Black Skin, White Masks* became the first book to look into the psychology of colonialism, examining how colonialism is internalized by the colonized, and as a result of which an inferiority complex is inculcated, and how in the face of racism Black people had to assimilate the lifestyle of their White oppressors. *The Wretched of the Earth* furthermore offers insightful studies of the social psychology of colonialism. As a colonized subject with a direct experience of both individual and collective struggle of racism, Fanon developed an intrinsic hatred of racial discrimination and hence offers a psychoanalytic interpretation of the Black problem. A lot of the theorists began to discuss Fanon's work in view of the concept of a 'psycho-politics' whereby the political is constantly aligned with the psychological, and vice versa. By examining the political in such a way, it was hoped that one might be able to think strategically about how best to get involved within the psychology of colonial power, and how using these concepts along with the actual terms of psychological experience can provide a way to strengthen confrontation to dominance.

Fanon also began a psychoanalytic deconstruction that was further developed by Ashis Nandy in *The Intimate Enemy*, Ngugi Wa Thiong'O in *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986), and other theorists of colonial subjectivity. Where Fanon depends on linking psychoanalysis to "the political and material contexts of its practice to make it an effective anti-colonial instrument," Nandy links it to "the cultural resources of the colonized people to make it an effective anti-colonial hermeneutic." But Bhabha does not support this project on "a reworking of the content of psychoanalysis as such," and so for him, one is not indebted to speak of culture, or of difference, each time s/he speaks of the colonized or colored person. Bhabha's work certainly introduces "a new possibility for psychoanalysis as a method of reading the colony" as it lays a significant way "to advance the relationship between psychoanalysis and colonial critique," owing to his examination of the colony "in psychoanalytic terms without pathologizing" the man of colour, or tying him to his racial, cultural, or colonial identity (Greedharry 138-40).

The most lasting legacy of colonialism is conceivably psychology in its enormity, resulting in the absolute division of the colonized people. Yaa Gyasi focuses in particular, on the experience of diaspora, the feelings of alienation and psychological fragmentation that colonialism stimulates within colonized people, including those who dwell in their homeland, as well as those who reside in the country of the colonizer. Although some disagreed to the use of psychoanalysis to describe the experiences of a group of people based on their racial identity alone, the psychoanalytic tradition is useful in understanding Black experience specifically because the Black population is internally diverse, and it helps to show the differences of every Black person's experience and way of life. Part of what makes psychoanalysis useful in understanding racism is the fact that it focuses on explaining irrational behaviour. Through characters like Turner in the preceding chapter, we come to know that understanding people's pre-rational and repressed desires is one way of explaining irrational acts and beliefs. Psychoanalytic formulations as that done by Fanon provides a powerful assist to Black people in finding the way to disalienation.

Since Fanon's time, significant changes have been made, but the core structures of subjugation and inequality remain the same. Direct colonial rule may have faded, but colonialism in its many disguises, be it cultural, economic, political, and knowledge-based oppression, lingers on. As Fanon has remarked, the present day inhumanity is no different from that of yesteryears for "all forms of exploitation are identical" because they are "all applied to the same "object": man" (*Black* 65). Psychoanalytic framework posits that the

personal and social problems that people experience tend to begin in childhood. From a very young age, Black people build up an inferiority complex that although initially rooted in the economic oppression, it gradually leads to the internalization of the idea that they are lesser. This black-white relationship has created an immense "psycho-existential complex" that Black writers like Fanon aims to debunk through psychoanalysis (12). Without History, psychoanalysis is incomplete. Psychoanalysis on the African Americans alongside their history thus becomes instrumental in understanding how subjectivity stands both within and outside History. Lazali has pointed that every subject is formed "within and by History" but the subject also hides "behind History" in order to "elude questions concerning individual responsibility" (3).

Memory undeniably has a bearing to a person's identity, and both *Homegoing* and *Transcendent Kingdom* benefit from this analysis on memory as evidenced from the characters' identities, which are largely affected by their past. While the debut novel traces the legacy of slavery through seven generations, the latter is as much about religion and science as it is about an immigrant life in America. Centring on these two fictional texts of Gyasi, this chapter will look into the psycho-politics of African Americans in relation to America, as well as the major concerns regarding how the characters define and reconstruct their cultural identities across borders, with references to the accounts of various postcolonial psychoanalysts such as Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, Homi K. Bhabha, and others.

4.2 The Significance of History in Identity Formation: One common aspect that postcolonial African American fiction writers share is the question of identity. Through their narratives, they challenge the notion of identity as fixed and confined to certain geopolitical borders. In reference to Stuart Hall, "identities are the names we give to different ways we are positioned and position ourselves within the narratives of the past" and these identities are "subject to 'play' of history, culture and power" (225). Very few of the African American émigré writers have a singular identity. Africa is definitely one of their identities, and so a lot of their books have a foot in Africa, which is a clear indication of their deep attachment to their home country. Although most of them might have left the country at a very young age and grew up in America, they still choose to keep their history central to their works.

The intense historical events that African Americans experienced over the years, such as with forced displacement, subjugation, cultural colonization, and racism, have led to acculturation, trauma, and identity conflicts. The psychoanalyst Karima Lazali identifies how her French

patients were being weighed down by a colonial history that they were far removed from. She also finds it surprising to see them struggle with the problem of shame and responsibility due to this legacy of colonialism. History is thus significant in the formation of identity. Fanon has rightly stated that "Without a Negro past, without a Negro future, it was impossible for me to live my Negrohood" (*Black* 106). These questions of race, ethnicity, and matters of origins are apparent in Gyasi's fictional works, which she uses as raw materials to present her major concerns, such as the Negro problems of identity, and how borders and places play into problems of belonging and human relationships. As Fanon observes, the Negro problem "does not resolve itself into the problem of Negroes living among white men" but rather of Negroes "exploited, enslaved, despised by a colonialist, capitalist society that is only accidentally white" (157). Gyasi's novels raise historical concerns with regard to violent uprooting, exile, loss, identity, immigration, memory, and nostalgia, while also touching upon the more contemporary topics like substance abuse.

One constructive possibility to help those ethnically marginalized people overcome such constant worry and cultivate a healthy psychological relief is building a strong connection to their culture and history. This is because identity formation is immensely shaped by one's past, community, and the society in which h/she lives in. In the case of African Americans, stereotypical representations make it hard to build prominent identities within the larger society without a strong sense of their history. As a result, the ways in which individuals recognize and understand their shared cultural history and heritage can have deep outcome on their sense of identity.

These cultural attributes are defined both internally and externally, as they not only come from personal choices but also attributions of others. As young generations negotiate these different notions of selfhood, they are constrained by the twofold ideas of those found in their traditional culture as well as those embedded in the current dominant society. Over the years African American community have witnessed the strengthening of their ethnic identity through various movements such as the Civil Rights, enabling and stirring them for action and participation in the larger cause. In this way, social memory functions as historical understanding that instils meaning to individuals and communities and also presents approaches toward future possibilities.

Stuart Hall presents two notions of viewing identity. The first is cultural identity in terms of "one shared culture a sort of collective one true 'self'…which people with a shared history

and ancestry hold in common" (223). This notion of identity homogenizes people and offers them a secure fixed identity. The second notion that Hall presents is cultural identity "as a matter of becoming as well as being which belongs to the future as much as to the past." These identities, although have histories, "undergo constant transformation," resulting in an unstable points of identification "made within the discourse of history and culture," presenting cultural identity as a process and not something fixed (225).

As studied in the preceding chapter, within the narrative provided by the collective memory, individual identities are considerably shaped by the accounts of the past. History not only presents a communal kinship, but it also provides a group with a sense of who they are, where they came from, and how to proceed in future. This is because the memory of the past serves as the groundwork of an individual as well as of the group. The memory of slavery is central to the formation and collective representation of African American identity, as it was slavery that brought Africans to America, and defined their identity. As such, the appellation 'African American' is a historically produced collective identity, and it was within this distinctiveness that various other classifications, such as former slave or sons and daughters of slaves, became functionalized and came to connect all Africans in America. However, having said that, the identity of an African American should not be limited to this memory alone and this is what Gyasi expounds in her narratives.

While *Homegoing* recounts the family tree of two half sisters, it also like Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad,* centers on the experiences of Africans during the colonial and slavery era. According to Gyasi, it is ridiculous to argue that slavery ended many years ago and therefore does not matter, because "History is not discrete or neat. It informs our present" and *Homegoing* proficiently illustrates this point, as it delves into the lasting effects of slavery echoing through history to contemporary America (https://www.foyles.co.uk/Author-Yaa-Gyasi). As mentioned in the third chapter, there are certain fears and traumas that come from transgenerational transmission and so, understanding *what* and *how* we "inherit" is necessary to bring to bear insightful changes, both at the individual and cultural levels, such as personal healing after trauma, or the collective goal in identifying and changing destructive policies that embed racism (Perry 127). This genetic inheritance is arguably a way of understanding the idea of a collective unconscious. Like her precursors Hurston and Ellison who have used ancestral storytelling in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Invisible Man* respectively, Gyasi also makes use of

this literary devise to highlight the connection between past and present. However, unlike her precursors, she depicts coming-of-age characters, who although have been deeply affected by the experiences of their enslaved ancestors, and memories of slavery passed down by a maternal figure that did haunt them, these do not limit the possibilities for their lives, rather, such memories empower them.

Born in 1989 Mampong Ghana, and raised in Huntsville Alabama, USA, Yaa Gyasi is able to bring into her narratives her deep and intuitive understanding of both her homeland Ghana and the American South. *Homegoing*, which was inspired by the trip she took to the Cape Coast Castle, talks about how slavery, colonialism, and institutionalised racism, moved and changed craftily over a long period of time. The author inexplicably makes use of the ancestral lineage of Akan tribe to present an authentic description of central-southern Ghana with the brutish treatment of slaves in the castle and on the ships heading for the Northern and Southern part of America.

Beginning in eighteenth century Ghana, *Homegoing* traces the lives of seven generations that stem from two half-sisters, Effia and Esi, in which one is sold into slavery and the other is married to a British slaver. As such, while one storyline follows Effia's descendants through centuries of warfare in Ghana, as the Fante and Asante nations wrestle with the slave trade and British colonization, the other follows Esi and her descendents into America, abiding the Great Migration, the Civil Rights and beyond. Their destinies lead them through two continents and two and a half centuries of history, each life enduringly drawn, as the legacy of slavery is fully divulged to the 21st century. Each story introduces the reader not only to a key descendant of the half-sisters, but also to major historical events and activities in both the continents, that have great impact on their identity formation.

The Cape Coast Castle, which is an important setting in the novel, is located along the coast of what is now Ghana. Built in the mid-seventeenth century, this castle was initially involved in the export of gold and mahogany, in exchange for manufactured goods. As the demand for slaves in the New World thrived by the eighteenth century, it led to the biggest export of slaves which profited many Akan tribes. Ghana is made up of several Akan nation-states, and two of its states, Fante and Asante, are woven into the narrative by Gyasi. During this time, both the states maintained varying deals with the British and with each other.

Amid the horrors of the slave trade, the novel reveals the depravity and cruelty of which humans are competent of. We see in the novel how slave trade increases so much with time, and the methods of gathering slaves become so reckless that many of the tribes take to marking their children's faces so that they would not only be distinguishable, but also appear too ugly to be sold. Esi was captured out of a battle fought between Asante and Fante, and no matter how much Maame loved her daughter, Esi, and vice versa, they both knew in that moment that love could never return what Maame had lost. Esi knew her mother would die and she would inherit that "unspeakable sense of loss, learn what it meant to be un-whole" (42). The first few days were bearable but by the tenth day, the calluses on her feet split open, in blood. Amid the howling, it was difficult to hear when the warriors spoke. The description of their journey, being tied to a rope and made to walk both day and night for half of the week, is heart wrenching. Esi was placed with the other women in the dungeon, where they were treated as subhuman. She describes how a soldier, after having raped her, looks at her in disgust as if "her body was his shame" (48). The beating, raping, and crying were a matter of routine in the dungeons that Esi would dream of how if all the women cried in unison, the mud would turn to river and they could be washed away escaping the terrible treatment. The visions and hopes of the colored men were limited by their race, and the daily doom and gloom have made them incapable to think of anything positive about the White owners and this is what colonization did to their psyche as a lot of freed men continued to be enslaved by the traumas they had endured.

Abolishing the slave trade did not stop the tribes from selling its people, and the British from leaving. The British owned the Castle and they intended to own the land as well. After slavery had largely been abolished, the British made Ghana a British Crown Colony, prompting wars between the British and Asantes. In 1896, the British overthrew the Asante king and when they rebelled, in their own land, the British demanded their Golden stool to be turned over. They would just trade one type of shackles for another, trade physical ones that wrapped around wrists and ankles for the invisible ones that wrapped around the mind, and as such it was difficult for people like Quey to believe in the abolishment of slavery altogether. In 1957 the Republic of Ghana became the first of the colonies in sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence.

Not only did the White men who live in the Castle trade goods like iron and millet with the people of Fanteland, but they also came to marry their daughters. But Cobbe was determined

that his daughter Effia would marry a man of his village. However, her step mother Baaba plots into marrying her off to James Collins, the newly appointed governor of the Castle, although she is promised to Abeeku to whom she fabricates a story that Effia was cursed in the fire and will never bear him children. Baaba's main intention was her desire of the bride gift that Collins had to offer which was more than had been offered for any other woman in the village. Even in Gyasi's work, we see the regular commodification of Black women, who were married off for business and political purposes. Soon after their marriage, Effia realizes that her husband is also involved into the slave trade and that there were people below the castle, people who had been captured in tribal wars, including her own half-sister Esi. Trading, which is a part of colonization, not only has had effects on the Black natives, but also affected the Whites as they were made to leave their wives and children back home and displaced to different places. James' reading of the letters from his first wife, whom he had married ten years ago, says it all. As a result of transnational marriages such as Effia and James', it also caused the problem of hybrid identities among many African offspring as they are preoccupied by European colonization and culture, while also trying to remain true to their African cultural heritage.

James' power no doubt came from his lineage, the Collinses of Liverpool, who had expanded their wealth by building slave ships. But a person like Quey, who was not much like his father, had no respect for his land and people as they long allied with Whites in trading slaves. Although he disapproves of his father's slave trading, he had to take part in it because he does not want to appear weak and also had to keep up with their tradition and identity. Every time he saw the bomboys set off with a canoe full of slaves, he thought of whether his late father felt the same fear, shame and antipathy that he felt. When Quey accepted his assignment in Fante, his mother insisted that he refuse and run away if need be, just as his grandmother had done, in order to escape the obligation. Although most slaves were captured in tribal wars, some like Nana Yaa had been stolen. The irony is that Quey is asked to marry Nana Yaa, the daughter of the highest power in Asante Kingdom, in order to protect Quey from future riots between the two states. Just as it is practiced throughout generations, his uncle Fiifi had also planned with Quey to marry his son James off to Amma Atta, the daughter of the Chief's successor, as their union would be the realization of a promise that Cobbe had made to Effia years ago that her blood would be joined with the blood of Fante royals. James wanted to marry Akosua Mensah as he did not want a loveless marriage like his parents but he knew that his thoughts did not count.

Tribal wars had long existed between the Asantes and Fantes and ever since James' mother had been stolen and married to his father, things began worsen. As Akosua tells James, she was proud to be an Asante, but after losing three brothers in a tribal war, she decides to be her own nation. Seeing so much of what power had done and can do, she had little trust when James asks her to wait for him. As a descendant of one of the most powerful families, James was required to do things so as to keep up his family's importance but what he most wanted was to disappear, and lead a simple farmer's life. He aims to reclaim his African cultural heritage and to maintain his independence from the British because he considers it necessary to reject this part of their history. And so with his grandmother's help, James does what his father Quey could not. He joins the Asante-British war only to feign death, and covering himself as a lowly farmer goes searching for Akosua, whom he met on his fortieth day of his travels only to find her waiting. But the consequence was that, none of the men wanted to take a chance with their daughter, Abena, because James was considered unlucky without a name or clan.

It has been suggested by some critics that "slavery gave birth to racism," "just as racism became the excuse for slavery's excesses" (Davidson, *The Search* n.pag.). Race and racial prejudice have thus been closely bound up with the colonial form of the institution. The chapters concerning Esi and her daughter, Ness, demonstrate how racism serves as the backbone of slavery in America. The awful condition of slaves is further seen in the intensely disgusting details about the smell and sight of human waste on the floor of the dungeon where women slaves were kept. The depiction of women stacked on top of one another, some of them unconscious and others having to pee on those below them underscores the unspeakable condition. This hatred is larger in America as shown in the life of Ness, and the other slaves at the Stockham family's plantation who are treated as mere objects. Lashing for the slaves became just another way of living, with their lashes reopening as soon as they heal.

The only time the slaves were allowed for church was on Easter Sunday, where they had to walk the fifteen miles to the Black Baptist church on the edge of town. Ness, who had been married off to Sam for reasons of insurance, meets Aku on one such Sunday suggesting her of a way back out from the plantation. Easter Sunday would not come again for another year and by that time either one of them or both could be sold, or even dead. Living was not guaranteed for the slaves and therefore they had to act fast. Although Ness knew that no one had ever escaped the Devil's plantation, the fact that Aku had taken Akan people north to

freedom so many times, she starts planning her family's freedom. As they waited for Aku's signal, an old Twi song, they would pray that they would not be sold or separated before their chance to escape come. But when Ness and Sam are caught after few days' run, they are both stripped bare. Ness is whipped until she could no longer move, while Sam's head was broken free from his body which Ness was forced to watch. Akua is plagued by this legacy of slave trade to the extent that she tries to kill her own children by setting her hut on fire in madness. This act then leads her son Yaw to move to the US in an attempt to escape this rigid cycle of guilt. But despite the time and space, history remains insightful, and captures with brilliant immediacy about how the memory of captivity came to be inscribed into the soul of a nation.

Homegoing vehemently speaks of the impact that history has in identity formation, by depicting how the present generation are very much shaped by the history of their parents and grandparents. This is clearly portrayed in the selection of research topics by Marjorie and Marcus, the contemporary generations of the half-sisters. While Marjorie's work was in African and African American literature, because those were the books that she could feel inside of her, Marcus was confused as to which era and on what topic he should work on because everything was so interconnected. Originally, he had wanted to focus on the convict leasing system that had stolen years off of his great-grandpa H's life, but the deeper he got into the research, the bigger the project got. Because his father had a deep-seated hatred of White people, and told him stories about how racial injustice continued to be the norm in America, Marcus has a profound vision of his family lineage. Through his project, Marcus wanted to capture the "feeling of time, of having been a part of something that stretched so far back, was so impossibly large," that it was easy to forget that Marjorie and he and everyone else "existed in it- not apart from it, but inside of it" (295-96). Marcus is deeply rooted in America and yet, invested in learning about his own history. Even though his deepest roots lie in Ghana, he knows that he is as much a product of American institutions, such as the slave trade and the convict lease system. Through his studies he sees how this collective cultural struggle has shaped his identity and the identity of those around him. He could not explain his surreal feeling to be alive and free, the fact that he was not in a jail cell somewhere. He had only heard tales of his great-grandpa H from Ma Willie, but those stories were enough to make him weep and fill him with pride. Marcus and the contemporary African Americans were an accumulation of these times.

Both Marcus and Marjorie are descendants of Maame, the woman whose spirit has been crushed as a house slave, being raped by her owner Cobbe. As the two of them visit the Cape Coast Castle where Blacks were enslaved, tortured, and sold off, Marcus knew that his fear was like the fire, "a wild thing that could still be controlled, contained" (300). Whether or not they directly experienced slavery or even had ancestors who did, Blacks in the United States were identified with and came to identify themselves through the memory and representation of slavery and racial oppression. The Black subjects developed what Fanon has described as the neuroses of race. In this sense, slavery is traumatic for those who share a common fate, not necessarily a common experience. Because of its distance from slavery and because its social circumstances have altered with time, each succeeding generation reinterprets and represents the collective memory around that event according to its needs and means. Marcus relates his fear of water to his family's phobia, having been shipped over from Ghana for the slave system. Likewise, Marjorie in some strange ways fears fire. This shows how large forms of repression and traumas have been inherited by younger generations, and how history informs their thoughts and feelings. It is thus apparent that the past is neither forgotten nor considered irrelevant among contemporary African Americans. They imbibe historical trauma, which is "a combination of acculturative stress, cultural bereavement, genocide, and racism that has been generalized, internalized, and institutionalized" (Duran et al. 341-54). Such trauma cannot also be said to be historic, as it is unanswered and still in progress.

Slavery, which is linked with colonialism, was more than robbery or loss of freedom in forced labor, as it disadvantaged a people of their dreams and stripped them of their culture, leaving them choiceless and helpless. The contemporary African Americans are the descendants of the men and women who suffered in America under the barbarous institution of slavery without mercy, but with their sufferings, they were optimistic that one day their descendants would be free. Slavery is many years in the past now but in the words of Hurston as mentioned by Eyerman, "Someone is always at my elbow reminding me that I am a granddaughter of slaves" (89). She is nevertheless off to starting anew and therefore must not look at the past and weep. Hurston offers a modern approach to the past as forward-looking and progressive, and articulates the feelings of a new generation of Blacks, those who came of age in the 1920s after the First World War and the Great Migration, two events which mirror and restore cultural trauma. Slavery is not here forgotten, but looked upon as a usable past, an experience which can be appropriated.

Eyerman attributes the development in the cultural identity of the African Americans as a result of not only the institution of slavery, but also the ways that the American government sidelined the impact of slavery on the country since the time of Restoration. As a result of the ignorance of the state, there is an erasure in the culture's experience, including the emotional and psychological wounds. This is particularly applicable to Gyasi's narratives, in which the Black descendents, in an African American neighborhood, struggle to establish identity within a community that is undergoing the emotional anguish of an extreme neglect from their own country. Gyasi alludes to different African folklore traditions connected to slavery, and this is her literary attempt to deal with trauma, not through the diagnoses typically found in American Psychological texts, but through the tradition of storytelling, of going back to their roots.

There were a handful of Ghanaians in Alabama who made up the Ghana Association, and many had to drive upward of two hours to come to any of the gatherings. The day Nana got hurt by the nail of the couch at one of their house parties which his mother rarely throws, the adults discussed various possibilities of cure, to which Nana and Gifty would simply roll their eyes at each other. But we notice that in their conversation and in the way they were working themselves up with reminiscences and ideas of their heritage and "folk remedies," they were showing and proving to each other that they had not lost "their Ghanaianess" (106). When Nana died, their mother wanted to throw a big, Ghanaian-style funeral complete with food and music and dancing. She sent money and measurements to the Chin Chin Man so that he could have their mourning clothes made. Although Gifty could not remember the last time she had been required to wear traditional dress, the funeral earnestly links her to her roots.

Marcus, Marjorie, Gifty, and Nana, fall under the "New Negro" category, usually being referred to modern Blacks with education, class, and wealth. Although the emerging Black middle class was a generation long removed from slavery, African American literature suggests that its traces could easily be recalled and relived, evoking strong emotional response in the community which shared its memory. There was categorization, "a process of naming self and Other, them and us," each with their own past and present, these categories were seen as unchangeable, "two races were opposed and in conflict, but one side refused to play the role of victim or survivor" (Eyerman 62). It was against the backdrop of cultural trauma that a new, positive collective identity took form. The African American experience characterizes the potential to transcend its own historical conditions and create something

distinctive in world history. Thus we see how out of repression and subordination had grown a vibrant culture, and a way to not just survive but to live.

The articulating discourse surrounding Postcolonial studies is a process that aims to reconstruct a collective identity through collective representation, evoking the need to narrate new groundwork which includes reinterpreting the past as a means toward reconciling present or future needs. African Americans hold different opinions about whether the memory of slavery should be suppressed as unpleasant and dispiriting, or bear in mind as a way to honor the slaves and give their deaths meaning. In this case, Yaa Gyasi chooses the latter, commemorating the struggles of the past to give meaning to the present.

4.2.1 The Representation of African Americans' Hybrid Identity: One innermost concern of African Americans since the time of slavery has been the challenging problem of representation. They have continuously fought for not only their rights to belong, but also to be heard and seen as equals in America which denied even their basic human rights. If narrative is the primacy of telling with the ability to speak, representation is that of looking with the ability to see and the prospect to make visible. As much as they were unified by forced subjugation, African Americans were always diverse, and so their discussions concerning proper representation were varied. With different dreams and voices raised to be perceived and heard, representation was both problematic and a responsibility. Even such representations as the slave narratives could only do so much as a Black artist was nothing beyond "black" in the eyes of dominant America. African Americans were for a very long time represented, on account to slavery, as inferior beings. Even so with factors such as education and media in addition to Black Consciousness enabled them to represent themselves otherwise. The visibility brought about by the growing mass media in the urban setting was nevertheless double-edged because while it bettered racial pride, it also enhanced stereotyping and misrepresentation.

As a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the Fugitive Slave Act, and the Convict lease system that began during the Reconstruction era, we see the great migration of some 1.6 million African Americans from southern to northern cities between 1916 and 1930, and some 5 million migrations between 1940 and 1970. Music was one essential means for the creation of a collective identity and the verbalization of hopes and dreams. History informs that it was also in song that the first suggestion to the concept of the African American came into view. In 1863, as Eyerman mentions, the "Old Cremona Songster" recounts the lines,

"I'd buy up all de niggers – de niggers – de colored African American citizens" (75). The term "African American" itself is one clear indication of the failure of reconstruction to completely include former slaves and their descendants as American citizens. Du Bois intensely questioned, "What, after all, am I? Am I an American or a Negro? Can I be both? Or is it my duty to cease to be a Negro as soon as possible and be an American?" ("The Conservation" 16-17). Consequently, Black Americans had to develop what Du Bois has described as a "double consciousness," both as an American "by citizenship, political ideals, language, and religion" and African as member of "a 'vast historic race' of separate origin from the rest of America" (Rampersad 61). But as Du Bois has mentioned, this divided consciousness was also double-edged in that, it combined the best of two worlds, an American who "has too much to teach the world" and an African whose "Negro blood has a message for the world" but it also meant "always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (*The Souls* 3).

Yaa Gyasi covers two cultures, which for Salman Rushdie is "not an infertile territory for a writer to occupy" because "the distance, the long geographical perspective" endows her with "new angles at which to enter reality" (15). Gyasi looks at various subjects through the daily life experiences of her hybrid characters, in their quest to make a home, and hopes of achieving the American Dream. The select narratives provide an intimate representation of African Americans struggling to preserve their identity through tremulous change and tragedy, having to negotiate their identity and belongingness within the hegemonic structures of the adoptive country which decides who belongs and who does not.

Quey, who had always been a lonely child in the Castle, is one fine example of the in-between space that half-caste children face. This recalls Fanon's words, "Not yet white, no longer wholly black, I was damned" (*Black* 106). Schooled in England, and a hometown in Ghana, it makes him feel like living between two worlds. Quey would never fully claim his father's whiteness nor his mother's blackness. Similarly, in Marjorie's sense of unbelongingness in Ghana as well as in America we see the in-between space that contemporary African Americans face. On being asked if she would ever move back to Ghana, she tells Graham that she does not feel she belongs there. "As soon as I step off the airplane, people can tell that I'm like them but different too. They can smell [loneliness] on me… the way I didn't fit here or there" (278). Fragmentation as such has been an inevitable

part of postcolonial African American identity ever since the transatlantic slave trade began. As Bhabha points out in *The Location of Culture*, for Fanon psychic trauma results when the colonized subject realizes his inability to attain the whiteness he has been taught to desire, or get rid of the blackness he has been taught to devalue as a result of which, it amounts to the "permanent psychic injury" that remains repressed and unhealed (117). Confronted with the conditions of life, most immigrant African Americans certainly shared the general sense of psychic and social alienation.

Uprooted from their geographical, cultural and linguistic homes, slaves were forced to adapt to a world in which to hope meant nothing. Even though they showed no desire to return to a past defined by slavery and segregation, contemporary African Americans expressed nostalgia for their homeland that had been deformed by modernity. Because of their biracial identity, the mulatto figure does not truly fit in either the Black or White world. Amani Zulema is another character who is not into the "Back to Africa" business because she feels that they cannot go back to something they have never been to in the first place, "It ain't ours anymore. [America] is" (255). But again living in America for them is clearly not easy. Zulema had to go begging club owners to let her sing. Fanon's yearning to be "typically Negro" or to be totally "white" was no longer possible, and his endeavor "on the level of ideas and intellectual activity," to reclaim his negritude which was snatched away from him, is a universal cry of the Blacks (101).

Immigrants like Gifty know about their homeland only as it is represented to them, for they had been in America all their lives. And for the most part, they are misrepresented. Bhabha uses psychoanalysis to explain the function of particular colonial phenomenon, the stereotypes, and in his analysis, "stereotypes are figures of knowledge that appear, disappear and reappear" with regularity and that "they do not capture the 'truth' of the situation" (Greedharry 140). For instance, the kind of tale and images Gifty ever saw of Africa on television were those of people stricken by conflict and starvation. Likewise, the show that was put up onstage where Willie worked was meant to be a portrayal of the South but it was not the South that she knew or even her parents had known. The three male actors picked cotton onstage, complaining about the scorching sun and singing a song about how grateful they should all be to have such kind masters to take care of them. This portrayal is nothing but a stereotypical representation of the Whites about the Blacks.

Du Bois' words in *The Souls* still echoes in contemporary America. It reads, "The Nation has not yet found peace from its sins; the freedmen has not yet found in freedom his promised land" and that whatever good may have come in these years of changing society, the darkness of a deep frustration still rests upon the Negro people, "a disappointment all the more bitter because the unattained ideal was unbounded save by simple ignorance of a lowly people" (5). The colonized country had lost its own cultural bearings and had internalized the idea of the inherent superiority of the colonizing culture. Fanon began to use psychoanalysis to study the effects of racism particularly on the self-perception of Blacks themselves. As a young man searching for his own identity in a racist society, Fanon identified with the African freedom fighters in France that was against European colonialism. He began to define a new Black identity, and became actively involved in the anti-colonialist struggle. In 1956, Fanon joined the National Liberation Front (FLN), and traveled throughout Africa speaking on behalf of the FLN, and even served as the ambassador to Ghana on behalf of the provisional government of Algeria. When the Black man comes into contact with the White world, he goes through "an experience of sensitization" "His ego collapses, self-esteem evaporates, and ceases to be a self-motivated person" (Sardar xiii). Fanon wishes to get rid of the internalization, the *epidermalization* as he calls it, of this inferiority that is of major concern to him as it is to other colored people.

As Du Bois observes, the world looks on through a veil, which separates two worlds, one black and one white. While the world looks in from the outside, the Negro looks out through the same veil, which not only divides, but also misrepresents perception. Fanon explores how the phrase, in which a White child points to him and publicly says, "Look, a Negro!" "Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened!" is parallel to a racial disgrace (*Black* 84). Fanon's sudden sense of alienation from his own skin here exemplifies the trauma of colonialism faced by colonized people at large. He argues that if he had heard the phrase only once it might be easy to dismiss but hearing it multiple times leads to a complete identity crisis. "Take no notice, sir, he does not know that you are as civilized as we…" says the boy's mother which only exacerbates the situation, while being apparent that she still associates civilization with whiteness (85). Fanon contrasts two forms of racism here as exhibited by the child and his mother. The child has internalized racist ideas that had been transmitted though her parents, which have led him to fear Black people. The child's mother then, suppresses her instinctive feelings for the sake of politeness.

The racial objectification that Fanon undergoes at the hands of the White child is that of being reduced to an object beneath a White gaze that obliterates his ability to represent himself. Fanon describes it as an "amputation, an excision, a haemorrhage that splatters his body with 'black blood'" (112). This metaphoric translation of psychic assault into the terms of bodily brutality makes apparent the violence, indeed the trauma, of "institutional, epistemic, non-physical" incidents of colonial racism (Hook 19). Such trauma ensures that the Negro lives an indistinctness that is "extraordinarily neurotic" in the words of Fanon (*Black* 192). Fanon's work was groundbreaking in that, it challenged contemporary racist theories which advocated the result of colonialism to certain psychic differences between races that lead "some people to dependency or the need to be ruled" arguing instead that "colonialism was the cause which engendered psychic difference along racial lines and annihilated the black subject into nothingness" (Loomba 143). Fanon's psycho-politics robustly helps in the understanding of colonialism not only as a means of taking possession of land and its people, but of appropriating culture and history, as a way of appropriating the means of identity. This is in itself the colonizing of the mind, to borrow the words of Ngugi Wa Thiong'O.

Just as Fanon argued, colonialism made it impossible to a large extent to grasp the ontology of blackness, as it disallowed people to identify the Black man in his truest self. The system was organized in such a way that the Black man had to be black in relation to the White man. Whiteness becomes a symbol of beauty, right, and truth, while blackness is symbolized as ugly, dark and immoral even to this day. It has, what Bhabha brought about, a binary opposition. And whatever the Blacks saw around them were proof enough of this notion, representing the intense isolation caused by racism. Fanon feels a sense of solidarity with the Jewish people, and yet remains distanced from them due to the differing nature of their oppression. The Jews were harassed, hunted down, and killed, he admits, yet "these are little family quarrels" because in the case of a Black man like him, "everything takes on a *new* guise" because he is "the slave not of the "idea" that others have" of him but of his "own appearance" (*Black* 87).

Fanon has argued that a normal child that has grown up in a normal family will be a normal man as there is no imbalance or inequality between the life of the family and that of the nation, however, a normal Negro child having grown up within a normal Negro family, will become "abnormal on the slightest contact with the white world" (111). Tom Jr.'s reaction and vulgar comment towards Pinky, calling her a nigger and scaring her to speak, when his

sister's dress got a little dripping is clearly indicative of colonial domination even on young White children (78). In a white society, such an extreme psychological response originates from the unconscious training of White people from a very young age, to represent blackness with wrongness. Similarly, as a child, Gifty would elaborate lies to classmates about how her grandfather was a warrior, a lion tamer, a high chief, and that she is actually a princess, in search of acceptance. "No, you're not," Geoffrey a fellow student in her kindergarten would say, "Black people can't be princess" (25). In sharing a table with Geoffrey at the very back of the classroom, Gifty would always have the thought that her teacher had put her there so that she would feel her unbelongingness even more intensely. All the comic books and magazines put together by White men for their little children always have the Negroes symbolized as the Devil, the Evil Spirit, and the Savage. The Negro is thus identified as second-rate, "a phobogenic object, a stimulus to anxiety" in the words of Fanon (*Black* 117). When Black children are exposed to such misconceptions, they experience a psychological trauma, and the mental wound becomes inherent to their individual behavioural personality.

The quasi freedom of the Negro is often more humiliating than slavery and more difficult to fight, because it gives the Negro the illusion of freedom while denying him the fact. Thus the Negro continues his alien status in a country where his people have lived for more than three hundred years. As Arundhati Roy has once remarked, "Everyone is co-opted into the business of hierarchical silo-ised society… So what people think of freedom is really slavery" (https://www.theguardian.com). Gyasi substantiates this point by using the voice of a cellmate telling H that "war may be over but it ain't ended" because according to him, White folks cannot stand the sight of Black man walking free and proud (158). The White man's words were the final verdict. We get a sight of the nineteenth century America through the life of H, who is imprisoned for nine years for looking at a White woman for too long.

The fact that H had to endure a modified version of slavery known as the convict lease system draws attention to the fact that there is "no such thing as a free nigger" (160). The day the war ended, H and everyone he knew were content to be free, but this happiness did not last long as he is soon chained to ten other men and sold by the state of Alabama to work the coal mines outside of Birmingham, where he is exposed to an entire city underground and is leased to work while carrying out his sentence. The convicts working the mines were almost all Blacks like him who were once slave, once free, and now enslaved again. The miners had to witness inhumane deaths in the mine from dust explosions, and collapse of mine stopes burying the prisoners alive. He knew that it was not just pain from work that could kill a man

in the mine because he had seen a miner being whipped by the White prison warden, leaving the dead body in the dust to blanket his body. We find that even in the coal mines, the White prisoners would protest having chained to a Black man. At least when he was a slave, his master had needed to keep him alive in order to get his money's worth but now even if he died he would simply be replaced by another, making him feel the life of a mule more worthy than his own. He could hardly remember being free, and he could not tell if what he missed was the freedom itself or the capacity for memory. He used to dream about killing White men the way they killed them. Sometimes, he would study the underground city to check if there was some way he could break free. H could not help but come to sense that he was living the nightmarish stories his parents told him.

One strong theme in *Homegoing* is undoubtedly history itself. Yaw's book, "Let the Africans own Africa" speaks volume about the individual freedom that the people of color long for. The problem of history is that one cannot know those which were said and done in his/her absence and therefore must rely upon the words of others and in the process the perspectives in the story may be altered by the one telling it. Often, history is told by the privileged party, the one with power. The subjects of who can speak, as well as who can make visible are thus essential. In the words of Barton, as mentioned by Eyerman, "the ability to render the world visible and invisible is a concrete form of power, and is part of the social construction of race" (9). Gyasi's purpose is to help the readers understand how African American history has been told largely from Western perspectives, and thus missing the nuance of individual stories. As Adichie has stated in one of her famous TED talks, the history of Third World countries and cultures have been silenced and turned into a cliché for many years, and that "it must now be heard from the view point of those who actually live it" because the more stories they have, the more likely they are to challenge those very stereotypes (http://youtu.be/D9lhs241zeg). And Gyasi plays a significant role in reappropriating the story of colored people from the conceited fictions of the West by unsparingly describing race-based discriminations.

How then, can a Black man speak for himself, to posit a Black self in a colonial language, becomes the question. Whenever Gifty's mother spoke in English, she stumbled and was embarrassed, and so to hide it she demurred and Gifty thinks that her mother does this not because she wanted to, but because she could not figure out "how to translate who she really was into this new language" (129). The importance of language is one of the most central themes in postcolonial studies. It is because language is not only a means through which

colonized people express themselves of their colonial subjugation but it also gives them a sense of their own identity. To speak, above all, is "to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization" because "Mastery of language affords remarkable power" (Fanon, *Black* 8-9). The problem however, is not limited to the single use of language, but also to the civilization of the White man at large. As Sardar remarks, if western civilization and culture are responsible for colonial racism, and Europe itself has a racist structure, then "we should not be too surprised to find this racism reflected in the discourses of knowledge that emanate from this civilization" and "work to ensure that structural dominance is maintained" (xv). The Black man develops his own self-definition by using the tools and instruments of western civilization.

The colonized people had been taught all their lives to think of the language and culture of the colonizers as unquestionably superior. Every colonized people find itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation. Fanon posits how the psychological state of Black people changes when a person in any group of young men in the Antilles has mastered the language of the oppressor and expresses himself well. And through the Negroes of the Antilles includes every colonized man. The end result however, is nothing but a complete alienation from their identity, culture, and lifestyle. When Antilles return from France, as Fanon exemplifies, they deliberately forget the way things work in their homeland, and even stops speaking Creole so as to assume the identity of the colonizer that makes them proportionately whiter. But here in his speech, he betrays himself. This then also find echoes in Adichie's characters in *Americanah.* Changes are brought in by colonial neurosis, craze for the western values, language and cultures, and also the impact of globalisation and modernisation. Adichie presents in her famous *Americanah* about how young Igbo, when directed towards a more cosmopolitan lifestyle, tend to move away from their ancestors' villages, losing contact with their tradition and culture. The ones who normally travel abroad are focus of interest and fascination of their friends. For instance, when Ginika and her family decide to leave for America, it is a matter of pride and wonder for her friends. "But, Ginika, seriously, I would give anything to be you right now" says Priye, while Ranyinudo remarked, "She'll come back and be a serious Americanah" (65). However, in the process of being one to Western civilization, many fail to assimilate new cultures and also give up their original culture in totality. And there remains their identity crisis. The fact that the newly returned Negro adopts a different language is evidence of dislocation and a separation. All these desires for a whiteness also spring from their own internalized feelings of inferiority.

Within the colonial mindset, Black people do not have an identity of their own, and are understood only in terms of racist stereotypes put forth by white people. Fanon is of the view that kindness, generosity, and love are not enough to make racism right. Frequently, a White person will speak pidgin to a Black person, supposedly out of kindness, but the effect is that the Black feels his very self disappearing. When White people speak pidgin, they in a way, aim to remind Black people of their inferiority. Racism is so deeply entrenched in people's psychology that it is often not enough to only be kind. People need to also understand how their way of thinking has been shaped by racism and then actively work to undo this.

Esi and her descendents are haunted by the effects of colonialism when she is shipped to America. However, instead of trying to regain their African culture, they are forced to forge a new kind of cultural heritage because so much of their original tradition has been taken away from them. Many of her descendents are ripped away from their parents and lose any connection to their heritage. This is largely symbolized by her loss of the black stone necklace her mother gave her. It begins with Ness losing her mother's language. As schoolchildren, the Blacks are forbidden by their teachers from speaking Creole. The White men demanded the colonial language from Esi. In Mississippi, she is whipped five lashes by her master for every Twi word her daughter, Ness, spoke. Also in Ness' silence, Esi is whipped until she cried out 'My goodness!' words she picked up from the cook. Not only do we make meaning through language, but it also structures the psyche because being understood through one's home language is essential to mental well-being especially in a depraved situation as enslavement. Evidently, the sounds of their regional tongue at the Castle in the company of fellow Blacks gave Adwoa and Effia a sense of comfort. The dependency and inadequacy that Black people experience, having lost his native cultural origin, produces a lesser sense of self owing to their inability to fully fit into the norms of both the cultures of the colonizer and the colonized. Historically, it must be understood that the Negro wants to speak Western language because it is the key that can open doors which were still barred to him fifty years ago. Fanon has constantly argued the point that as a result of colonialism, European culture no longer belongs only to white Europeans, but equally also to colonized populations. And their language is no exception. Postcolonial writers faithfully make use of their own way of speaking English, appropriating the colonial language to serve their needs.

The history and progress of the Negro, his relationship to all other Americans, has been kept in the social arena. As Baldwin says, he is "a social and not a personal or a human problem"

and that, to think of him is to think of "statistics, slums, rapes, injustices, remote violence," it is to feel infuriated and incapable, "as though his continuing status among us were somehow analogous to disease," which Baldwin calls for a check, although it cannot be cured ("Many" 325-26). The colored people may have been free from the bondage of slavery but they are chained to this prison of racism, which limits one's perceptions of other fellow human beings. Judging the absence of Black Americans in bigger occupations as evidence of their inferiority, when in reality they are denied job opportunities, substantiates racist beliefs. As presented in the writings of African Americans, the only work readily available to people of color in the United States is menial labor. In Harlem, Willie begins to see how Black people in America are creating their own communities and new forms of culture through jazz and art. This culture is however created less from a shared African heritage and more by a shared heritage of being Black in America. When Robert Clifton and Willie went seeking for a job, the store clerk's first question to Robert, whom he thought was a white man because of his light skin tone, was, "You married to a black woman?" as though it was all that mattered (206). Robert is denied employment despite the vacancy, only because he married a Black woman. Consequently, it hampers their plan of looking for work together into Harlem. As mentioned in the second chapter, for Baldwin, to survive in Harlem peacefully meant walking paths separately and visibly, Robert always walked a little ahead of his wife and even if she was falling into the street or a man was robbing her, she knew not to call his name. While it took two weeks for Robert to find a job in Manhattan, it took Willie three months to work as a housekeeper for the Morrises. Black writers were acutely aware of the double-consciousness that Du Bois has described. Double-consciousness played out not only in the relationship between Blacks and Whites, but also within the African American community in relation to gender, sexuality, class, and color.

Focusing on the internalization of White supremacist notions of color, the preference for light-skinned spouses among the colored people highlights how double-consciousness ruins even the most cherished experiences. Colonialism had consequently exacerbated the relations among the colonized people. There is no solidarity between Antilleans and Africans who are serving in the army as Fanon's work posits. Black citizens of different nations within the Caribbean also feel superior to one another, such as the annoyance of the Antilles Negroes when they are assumed of being Senegalese because they consider themselves more civilized than the African. Colonialism or Apartheid's dominance was in many ways due to its divide-

and-conquer approach, which systematically planted in-group violence within Black communities, thwarting any harmony among the oppressed**.**

As a result of institutionalised racism, it often led to internalized racism, which is the acceptance of the belief pressed upon the Blacks by racist America that they are inferior to Whites, which in turn led to intraracial racism, which is the discrimination within the Black community against those with darker skin or more African features. *Homegoing* also examines this intraracial racism through the involvement of Africans in the slave trade because Africans were sold to the British, and so into slavery, by their own people. This can be seen from the very beginning of the narrative when Fiifi tells Effia about how chief Abeeku has made an alliance with one of the most powerful Asante villages to sell their slaves to the British. Under corrupt leaders, even young warriors like Fiifi falls as a puppet because this model is being passed down from one successor to the other. Gyasi paints a distressing picture by writing about the ways in which these families were irreparably damaged. The Fante and Asante villages already had the practice of capturing their enemies in times of war, which served as an advantage for the British to create a brutal slave trade.

The colonized native exists in what Fanon referred to as the status of a "nervous condition," a state of being politically and psychologically anxious, owing to their cultural resources being deformed and distorted by the cultural imperialism of the colonizer (*The Wretched* 17). Because the Black man is often sidelined, the entire purpose of his behaviour is to emulate the White man, to become like him, in the hope of being accepted as a man. Langston Hughes in "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain" talks about how disappointed he was to hear a promising young Negro poet say to him, "I want to be a poet – not a Negro poet" because this subconsciously meant that he wanted to write like a White poet, a "white." This is the mountain standing in the way of any true Negro art in America, the desire toward whiteness, "to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization," and "to be as little Negro and as much American as possible" (258). Most of Hughes' poems are racial in theme, writing about Black people, derived from the life he knows by heart and he talks about how his own people would question him why. "You aren't black. What makes you do so many jazz poems?" but jazz to him is one of the inherent expressions of Negro identity in America (262). He talks about how some people were even ashamed to say that his race created it and does not like him to write about it. This is because the old sub consciousness, that White is unsurpassed, dominates their mind. All these years of working under White owners, studying

in White institutions under White teachers, and living a life of White morals and standards made the natives dislike their spirituals and culture.

Fanon also explicates the desire of Blacks to achieve whiteness in various ways. “By loving me [a white woman] proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man” (*Black* 45). The different forms of White rule have thus shaped the psyche of Black people. Robert leaving Willie for a White woman finds voice in Fanon’s “The Woman of Color and the White man” in which he gives a critical analysis of Lucette Ceraniaus’ novel *I am a Martinican Woman*. Here the character Mayotte Capécia desires a White man even though she is fully conscious that he views her as an inferior. In her desire of something she knows to be irrational, Fanon elucidates the psychological forces of racism that have thoroughly infiltrated her subconscious mind. Although Fanon does not judge the woman here, he is concerned that others will accept the myth, that White is better, as a fact rather than determining to revolutionize the observation. Fanon further explores the awe and envy that the characters had, in Abdoulaye Sadji’s novel *Nini*, upon hearing the news of a biracial woman marrying a White man, because “From one day to the next, the mulatto went from the class of slaves to that of masters” “She was no longer the woman who wanted to be white; she was joining the white world” (41). In their desire for whiteness, the women and men like Mayotte and Robert abandon all respect for Black culture, falling into a cycle of self-hatred. As baseless as this condition may seem, it is a terrible doing of colonial dominance.

If all one is represented with, is nothing but ugly, such as one’s history, culture, and identity, then it becomes obvious not to see himself/herself in a positive light. Racism in the United States has forced Negro people into a prolonged and pathetic war. He is either at war against his oppression or against the weakness within himself that frustrates his ability to participate in this war effectively. But what Fanon seeks to emphasize it that this neurotic condition is not the route to emancipation. The solution is to rise above the ridiculousness and harshness that have been laid for the Black man and to reach out for the universal through one individual, and one step at a time. It was, and still is, necessary for the Black men to free himself of the varied webs that has been developed by colonialism, and to defy any attempt to fabricate a definition of him. Similarly, it is for this reason that Black Consciousness maintained the main concern of a healthy and unifying group identity of resistance. One of its central tenets promulgated by Biko is a total involvement. He holds that “We are oppressed because we are black … We must cling to each other with a tenacity that will shock the perpetrators of evil” (*Black* 97). Black Consciousness involved self-interrogation as a

fundamental part, and Biko was particularly critical of Blacks who approved the White value system of apartheid hoping to attain such privileges for themselves.

While there are many surface-level indicators of racial progress, in reality there are still powerful stereotypical practices that reinforce Black identity. Hughes strongly puts forth the point that it is the duty of the younger Negro artist to change this concept through the force of his art. Today, contemporary African American artists intend to express their individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. "If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter," "[we] build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on top of the mountain, free within ourselves" writes Hughes ("The Negro" 263). The books designed by White men for their children, with their White heroes and Black villains, work just as effectively in the way disciplines are taught, discourses are promoted, and knowledge is advanced. The dominance of western culture however should not be baffled with universalism, because it does not mean it is universally valid. If at all the ideas to be universalised is that of dignity, equality and justness.

Focusing on Stuart Hall's second notion of identity, this chapter further draws attention to the fluid nature of cultural identity. The African immigrant characters in the narratives encounter a new culture in the host community being displaced from their native cultures, and these two cultures are always in contact. The characters have to negotiate between these cultures influenced by the past and also the present, as they define and re-construct their cultural identities as some try to fit into the socio-culture of the host community while others remain in the peripheral. The physical displacement that the characters undergo, and the sense of loss, estrangement, discrimination, and isolation they face has a significant impact on not only their cultural identities, but also on their psyche. Through the character analyses, we see how their identities are constructed, reconstructed and transformed.

4.2.2 Generational Psychic Ordeal Among Diasporic Communities: There has undoubtedly been the dehumanization of the Negro, and time has certainly made some changes in the Negro face because today we know that the Negro is no less than any superior subject. Yet, they are set at a division that, in the words of Baldwin, "he may not marry our daughters or our sisters, nor may he … eat at our tables or live in our houses" ("Many" 327). And even those who do, risk the inescapable alienation from their own people. This is caused by what is known as the *jouissance* of the Other. *Jouissance* is signified as more than sexual pleasure, an "absolute" right to "enjoyment" by critics such as Lacan and Wilderson (Malone

and Jackson 210). In *Trauma and Race*, Sheldon George argues that racial identity in America is formed in relation to slavery and is deeply connected to our relationship to "fantasy and enjoyment" (55).

Considering the idea of implicit or unconscious bias of racism, Sheldon George and Derek Hook write that although "the goal of its conceptualizing is to alleviate racism by making us conscious of our biases" such a conceptualization, as Todd McGowan makes clear, falls short of the proper psychoanalytic realization that racism is not "a problem of *knowing*" but rather "a problem of *enjoying*" (3). They further mention that commonsense struggles with the contradiction between "what we know consciously" and "how we enjoy unconsciously" because it involves imagining "two deeply conflicting states existing in a type of perennial disjunction" (4). In McGowan's depiction, the contemporary proliferation of racism despite our understanding on its flaws implies that we have an "unconscious investment" in racism that continues and multiplies and therefore "unless one takes the unconscious of the starting point for making sense of racism's appeal," "the mystery of the enduring power of racism is almost impossible to decipher" (19). Given the current circumstances of America, and the evident rise of racism and xenophobia, to root out the racial fantasy is called for.

In what follows will explore this *jouissance* and unconscious biases. Both the narratives under study are a microscopic presentation of the lives of African Americans who had been displaced and married off to foreign lands and people, as a result of British colonial rule or in search of better opportunities. Each chapter in *Homegoing* is a story in itself, presenting the characters' lives in different parts of their settlement. Everything around was depressing and the evidence around them was apparent. The shooting of a fifteen-year old boy by the New York Police Department, for nothing, had started riots but the news made it seem like the fault lay with the Blacks of Harlem proclaiming that "the violent, the crazy, the monstrous black people who had the gall to demand that their children not to be gunned down in the streets" (260). They knew that the worst thing one could possibly be in America was a Black man. The police shooting of innocent African Americans are still extensive in 21st century America and justifiably, the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, and Breonna Taylor in 2020 are not a new alarm against the evil of racial injustices as it had been ringing since a very long time. Arbery, a 25-year-old who was jogging near Brunswick in Georgia, was shot by a White former law enforcement officer and his son on February 23, mistaking him to be a man suspected in several break-ins in the area. Then, Taylor, a 26-year-old was killed with eight gunshots on March 13 by three plainclothes officers who arrived at her apartment to

execute a search warrant in a drug case. Then again, a 46-year-old Floyd was handcuffed on the ground by four police officers for trying to use a counterfeit $20 bill. Even as he and onlookers called for help due to his suffocation, the police officer Derek Chauvin did not lift his knee from Floyd's neck leading to his death on May 25. These are just a few of the Black Americans killed by White police officers without any crime. As Barack Obama has opined, it is obvious that "the African-American community is looking at this issue through a set of experiences and a history that doesn't go away" (qtd. in Gilroy, *Race* 1). All of the racial discriminating processes of US still rely upon the institutionalised double standards that earlier characterized colonial government.

Fig. 8 Protestors of Civil Rights from the 1950s and '60s and Black Lives Matter from 2020, *CNN*, https://amp.cnn.com/cnn/2020/06/15/civil-rights-protests-then-now/index.html.

What is happening in America now is the Civil Rights Movement of contemporary time. Martin Luther King has once said that a riot is the language of the unheard and indeed it is miserable to see that African Americans are living in the same mess. It is not that their voices are unheard, owing to the fact that injustice is overtly exposed with social media and modern technologies today. Back in the days, there were not many White people marching as now but although things have improved over the years, African Americans still have a long way to go from what we see happening. To say that "a society is racist" is to say that "a racist fantasy underlies its social order" and so the fight against racism must aim at dismantling the "racist fantasy structure" because as long as the fantasy continue, racism will remain insoluble (McGowan 22, 25).

According to Papademetriou et al, there are two generations of immigrants. The first generation immigrants are "persons who have immigrated to the host country and did not have the country's citizenship at birth" while the second generation immigrants are "those born in the host country to at least one parent who is foreign born that is who is a first generation immigrant" (23). Second generation immigrants can also be referred to individuals born in

the adoptive country by immigrant parents. This study looks at both generations of immigrants to refer to the characters who were displaced from their homelands for economic and political reasons.

The African immigrants get to America in hope to achieve the American dream but their hopes and dreams become illusions as they are faced with discrimination and isolation because of their status as African immigrants. The Negro was not brought to the United States to be given democracy. When the promise of democracy was made, "it was not made to him," and this is the main reason why, in the words of Clarke, "the growth of democracy in this nation is retarded" (352). Their failure to fit into the mainstream society is because they are always on the margins.

As the narrative reaches the generation of Kojo, the son of Ness and Sam who escaped with Ma Aku while his parents were caught, we see few White families supporting and helping Black folks in and around Baltimore, as represented by the Mathisons and the other abolitionists. However, racism slips into other American institutions, which allows the oppression of African Americans to continue. Racism became a real force in America mainly because it was supported by the society's institutions such as the educational and judicial systems, the law enforcement policies, labor practices, as well as housing regulations. Kojo had been working on the ships in Fell's Point for nearly two years, and he was still anxious around police or anyone in uniform, a consequence of always being on the run from a very young age. The colored dockworkers were weary of being suspected each time a boat went missing because as Mathison remarks, it has been "the white man's word against no word at all" (124). Although Kojo escapes slavery, he still lives in constant fear of being re-enslaved as the Civil War advance in America and the Fugitive Slave Act passes. Tired of running and used to waiting, people like Poot stayed back amid the Great Migration to North in search of safety and freedom. It was August 1850 in Baltimore and situation got intense when White people could be fined for giving a Negro a meal, or a job, or a place to stay.

First generation immigrants like Kojo had more trouble than the second like his wife and children. The mistreatments he received from the White people in the process of finding his missing wife Anna reflect the deliberate hatred that the Whites carry against colored people. The White woman's plead not to hurt her, when he approached her with the picture of his wife, was enough for the two policemen to grab his arms and interrogate him. Instead of helping him find Anna, they disrespectfully snatch her picture and give vulgar comments.

Initially, as Kojo listens to the Whites talk about liberating more slaves, he is hopeful to see some White people take up for colored people, but as years went by, he came to realize that even kind people like the Mathisons could only do so much. As a result of enslavement and dislocation, Kojo did not truly know where he came from, who his people were and who their people before them were. Losing his wife only intensifies his anxiety that his family line had been lost forever. Kojo knew the South and his parents only from Ma Aku's stories. He used to spend many nights trying to conjure up an image of his own father. Jo had been hearing talk of war for years but he tried to turn away from the conversation, doubtful of Southern sympathizers in the North who wanted him to be angrier to defend himself and his right to freedom. But Jo was not angry anymore, just tired. Even though he was the best caulker the Chesapeake Bay area had ever seen, all Jo cared for was the old life he had with his family. Because Kojo is sent away at a very young age to escape slavery, all the family's history is lost. Likewise, his son H becomes even more removed from his culture as his mother was kidnapped and re-enslaved when she was pregnant with him, and he never knew his father.

The fact that the union meetings that H attends consist of both Blacks and Whites, discussing about black lung disease caused by the mines, and debate of whether to put up a strike or demand more wages, is indicative of constructive changes taking place. When H says, "When a white man ever listened to a black man?" the White man replies, "I'm here now, ain't I? I'm listening" (172). As the people on strike broke the line, swarming the few White bosses who were standing guard, H grabbed a White man by the throat and held him over the vast pit, telling him that one day the world is going to know what he has done to Black people. And in his statement, one can feel the profound rage, pain, and assurance all at once. It took six more months of striking for the bosses to give in to the list of their demands, and although the pay increase of 50 cents was a small victory, they would all take it as such small victories led to bigger ones. H served as a convict till 1889, and after he was free, he had no place and family to turn to. Things would have been different had he not been arrested. Looking at his friend's son Lil Joe, H thinks to himself that maybe he would be a new kind of Black man altogether, one who got to use his mind and not his body for work like him and his father. Just as Baldwin suggested in his works that the possibility of a better America lies in the connection of the two races, Gyasi also brings this notion to light through the miners of both races who had to rely on each other in order to survive. Though H no longer had any scar on his neck from the day the pit boss had sliced him, he still unconsciously ran his hands there from time to time, reminding him that a White man could still take his life for nothing. The

novel portrays the generational psychic injury of slavery on freed Blacks as symbolised by H's failure to erase his fear despite his gradual freedom.

Gyasi effectively covers America's multifaceted racial injustices as she depicts how even the reasons of enslaving Black and White men differ largely. While Black men are put behind bars for nine years for not crossing the street when a White woman walk by, the White men are arrested for the same number of years for killing a man. Sonny had asked himself the same thing his mother had asked multiple times, which is, "How many times they gotta throw [him] in jail?" "How many more days would it take to get something to change?" and when it did change, "Would America be any different, or would it be mostly the same?" (244). By the time we reach the generation of Sonny, it is twentieth century, and being on the housing team at the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), his work was to visit different neighborhoods in Harlem to ask people how they were faring. "We got so many roaches and rats, we got to keep the toothbrushes in the fridge" the people complained and it seemed pointless to him for he had spent his entire life with his family under similar conditions and this was nothing new (245). Reverend George Lee of Mississippi was fatally shot while trying to register to vote, and Rosa Jordan while riding a newly desegregated bus in Montgomery. Sonny was consumed in his own thought that if nothing he did changed anything, then maybe he was the one who would have to make a change. He therefore quits his job and later becomes a head bartender. Sonny barely remembers finishing school properly in any one place for he either skipped school, moved around, or gotten kicked out. One year, out of sheer desperation, his mother had tried to get him into one of the fancy White schools in Manhattan. And as Sonny looked at the spotless building, with smartly dressed White children, he thought about his own rundown schools in Harlem, and he was taken aback that both things could even be called "schools." The bitter truth is that White men get a choice for everything. Sonny was always angry because he does not get to choose the life he wants to live, he is not able to get any job of high stature, or attend good schools, and as such there is a constant psychological torment in him, which gradually leads him to the influence of heroin. Anger is one way of expressing anxiety and because it is so incapacitating, some people take the help of alcohol and other substances to get rid of their troubles, which is but only fleeting and their anxiety comes back in even poorer condition.

The practice of segregation still meant that Blacks had to see White people taking the front seat of every bus. Sonny is furious that his mother had not fought for anything in her life. But

in reality, she had marched all the way to Harlem so that his son would see a better world than what she or her parents saw. The novel shows how in practice, things did not work the way they did in theory. One of the main goals of *Homegoing* is to illustrate the brutal lineage of American racism, and how it becomes codified in both political and social structures like job access and the prison system. Even in Postbellum America, blatant discrimination caused people of African heritage to face roadblocks when looking for jobs or simply trying to live free and happy lives. When the judicial system protects people of color in the 21st century, as does the equal-opportunity law that now prohibits racial discrimination in the workplace, discrimination still occurs. Willie and her son Sonny had to bear the burden of racist systems, even after they travel North to live in Harlem in a small shared apartment with Lil Joe, as none of them could afford to pay the rent individually. Willie wanted to become a jazz singer in New York City, and so after her work at the Morrises is over, she would leave for her auditions. But just as the man at the bar tells her, "Jazzing's only for the light girls" and that "If you were a man, maybe" (209). Clearly, women were doubly colonized even in the ladder of colonization. When the man then offers her the post of cleaning the place at night instead, Willie readily accepts. Willie's experience connects the kind of discrimination that diasporic communities continued to face even in contemporary America.

As stated earlier, it is not only due to colonization that Black people moved to America, as some like Gifty's mother in *Transcendent Kingdom* chose to migrate as she wanted room for her newborn son to grow. When Gifty's mother decided to move to America, it was a time when not many Ghanaians were immigrating to America, and so anyone could easily enter the lottery and win. She moved to Alabama with baby Nana, to stay with her cousin who was completing her PhD. Her father, the Chin Chin Man, was to follow later after they had saved up enough money for a second plane ticket and a home of their own.

Gifty's mother was making ten thousand dollars a year working as a home health helper, the only place to hire her, for a man named Mr. Thomas. "I can't believe my shithead kids stuck me with a nigger" he would often whine (27). The home health service later hired her father too, but a lot of people criticized seeing him walk in the door. Racism exists in interlinked symbolic, psychological, and bodily registers and as Hook has opined, the bodily register has been ignored for far too long in contemporary studies of racism. Such "a bodily focus directs us to the 'sensuality' of racism that Fanon understood all too well" that is, "the racism of fearful bodies, anxieties of racial proximity, a physicality of racial fear" "that manifests in the

racist's abrupt 'psycho-visceral' reactions to the other" (7). Gifty's mother never admitted to racism but walking around her husband, she saw how America changed around big Black men. She saw him try to shrink to size, his long, proud back hunched as he walked through the Walmart where he is accused of stealing three times in four months. Just as Fanon remarks, it is "the colonist who *fabricated* and *continues to fabricate* the colonized subject" (*The Wretched* 2). Each time the racists take the Chin Chin Man to a little room of the store, lean him against the wall and pat him down, he was not only losing self-confidence but also his trust on the larger America.

A feeling of nostalgia and disgrace overpowers the Chin Chin Man that he quits leaving the house. Soon after, he is hired as a janitor at a day care center, but he was paid under the table, seven dollars for an hour a day, five days a week. After buying a monthly bus pass, he hardly broke even but his family was content that it at least got him doing something. People like Gifty's father fall short to make America a home and leaves searching for their homeland, but others like Gifty has been assimilated to America more than to their homeland that it becomes difficult to leave while also enduring the hardships of racism. The night janitor was a man whom both Nana and Gifty avoided because his job always reminded them of their father. After her father left them and her brother died of heroin overdose, only Gifty and her mother remained, leaving them wondering if they were going to be okay. The mother-daughter relationship is intense and troubled, yet it is also secured by love.

Exceptionally intelligent, Gifty was a kind of person who was always curious to learn more. She was as gifted as her brother, but to realize these gifts as a female and an African immigrant to the South with no set of connections of family or friends was challenging. A gifted high school athlete, Nana died of overdose after an ankle injury left him hooked on OxyContin. Desperate to understand the opioid addiction that destroyed her brother's life, Gifty turns to science for answers. But when her mother comes to stay with her, Gifty learns that the roots of their tangled traumas reach farther than she ever thought.

Nana was five when he started playing soccer, and by the time Gifty was born, he had already made a name for himself on the field. He was tall, agile, and he led his team, the Rocket, to state finals three years in a row. They would always watch his matches and on one such game, a man grabbed his son by the root of his hair during halftime and shouted, "Don't you let them niggers win. Don't let them score another goal on you, you hear me?" (59). Getting in the car after the match was over, Nana and Gifty were overjoyed by his accomplishments.

However, as Gifty narrates, they had not forgotten what that man had yelled and here we know that this memory was to hang around and that she would always have something to "prove" and "nothing but blazing brilliance would be enough to prove it" (61). These small gestures are indicative of the greater issues. It might not play out in the same way as happens in the book, but the Black Americans certainly face problems in different ways, problems to do with power and stereotyping, the underlying issues that re-emerge as they have not completely died out.

On the day of the Nashville game, Nana's team was called the Tornados. This time, there was one other Black kid on the team and two Koreans, so Nana did not have to worry as much about bearing the taunts from racist parents. Nana was a prolific player and Gifty and her mother used to attend Nana's games after their father left them. And each time, parents would start cozying up to her mother and make an effort to get her sit next to them so that she could hear them say things like "Boy, does he have a future ahead of him" (110). She had never been like the stereotypical immigrant parents, who pride themselves on the success of their children. She certainly wanted them to be successful and live a comfortable life unlike hers, but again her duty was hectic on a regular basis to know if her kids were making good grades and too broke to get them help even if they were not. She hated the idea that anyone might believe that her son's athleticism was his only gift. Gyasi's depiction of what Nana experiences as a teenager whose athleticism is valued over his intellectual potential and mental health is a particular elicitation. Nana, facing an injury and subsequent hit with addiction, is treated as nonessential by his community, and that devaluation takes a great toll on him and his family.

At her new high school, Marjorie realizes that she was one of thirty Black people and none of them had been asked to prom. The fact that biracial relationships often fail show how the impact of colonialism is at the most personal level. Marjorie thought she was finally going to prom with Graham, but on the day of the prom he gets a call from him telling her that the school did not think it was appropriate for a White boy to take a Black girl to prom. Also on the day they were at the cafeteria, the brunette girl approached them telling Graham that he should not be with a Black girl. Because the novel spans over several generations, it effectively demonstrates the lasting legacy of slavery and American racism even among the Gen Z.

Gifty similarly had never been asked on a date in high school because she was not White enough to fit in. This leads her to often wonder if she was the first ever Black girl for the White man she dated during her first year of grad school, which however did not last long because her "blackness" "was too much of an anomaly for him" (22). Her father must similarly navigate the White community's mistrust of him as a tall, dark-skinned man. Fanon's anger thus "has a strong contemporary echo" in the words of Sardar (vi). It is the silent scream and resentment of all those Blacks who have been marginalized, of all whose cultures, knowledge systems and ways of being are ridiculed, demonized, and declared inferior and irrational. It is the general rage against oppression, and the continual domination of the Western civilization in particular. The problem of racism in present-day America is no different than had been many centuries back. With each new generation, Blacks are forced to process a new level of trauma, and it is destabilizing because they have fought and accomplished a great deal yet they are still killed physically and mentally.

Gifty's family lived in a rented house, about a mile and a half away from the school and the only people who had to walk were people like them. Owing to the hardships inside the house and exacerbated by the racism outside, Gifty's parents started to fight every single day. They fought over anything and everything ranging from money to the Scriptures. The Chin Chin Man had not just left his parents to be in America, and he would unfailingly remind his wife about his country that he had also left behind. "In my country," he says, "neighbors will greet you instead of turning their heads away like they don't need you" "We are not divided" and that in his native country, "people may not have money, but they have happiness in abundance" while "[no] one in America is enjoying" (69). And she would gently remind him that Ghana was her country too and although America is undoubtedly a difficult place, she would tell him of what they have been able to build here. It was difficult for Nana and Gifty to see America the way their father saw it because Nana could not remember Ghana, and Gifty had never been there. Southeast Huntsville, northern Alabama, was the only physical location that they knew. Gifty could not imagine whether there were places in the world where her classmates would not make fun of her, naming her with derogatory terms because she feels that if she saw the other world, she would have wanted to go.

Gifty's mother has never been to Ghana since she left with baby Nana. "Go back to what?" she would often say, because she believes that her life is in America now (243). And clearly, everything she had built for them and everything she had lost were held in America. Even if

there was pain in this country, there had also been joy in little things such as the markings on the wall off their kitchen that showed how Nana grew two feet taller in one year, the rusted basketball ring from the rain, and many such memories. Gifty thinks that America was not everything her mother hoped for that day when she asked God where she should go to give her son the world. She still did what a lot of pioneers before her had done, i.e., traveled thoughtlessly and curiously into the unknown in the hopes of finding something better. And like them she shouldered challenges. Whenever Gifty looked at her mother, it was tough to look past the account of all that she had lost such as her home, country, her husband, her son, and now losing herself.

Immigrants like that of Gifty's family not only had to adapt to a completely different environment, but also to a total novelty in lifestyle which can be challenging at times. Even the church beliefs and way of worshipping varied in Ghana from America. Her mother would often say, "Americans don't believe in God the way we do" (91). Nana was baptized in water as a newborn in Ghana, a Protestantism approach that differed from most American Pentecostal churches in America that do not believe in baptizing babies for they had the belief in one's ability to have a personal relationship with Christ. Gifty therefore would not be baptized until she chose it for herself.

Even among the colored immigrants in the US, their need and predicament varied, because as mentioned earlier, Negro experience is not uniformed. For instance, Marjorie sees how her blackness is defined very differently because she does not have the same cultural inheritance of African Americans who have lived in America for generations. When asked to tell her story about what being an African American means to her at a cultural event, Marjorie tells Mrs. Pinkston that she is not African American. Her return to Ghana makes her feel at home because the culture is so integral to her sense of identity although she could feel herself being pulled away like the *akata* people, people who were different from other Ghanaians as they are too long gone from Ghana to be Ghanaian. But for Gifty, Ghana is not so much of a home to her as America is. After her brother Nana died, Gifty is sent to Ghana so that her mother can focus on her healing. She was headed to a country she had never been to before. The Pentecostal church that Gifty attends was not the evangelicalism as she knew it in Alabama. She had never heard Pastor John talk about demons and witches as though they were living, breathing beings, but the pastor in Kumasi spoke as if he could see them seated among them. Gifty's mother had grown up in a church like this, and she had sent Gifty as a kind of emissary. Her father, who is now in Ghana, was as foreign to her as the language, as foreign

as every person who passed her by in Kejetia. When Raymond said that he always wanted to visit Ghana, the motherland, and suggested for a visit, it annoyed Gifty that he felt close enough to Africa to do so. It was her motherland too, but the only memories she had of it were the brother she had lost and the mother she was on the point of losing.

The mother came to know that Nana got hooked on the OxyContin when he asked for a second refill and later also found more hidden in his light fixture. She thought the problem would just go away. They knew nothing about addictions and there was no one to guide them through this. Nana looked like she was "walking, breathing misery" and although Gifty was scared for him, her mother was immune to it (154). Her profession as a caregiver initially kept her composed and did what she had always done with her distressed patients. There were times when Gifty and her mother would drive all over Huntsville for hours searching for Nana, times when she saw him strung out in front of the carp-filled pond at Big Spring Park and would think, "*God, I wish it was cancer*," because she feels it would be a better story and a better answer to the questions "Where's Nana? What happened to Nana?" (160). When they both struggle to get Nana in the car, people were watching them do all of this with curiosity, and no one lifted a finger. "We were three black people in distress. Nothing to see" (161). This echoes McGowan's thought that racism is a problem of fantasy and not of knowledge. Such instances of enjoyment from the people watching them are organized by "collective forms of fantasy" that are deep-seated in the unconscious that remain in a constant state in spite of the best efforts at "educating away society's racism" (George and Hook 4).

There were gossips about Nana's addiction starting to spread among the church-goers and neighborhood. Gifty was ten years old when she overheard Mrs. Cline, a deacon in the First Assemblies, say to Mrs. Morton, "I heard he's on drugs," "It's sad … their kind does seem to have a taste for drugs. I mean, they are *always* on drugs. That's why there's so much crime" (172). Had she heard them now, she would have confronted them that there is no data to support their thought that colored people are naturally more given to drugs or crime than any other race, but back then, the conversation made her ashamed. Fanon, and the other writers influenced by psychoanalysis, suggests that the childhood of the colored man is also a harmonious existence before entry into "the Law of racism" (Greedharry 137). As a child, Gifty never heard the words "institutionalized racism" as people hardly even said the word "racism" and does not recall taking a single class in college that talked about the "physiological effects of years of personally mediated racism and internalized racism" (173). But as she grew older, her experience in Huntsville serves as a microcosm for the way racism

crushes down Black Americans, whether in the over-prescription of painkillers that has led to the opioid mess, the racist motives and politicization of the local evangelical church, or the racial hostility of White soccer parents who throw words of disgrace when a Black kid outperforms their sons on the field. We thus see the recurrence of American racism even in an era of better awareness about its intransigence because Americans are psychically drawn in a deep-seated racist fantasy.

Thus, through the reflection of various points of racism such as the colour hegemony over the other, failed inter-racial relationships, issue of language, and also how Blacks' identity is shaped by their blackness associated with everything which is not white, Blacks' struggle for existence and their desire to be like their White colonizers by putting on a white mask, Gyasi substantiates the generational psychic ordeal of the diasporic African Americans. Gyasi has herself spent her formative years in Huntsville and this could be one of the factors that made the projections of the lives of diasporic communities with such authenticity.

4.2.3 Navigating an Intense Psychological Wrestle Between Science and Religion: The feeling of defenceless amid the given circumstances caused the people of African descent, since the time of slavery, to turn to religion. Sigmund Freud sees the "need for religion" as deriving from the "infant's helplessness," which is a primal experience of subjectivity. This state is experienced by every infant before a "figure of comfort" comes to put an end to its helplessness and this "figure" registers as coming from the outside (Lazali 13). The outside hence becomes the solution for inner anxiety and pain. Similarly, African Americans have a long history of turning to religion for their inner despair. But the recurring traumatic experiences have directly affected their relation to faith, leading to an intense psychological wrestle in their religious conviction.

Gifty's mother was a strong believer of God but when she failed to conceive a baby after months and years of waiting, she becomes doubtful of God for the first time ever. However, nine months after she spent three days fasting and praying in her mother's house, Nana was born. She has not lost faith in God since. This flux in one's Christian belief and a wrestle between faith and hard science is apparent in Gyasi's narratives. Before Christianity was widespread among the Africans, Western secularism identified itself with ideas of modernity and development that the non-Christian religions were othered, and their belief systems were seen as bigoted and irrational. One example to substantiate this point is that, on learning about the roots which Adwoa gave Effia to put under the bed for fertility, James called it evil

and not Christian, projecting it as a "black magic" as though magic had a color (*Homegoing* 23). The need to call one thing good or white and the other bad or black, was something that Effia could not understand because in her village, there was no such distinction.

Even after Christianity is accepted by more than half of the Black population, there often is a struggle with religious faith. The many mishaps encountered in the Black lives in general make them skeptical about God. The more Akua learned about God from the White missionary, the more questions she had, such as, if God was so big and powerful, why would he need the White man to bring him to them. And so, even their scepticism towards God is built by the force of White dominance. This doubt is not a deliberate creation of God but an artificial fabrication of the truth made by power-hungry missionaries who terrified and confused the people with their religion just as the missionary who took Abena by force to the water to be baptized and accidentally killed her as he lowered her down into the water. They painted their God as a demanding God who wanted worship "or else" (Biko, *Black* 93). In the American missionary's advice to Akua that all Black people must give up their heathenism and turn to God, and in the general ways to impart American values into the Black communities, the Whites failed to understand that the natives have a tradition of their own. Their domination on truth and moral judgment made them spurn native traditions.

This ill-resolved conflict seems to be at the core of colonialism. In quoting M. Mannoni, Fanon cites, "What the colonial in common with Prospero lacks, is awareness of the world of Others," a world in which Others have to be esteemed, for "Rejection of the world is combined with an urge to dominate … and which social adaptation has failed to discipline" (*Black* 80). The natives, as such, also had an aversion with those associated with White Christians. An unmarried woman of 25 years old, and knowing that she would not be asked for marriage, Abena leaves for the missionary church. After fifteen years of stay there Abena dies, leaving her daughter Akua from Nyarko, at the hands of the missionary. Akua's mother-in-law had therefore always disapproved of her as she doubted her knowledge in raising children herself, being raised by the White missionaries.

The people and society that one surrounds himself with can greatly influence one's faith, belief, identity and being. Nana had always been conflicted about God and the ignorance of certain spiritual leaders, such as Pastor Tom (P.T.) who was not accustomed to profound thinking about why he held fast to his faith, only exacerbated this conflict inside him. P.T. was the youth pastor at First Assemblies, and as he was preaching to the youths one day

about how God glories in man's commitments to Him, Nana raised a question about whether the villagers from a small remote village in Africa where no Christians have ever been able to go to spread the Gospel are going to Hell. The Pastor answers that God would have made a way for them to hear the good news about Jesus. But when Nana insists, "Okay, but hypothetically," he replies, "Hypothetically…? Yeah, they're going to Hell" (98). This leaves Gifty stunned because it was as though P.T. believed there were 'people' for whom Hell is a given, and the thing that bothered her most was that those 'people' looked like her and Nana. Gifty had seen pamphlets that proclaimed the great need for missionaries in various other countries and the children in those pamphlets, with swollen bellies and dirty clothing and flies buzzing around their eyes, were all Black like her. Nana's hypothetical question had been treated as a threat instead of as an opportunity. Years after P.T.'s remarks, Gifty started to see the irrationality of the idea of "a refined and elevated American poverty that implies a base, subhuman third world" (99). The belief in this sub-humanity was what made those advertisements overly effective, presenting a people that were no better than animals.

In contrast to P.T., Gifty was awestruck by the reverend, a woman professor in the Harvard Divinity School, who preached on literalism in the church questioning, "If the Bible is the infallible word of God, must we approach it literally?" (128). Her interpretation of it was so humane and thoughtful that Gifty became ashamed of the fact that she very rarely associated those two things with religion. She had grown up in a church that seemed to shun intellectualism as a trap of the secular world, designed to weaken one's faith. While it was easy for Gifty to be literal about some teachings of the Bible, it was difficult to be literal about some others. How, for instance, could Pastor John preach literally about the sins of the flesh when his own daughter got pregnant at seventeen before marriage. Soon after his daughter's pregnancy, his sermons took on a different weight. Instead of a punishing God, the congregation were told of a forgiving God and so while the Bible did not change, the passages he chose did.

Religious hypocrisy is highlighted in the duplicitousness in Ryan's faith, one of the boys from Nana's team whom Gifty hated. He raised both hands during worship and closed his eyes tightly, singing loudly, tears streaming down his face as the worship leader led in songs. But he was a whole lot different person outside Sunday service or when P.T. was not around. Just as Gyasi unflinchingly draw attention to the failures of evangelicalism, she also sheds a critical eye on the thoughtless contempt on religion that atheists sometimes put forth. This can be seen in Anne's opinion, with regard to religion during Gifty's undergraduate years at

Harvard, that believing in God is not just ridiculous but dangerous too. Gifty was adamant that it does not have to be that way because she holds that belief can be powerful and transformative. But she also thinks that none of her ideas are ever taken seriously because she is simply a 'Jesus freak' in the eyes of her colleagues and friends.

This tussle is even more brilliantly painted through the personal experiences of Gifty, having brought up in a Ghanaian Christian household, and simultaneously as a scholar in neuroscience. Gifty's family were the only Black people at the First Assemblies of God Church. And for her, the pain of going to a church where people whispered judgmental words about their "kind" was itself a profound spiritual wound that takes her many years to come to terms with. Gifty began to question God's presence in all of this mess. "If my blackness was a kind of indictment," "if Nana would never be healed" and "if my congregation could never truly believe in the possibility of his healing," then "where was God?" (174). Having grown up in a Christian household with a mother who would instigate her children to go to church every Sunday, Gifty was a good, pious child, committed to not sinning. "But to not think sinfully?" "Do we have control over our thoughts?" was a religious as well as a neuroscientific question to Gifty (73). Although it is possible to control the surface layer, there was always a sublayer lurking, and this sublayer was more essential and truer than anything else to Gifty. She gradually began to understand that humans have a subconscious life that acts in spite of our conscious selves. To fulfil a humanities requirement in college, Gifty took a poetry class which she hated, on Gerard Manley Hopkins, but she felt a deep sense of connection with the author every time she read about his personal life, his difficulty in reconciling his religion with his desires and thoughts, and his repressed sexuality. Gifty would write letters to her mother about whether or not believing in God is attuned with believing in science but would never send them to her. We thus see an intense psychological wrestle with Gifty's religious conviction and her academic science.

Gifty began to wonder how exactly God worked. She doubted him, and she hated herself for that. When her mother could not compel Nana to come to church with them again, Gifty found a sense of relieve. She was now tired of people staring at them and making judgments, and did not want further proof of God's failure to heal her brother, despite hearing all her life that God works in mysterious ways. Gifty was no longer interested in "mystery" for she now wanted "reason" (177). The journals that Gifty wrote as a child to God give a touch of innocence, and a wonder about the workings of God. Gifty gets to see the harsh reality of life from a very young age that "guilt and doubt and fear" had already developed into her young

body “like ghosts haunting a house” (31). Seeing so much pain, Gifty even stops believing in God. All of her years of Christianity, of considering the heart, soul, and mind with which the Bible instructs to love the Lord, had prepared her to believe in the great mystery of human existence, but the closer Gifty tried to bring it to light, “the further away the objects moved” (198). But again, the more scientific experiments she conducts, the more she is forced to grapple with the fact that science can only take her so far. At some point, therefore, she feels the presence of God with the entire world in His hands, but sometimes, the world was relentlessly sinking toward an increasingly changing bottom.

The knowledge that there were people talking about her brother as though only the portion of his life before his addiction was worthy of compassion, was a strong blow to the long-held belief that Gifty had. It is devastating to see Gifty write in one of her journals, “*Dear God, I wish Nana would just die already. Please, just let this be over*” (170). When Nana relapsed, she went quiet and her mother went insane. She “became a kind of one-woman child hunter,” driving up and down the streets of Huntsville searching for her son and at church she would move up to the altar during praise and worship and dance around like a possessed woman (171). Gifty would rush home from school early the first week of her mother’s bedroom exile and every afternoon she would push her mother’s arm till she murmured to convince her that she was still alive. A school-going girl at that time, she had so much to carry on her own, psychologically, apart from the physical chores. Knowing that her mother was in the house, and that she could not and would not get out of the bed to console her in her sadness infuriated Gifty, but again this anger made her feel guilty, and so she was stuck in a miserable circle. Emptying the grayish water into the bathtub eased her to see all of the dirt travel down the waste pipe, leaving nothing but cleaner water in its stead, she would long for similar process in her life and her mother’s.

When Pastor John asks the congregation to stretch out their hand to pray for a fellow congregant, Gifty could feel that thing she has often heard called “energy,” that thing she used to call “the Holy Spirit,” moving through the room (252). Gifty grew up around people who thought of science as a deception to rob them of their faith, and she has been educated around scientists and laypeople alike who talk about religion as though it were for the dumb and the weak. But at some point in her life, both have failed her “to fully satisfy in their aim: to make clear, to make meaning” (198). And this pressure that one must inevitably choose between science and religion, she believes, is incorrect for both becomes valuable ways of

seeing, and transcending to a higher level of understanding requires a merging of both her belief in God and her scientific practice.

Driven by a desire to discover a cure for addiction, Gifty finds her calling in neuroscience. Nana was the reason Gifty began this work. A sixth-year PhD candidate at the Stanford University School of Medicine, Gifty's research was on the neural circuits of reward-seeking behavior. Gifty never used the words 'addiction' or 'relapse' but instead said 'reward seeking' and 'restraint' because she did not want her mother to think of Nana and feel pain. Gifty is determined to discover the scientific basis for the working and complexity of human minds, the "… *Homo sapiens*, the most complex animal, the only animal who believed he had transcended his Kingdom" (21). This science was a way for her to challenge herself, to do something truly hard, and in so doing to work through all of her misunderstandings about her brother's addiction and all of her shame. But even as she turns to the hard sciences to undo the mystery of her family's loss, she finds herself hungering for her childhood faith, and wrestling with the evangelical church in which she was raised, and the promise of salvation.

When she watched the limping mouse refuse the lever, Gifty was reminded yet again of what it means to be reborn, made new, saved, which is symbolical of her need of the grace of God and those outstretched hands in church for prayer. Despite the endless hardships, there is hope in Gifty's journey and a call for empathy. The theme of salvation is at the novel's heart, shaping her life, whether in violent attempts to cure her lab mice of addiction, or revive her mother from a devastating depression. Gyasi's portrayal of Gifty's spiritual journey feels all too real and refreshing in that a negative experience with her church does not cause her to reject Christianity altogether. Although this is something Gifty would dare not profess in a lecture or a presentation or even a paper, she believes that at certain point, science fails.

As the narrative comes to a close, we read that Gifty is with Han, her old lab mate, in their house in New Jersey, from which they could hear the church bell ring every Sunday. Although she does not know a thing about Episcopalianism, she would sit in the back pew, and as she stares at the portrait of Christ on the cross, her emotion changes from anger to pain to bliss. This ending shows that Gifty has never really given up on her faith in God and is willing to start afresh even if it means starting from the scratch. As she sits there in blessed silence, she tries to make order and meaning of all the mess.

These narratives invoke dimensions of psychical matter which is a characteristic not only of the apartheid or colonial time and place, but of many other neo/postcolonial situations of

deep-seated social lop-sidedness. These experiences of African Americans in America thus offer an outlook on a series of conceptual challenges that are both psychological in nature and yet not effectively grappled by the standard tools of social psychological analysis.

4.3 Confronting Complicity and Overcoming Trauma: Literature carries out a major role in what sociologist Jeffrey C. Alexander calls the "trauma process," the process that gives narrative form and meaning to "harmful or overwhelming phenomena which are believed to have deeply harmed collective identity" (10). From the viewpoint of postcolonial theory, this concept of the trauma process involves the examination of the history of colonialism and decolonization through narratives. Colonialism is certainly a part of that trauma process, because it undoubtedly led to the disappearance of a lot of the native's culture, tradition, and originality. This experience led to a permanently painful loss that the colonized people refused to recognize for a very long period of time, which resulted in colonial trauma. The injury caused by various colonial abuses, then, takes root in the present as "social trauma" because the past is an enduring present (Lazali 98). And this trauma continues to plague both individual subjects and the larger African American community in contemporary times. In order to rise above this glum state, a deeper understanding of history and confronting complicity is of great significance because "attentiveness to complicity" marks one promising direction for "a differentiated approach" (Rothberg, "Decolonizing" 231).

We have seen that complicity, a toxic force that challenges, weakens, and even tears down communal life, is a major theme in *Homegoing*. It provides a detailed analysis of the history of the generations of Maame who chose to comply with the British government's domination of Ghana. Gyasi presents this result as part of the internalization of the White's ideology of dominance. The later generations' realization of the dangerous nature of this complicity deepens their trauma of defeat and ruin, and heightens their feelings of shame and guilt. Gyasi unitedly stands with African activists like Biko that calls to confront the complicity of the oppressed with the oppressor, "bearing the yoke of oppression with sheepish timidity" (*Black* 43). What Gyasi's fiction foregrounds is that storytelling offers a way to come to terms with this traumatic, repressed wounding, and opens the way to healing. Storytelling, as studied in the preceding chapter, is itself a custom for African Americans to heal from trauma because it connects past and present, drawing upon the ancestors and their sacred power to restore harmony and health. Postcolonial fiction demonstrates that trauma can be narrated with integrity, and that oral storytelling enables a healing process, which allows insight, acceptance, and access to various modes of redress.

The Crazy Woman, as she is called, Akua was chosen to know her ancestors and their hardships through dreams and nightmares of the firewoman Maame who set the hut on fire before escaping. On one such nightmarish night, Akua sets her hut on fire killing her daughters except the newborn baby Yaw, who also was left with scar on his face that although nearing fifty years of age, he remained unmarried as the girls were fearful of getting ugly children because of his scar. "The longer he looked at himself in a mirror, the longer he lived alone," and "the longer the country he loved stayed under colonial rule, the angrier he became" (232). As she tells Marjorie, Akua kept seeing the castle in her dreams and one day when she came to the waters she could feel the spirits of her ancestors calling to her, and while "Some were free" "some others were trapped deep in the water" so that she had to wade out to hear their voices (268). Similarly, Jo's daughter Beulah, a little Black child, fought invisible battles in her sleep against a rival she could not identify and in the morning that rival looked just like the world around her. As Jo grew older, he comes to know that staying free required unimaginable sacrifices. Akua intensely holds that "Evil begets evil. It grows. It transmutes," and when someone does wrong, whether it is her or the Gold Coast man or the White man, it is like a fisherman casting a net into the water, who keeps only the few fish needed to feed himself, and outs the rest in the water thinking that their lives will go back to normal but "No one forgets that they were once captive, even if they are free now" (242). Likewise, one hundred and fifty-five years after its abolition, the trauma of slavery is still clearly etched in the hearts of millions of African Americans.

Postcolonial literature is surely a key contributor to the socio-cultural construction of trauma that constitutes the trauma process. Postcolonial fiction typically brings to light the concept that the trauma of colonialism can and must be addressed. Postcolonial trauma theory explicates how narrativization of trauma permits insights into the details of colonial past as a way to integration of the traumatic memory. This process of integration may also concentrate on the sensitive issue of complicity. During decolonization, what needs to be confronted is the complexity of the "entanglement of desire, seduction and subjugation; not only oppression, but its enigma of loss," which may include the realization that the colonized people "have allowed themselves to be duped, seduced, and deceived" (qtd. in Visser 35). For freedom becomes possible only in the deeper look at history and confronting and accepting complicity. Freedom, as Fanon observes, is determined not by historical, biological, social, or economic factors, but by someone who steps up and proclaims that there is "no white world… I am not a prisoner of History" and that "In the world I am heading for, I am

endlessly creating myself. I show solidarity with humanity provided I can go one step further" (*Black* 204).

Histories of colonial mental health practice have tended to focus on the European doctors and their patients given that the immensity of mental health resources cared for the European or Anglo-Colonial patients. On the other hand, there was also discussion of colonized people in terms of psychoanalytic and psychiatric disorders even while they remained untreated for mental illnesses they suffered from. African subjects were kept out from psychoanalysis, and even when they were later reintegrated, it was done so on different grounds than other colonized subjects. For instance, Greedharry asserts that unlike Indians, who were considered culturally pathological, "colonized Africans," as Jock McCulloch's work shows, "were not considered human enough to suffer from mental illnesses such as depression." Africans could not suffer from mental illness because they, supposedly, did not experience "guilt, religious doubt and artistic originality, characteristics often identified as the very foundation of Western subjectivity" (156).

After Nana died, Gifty's mother refused to name her illness depression because from what she learned on TV, Americans get depressed and cry. She was skeptical of psychiatrists and mental illness asserting that "it, along with everything else she disapproved of, was an invention of the West" (33). Her mother became markedly cold-hearted to understand that she was weighing up with the multifaceted shades of loss. Her left breast deflated from the weight loss and shrivelled with age and for many months "she colonized that [queen-sized] bed like a virus" (3). But in her bed, infinitely still, she "was wild inside" (4). She has suffered from depression in the past and has had a bad experience with psychiatric care that she is now resistant to getting help. In *Soothe Your Nerves* Dr. Angela Neal-Barnett, a child psychologist, shares different stories of Black women whose devastating anxiety and fear prevented them from doing things they love, accomplishing their dreams, and simply living. She talks about how each of these women thought Black women did not get anxious and felt that they had lost control of their lives.

If we look at the causes of anxiety and fear in Black women's lives, there is plethora. And some of these causes that Neal-Barnett brings to light are stress, prejudice and discrimination. Interviewing Black women who are mothers, she concludes that the situations that seem to generate the greatest amount of stress involve their children, and in their quest for help in taking "positive action" can generate additional stress (16). Any sort of unfamiliarity

intimidates the traumatized subject and Gifty's mother was apprehensive of alterity. Institutional discrimination and interpersonal prejudice are two of the most potent psychological and environmental burdens faced by Black women that take a heavy toll on these women both physically and emotionally. Anger and anxiety are irrefutably interconnected but little concentration is paid to anxiety and more on anger when it comes to Black women. In the case of Gifty's mother, the stress of being a wife to someone with whom she was not compatible with, mother to a drug addict, coupled with the extensive interpersonal prejudice and institutional discrimination in her neighborhood, caused her anxiety to move to an unmanageable state. And Gifty inherits this anxiety from her mother.

The problem of anxiety, which is deeply linked to trauma, is a long-held family secret for many African Americans. Although Neal-Barnett makes a case study of the Black women, it can also be generalized that those who are related to an individual with an anxiety problem are "seven to nine times" more likely to also have that anxiety problem (21). And this is true in the context of African Americans. Gifty regrets that she should never have been left alone with her mother in those days after Nana's death, and that her mother should never have been left alone with herself. "Where was our church? Where were the few Ghanaians, scattered through Alabama, whom my mother had built friendship with? Where was my father?" (185). For a week in high school, Gifty had nightmares that woke her up in a cold sweat. And she would grab a notebook and try to jot down the dream but when she could not remember, she started avoiding sleep.

In the declaration of attending physician at the Mathari Mental Hospital in Nairobi, Dr. H.L. Gordon states that a "highly technical skilled examination of a series of 100 brains of normal natives has found naked eye and microscopic facts indicative of inherent new brain inferiority" (Fanon, *Black* 18). Gifty also points to a 2015 study by T.M. Luhrmann, R. Padmavati, H. Tharoor, and A. Osei that schizophrenics in India and Ghana hear voices that are kinder, more benevolent than the voices heard by schizophrenics in America. This could be a possibility of Gyasi's way of describing America's cruelty. When her aunt pointed to a crazy Black person in Kumasi, on her visit to Ghana, Gifty notices that the people in Kejetia did not back away in fear, or even gave a slight reaction. This would not be the case in America.

"I know what my family looks like on paper" Gifty bewails, "I know what Nana looks like when you take the bird's eye view," nothing but a Black male immigrant from a single-

parent, lower-middle-class household, further remarking that "The stressors of any one of those factors could be enough to influence anhedonia" (210). "Anhedonia" Gifty explains, "is the psychiatric term for the inability to derive pleasure from things that are normally pleasurable," the feeling of nothingness that kept her mother in bed (209). Anhedonia is the characterizing symptom in major depressive disorder, but it is also said to be an indicator of substance abuse, schizophrenia, and Parkinson's disease. That summer Gifty visited Ghana, she knew that her mother needed healing, but she did not understand what she needed healing from. Because the only time she heard people talk about depression was when they were using it as a synonym for sadness, and so she never thought of it as a disease.

Gyasi, using Gifty as her mouthpiece, brings to light about the fact that psychiatric care has come a long way since the times of lobotomies. Her mother had been taking the medicine as prescribed by her doctors and when they did not help she stopped. But she would not tell the doctors about it because she did not want them to "shock" her. The "shocks" described here, have come a long way since they were first used in the 1940s and '50s. Electroconvulsive therapy was used not as a treatment for mental illness, but as a kind of mind control. Back then, the therapy was performed on anyone from the schizophrenics and depressives who needed mental health care, to homosexuals and hysterical women who neither needed nor asked for it, but who simply lived outside the bounds of what society deemed "normal." This therapy is often presented as a last resort. The work done by Gifty's psychiatric friend, Katherine, and those interested in finding bioengineering and neuroscientific interventions to treat psychiatric illness, is in many ways about moving beyond the last resort, the final attempt.

Gyasi has brought to light the cynicism that people carry towards the expression of addiction as disease similar to high blood pressure or diabetes, and how instead of looking closely at the nature of their suffering it is easier to write all addicts off as bad and weak-willed people. Gifty understands this concern because she too has once judged. For years before her brother died, she would look at his face and think, "*What a pity, what a waste"* but the waste was what she missed out on, whenever she looked at him and "saw just his addiction" (211). What she can say for certain is that there is no case study in the world that could capture the whole being of her brother that could show how smart, kind, and generous he was, how much he wanted to get better, to live. Gyasi urges the people to forget for a moment what Nana looked like on paper, and instead see him as he was in all of his glory and beauty.

Gifty points to the endless zeal of humans to try something new, fun, pointless, dangerous, thrilling, and stupid, even if that includes risking their lives. The fact that she was doing addiction research at a university in California was the result of the thousands of pioneers who had taken the steps into facing disease, injury, and starvation. They knew that there were risk involved, but the potential for triumph was enough to outweigh the cost. Gyasi's desire to understand the brain superseded every other desire she had, for she understood that "the same thing that made humans great" such as the recklessness, creativity, and curiosity, was also "the thing that hampered the lives of everything around us" (226). In her study of optagenetics, a method used to cure diseases caused in the brain such as depression, addiction, and Parkinson's disease, Gifty tries to ask questions that anticipate the inevitable recklessness of humans and to find a way out. One of her studies involves decoding which neurons control the behaviours that lead to addiction, so that those behaviours can be controlled. And for that, she uses mice as they are subject to the whims of humans.

Human psychology is closely linked to, and trained by, the socio-political and historical forces of its situation. Gyasi's work, or for that matter the works of postcolonial writers, is certainly emblematic of this trend. They, like Frantz Fanon, argue that there is more to the options laid down by Mannoni, which is to either develop an inferiority complex, or dependency complex, in which the colonized is called to depend on the colonizer for a sense of self-worth. The Black man should no longer be confronted by the dilemma, "*turn white or disappear*," but he should be able to take cognizance of a possibility of existence (Fanon, *Black* 75).

The inferiority complex of the Negro is not inherent but rather generated in the hands of racist Whites. The colonized Negro is forced not to exist in his own right, but to exist in relation to the white colonizer. Fanon suggests that the solution to this widespread psychological damage is "collective catharsis" (116). But again, all societies need to have ways through which they can express their emotions. However, starting from children's comic books to academic knowledge to media portrayal, they contain racist imagery that leaves no room to perform the function of catharsis which only aggravates the feeling of alienation and internal conflict and self-hatred within the Black population. Fanon includes several passages by Freud in his works and in one, he mentions Freud's argument that neuroses are normally the result of not one but "multiple traumas, frequently analogous and repeated" (111). The only possibility of salvaging one's sense of balance is to confront the whole problem, and put an end to American narcissism.

African Americans had over the years, added constructive aura both to American culture and to world civilization. Although formed by the affliction and trauma of slavery which had produced "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings" "in one dark body," the African American had but one aim, "to be a co-worker in the kingdom of culture" (Rampersat 3). One thing that the colonizers propagated was the fabrication that colonized populations did not have a culture or civilization prior to colonization, and here lays their failure to understand that the colonized inhabit worlds of their own, which must be respected.

Due to the fact that the Whites have a fixed concept of the African Americans and are often misrepresented by the dominant host country, the Blacks strived to prove the existence of their civilization to the White world at all costs. The Whites brought segregation in large part to counter Black achievements, and to bring them to an end. But these efforts to erase the visibility of emerging Black middle class, and to identify all African Americans as a narrow range of characters, were not easy because the growing Black consciousness and Black power allowed them to represent themselves otherwise. In this self-presentation, besides their aesthetic representations, African Americans reversed the colonial imprint of a pessimistic self-image, and replaced it with optimistic, more self-affirming forms of Black identity and culture, and provided counter-images of themselves as the refined, successful, educated Blacks. Gyasi's narratives emphasize restored life and development even after traumatisation, in contradistinction to trauma theory's assertion on melancholia and limitation, or to Caruth's Freudian theoretical framework, which is directed at the notion that "melancholia and fragility are defining and unalterable characteristics of the post-traumatic stage," and lead to "the lasting effect of weakened communal and individual identities" (Visser 11).

African American writers posit that being Black is not a crime, or "a matter of pigmentation" as Biko says, but "a reflection of a mental attitude" (*Black* 48). They are not weak no matter how hard the White men in America wish to erase that part. Amid taunting experiences and hardships faced by the Black Americans, Gyasi has shown how a traumatic past and dark history can be redefined and its progeny can become controllers of their own fates. Marcus getting his PhD in sociology at Stanford was something he never imagined taking into consideration the boundaries set forth for the people of color. Similarly, as a first-generation graduate student and one of three Black PhD candidates, Gifty was navigating a male dominated lab in the entire White medical school, with only five women of twenty-eight. These books end on a promising note as the newest generation of both sides of the family tree

in *Homegoing* overcome their traumas and in a way connect the two family lineages together which Maame could not. Likewise, we find Gifty not only excelling in her neuroscientific studies, but also starting afresh in *Transcendent Kingdom*. Her ongoing belief in God propels her to hope that transcendence is possible, that one can reach beyond science, and develop again. Gyasi undertakes her own process of debunking a myth, in a way, by showing how community can rise above adversities.

Writers are "the most gifted diagnosticians of society's ills" in the words of Deleuze, because much more than physicians, psychoanalysts or psychiatrists, writers were in a position to produce meaningful accounts of "the codings, decodings and recodings" of identification and desire in any society since they are not bound to a diagnostic framework (Greedharry 153). The role of African American writers is that of advocate for a people who are deliberately left silent and invisible, those living behind the "veil," to borrow Du Bois' term, the veil of ignorance and disinterest that divides white from black and black from white. The Blacks have been silenced not by slavery but by its remembrance brought forth again in the contemporary times through numerous modified versions. Gyasi depicts various generations' traumatic memories of mental abuses at home, while also drawing into play the wider history of slavery and racist harassments, as well as the depression and anxiety conveyed in the forms of dreams and nightmares, and the many symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Despite these ineradicable scars of the past and recent wounding, the final pages of the narratives speak unreservedly of overcoming trauma, healing, rebuilding and growth. The writer's ability to present the narratives through a flexible, resilient, and an omnipresent voice that enables the detailing of not just the historical horrors of racial prejudice but also what the human minds are capable of, with extreme power, is notable. Like her counterparts in African American literature, Yaa Gyasi sought wider grounding for African American identity and race in a changing society than that imposed by slavery and the United States.

Chapter 5

Redefining History and Borders by African American Women Writers with Special Reference to Tayari Jones

5.1 A Brief Introduction: In essence, borders may be defined as a dividing line between countries or areas, but it can also be applied to the ways in which differences across the world elevate power differences. The subject of borders has been imperative in recent African American women's writing as has been in feminist studies, in which they confront the structuring power of Eurocentrism, of calculated subjectivity, and speculate women's experience. Struggle of borders is specific to Tayari Jones' subject positions, and her works are challenging to all those who live multiple black identities, and undergone varied black experience.

This chapter examines the emergence and progress of African American women writers who developed counter discourses of the tri-dimensional oppressions of capital, race, and gender, with special reference to Tayari Jones' select narratives *Silver Sparrow* and *An American Marriage*. Both are coming-of-age narratives that provide various forms and practices in relation to wider socio-economic developments of African Americans in America. As Jones' third novel *Silver Sparrow* expands upon the subject of love and marriage, it also touches upon the everyday challenges faced by women inside and outside of home. Problems such as infidelity, class differences among partners, and bigger issues such as bigamy. Published in 2011, the story revolves around a father's life that is filled with massive lies, and the chaotic consequences that his two wives and two teenage girls are swept up in. Following the wrongful imprisonment of a young Black man and its impact on him and on his families, *An American Marriage* published in 2018, then, explores how the personal and the public are intimately associated by placing the intimate details of the lives of the characters within the larger social and political forces in contemporary America. Although it is structured as an intersection of culture, race, class, and gender, the novel also closely examines the inescapable niceties of family, and exercising one's choice.

From a postcolonial Black feminist standpoint, these narratives talk about patriarchal power structures wherein women were denied the positions and opportunities given to men, while also bringing to light the ways in which women challenged stereotypes and redefined history and borders that had been set for a very long time by colonialism and patriarchy. The confluence of differences, the "border crossing" as Heidi Safia Mirza writes, denotes

"change, hope of newness, and space for creativity" (16). Since this chapter is analyzed using Feminist literary criticism, we shall first look at its theorization.

5.2 Theorizing Feminist Literary Criticism: Feminist literary criticism, which began after the second wave of feminism, aimed to establish the writings of women and the ideas put forth by early feminist thought, to counteract and deconstruct male superiority and dominance. It is informed by feminist theory, as it makes use of the principles and ideology of feminism in the evaluation of literature. Feminist literary criticism did not flourish right away, however the diligence of women writers throughout the centuries in their self-conscious addresses of women's psyche, body, art, and ideas, made it possible to accomplish in ways ineffable.

Although Feminism gained popularity only in the 1970s, it has a long history. Feminism, simply put, is a political and cultural movement that aimed to debunk ideas of gender disparity, and advocate equal rights for women. Virginia Woolf is by and large considered the founder of modern feminist literary criticism with landmark essays such as *A Room of One's Own*. Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own*, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Mad woman in the Attic*, Patricia Meyer Spacks' *The Female Imagination*, Mary Jacobus' *Women Writing and Writing about Women* and Ellen Moers' *Literary Women* are some of the early boundary crossing texts that have been significant in feminist approach, and whose influence on later generations of feminist thought has been insurmountable.

The establishment of feminist publishing corporations made the retrieval of lost classics possible and also allowed the expression of diverse types of writing that illustrates the experiences of women. The publication of women-authored books by the Feminist Press in New York is one classic example. Other publishing houses such as Onlywomen Press, also known as The Women's Press, helped contemporary women authors in giving them a voice in the field of literature. In addition, the BLF Press which is a self-governing Black feminist publishing house also devoted to enlarge and reinforce the work of Black and colored women in the US. Feminist book shops, reading groups, book festivals, conferences, and extracurricular classes further led to the outbreak in women's writing.

Feminism has had profound and extensive impact on literary criticism, and has influenced a horde of related disciplines. However, although it has contributed massively in transforming the way literary texts are studied, most of the feminist movements had leaders who were

chiefly middle-class White women. Women of colored races were sidelined and as a result of which they began to bring forth alternative feminisms, and with the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the end of European colonialism in former European colonies, this idea began to proliferate in the 1960s. The issues of class, racism, and the effects of colonialism on non-Western women were left unaddressed in the works of Western women. And so, while the upcoming feminist scholars and publishing companies were creating new canons, the absences of various subjects concerning colored women were apparent of exclusionary standards. Not only have their efforts to be taken sincerely in mainstream Western feminism been difficult for Postcolonial and Black women writers and feminists, but to gain access to opportunities has also been hard fought.

In a society that reflects a particular patriarchal ideology, feminist literary criticism calls for an urgent consideration of viewing literature through a feminist perspective, and to increase awareness of the sexual politics of language and style as the field of literature has historically been shaped by men. Today, various feminist schools such as Black and Third World feminisms have come into being as a counter discourse to Eurocentric feminism. Although the core political strategy of feminism remains the same, which is the subjugation of women, contemporary feminism has called for the importance of being conscious to differences and advocate the need to understand the outlook of, and pay heed to the voice of non-Western feminists in challenging patriarchy. These feminist critiques both confronted and helped transform early feminist criticism, and particularly developing the outlook of postcolonialism.

5.2.1. Postcolonial Feminism: Colonialism had not only formulated a massive influence on capital and other forms of development in the former colonies and Western societies, but it also had an impact on national literary traditions and popular culture. One of the primary concerns of postcolonial studies has always been the observation that the history of the West has generally been a history of the exploitation of the non-Western others. Emphasising on the gendered nature of this biased history, and specifically focusing on the relationship between colonialism and patriarchy, feminist literary studies have significantly contributed in the development of postcolonial studies.

Poststructuralists have had profound influence in the general development of postcolonial studies, and feminist postcolonial literary studies in particular. The deconstructive theory and critiques of the binary oppositions of Jacques Derrida, the psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan, and Michelle Foucault's theory on the relations of power, knowledge and subjectivity, are

some insightful contributions worth mentioning, from which contemporary feminists took on to work in the context of postcolonial feminism.

The position and condition of women in both colonial and postcolonial period is a defining focus in postcolonial feminist writing. Globally, the economic, political, social and cultural gender division is obvious. Nonetheless, post-colonial women are mostly affected in such divisions as we often find them in the worst socio-economic positions, and postcolonial feminist critics have endeavoured to surpass these limitations. They aim in examining history and the literary texts, and connecting it to larger social relations. Postcolonial feminists also work to incorporate the ideas of indigenous and other Third World feminists, as these feminists draw on their experience of borders to develop an inclusiveness of differences. As Gloria Anzaldúa has remarked, "We are articulating new positions in these "in-between," Borderland worlds of ethnic communities and academies, feminist and job worlds" (xxvi). The term Third World is being referred to the developing countries, and here ideas about race, colonialism, and imperialism are interlinked. Although many Second Wave feminists used the phrase to describe colored women in America, the terms Postcolonial and Third World are used interchangeably. Barbara Smith used the term Third World to indicate both women in developing countries and minority women in the West, to indicate women all over the globe. Being part of a Third World feminist movement, she remarked that "Third World feminism has enriched not just the women it applies to, but also political practice in general" (27).

Gayatri Spivak has helped shape the idea of thinking outside the box in the field of postcolonial feminism. The question of who gets to speak and whose voices are heard in discussions of the problems of women is a defining factor in postcolonial feminist criticism. And Spivak raised this subject of voice in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in which she analyses "the relations between the discourses of the West and the possibility of speaking of (or for) the subaltern woman" (271). This essay recognized Spivak as a critic who has feminized and internationalized the philosophy of deconstruction, in view of the position of the subaltern. In all of her works, Spivak's main effort has been to find answers for those who are left behind. Spivak's contribution to the Subaltern state under colonialism was "to expand its signification to include groups who do not figure on the social scale at all" such as "the tribals or unscheduled castes, untouchables, and within all these groups, women" (Boehmer 353). The Third World is often understood in the political and economical interest of the West and so Spivak questions the authenticity of the voice of the subaltern in a counter discourse with the

colonizer, that is, whether the subaltern speaks or is spoken for. And also if they do speak, are they heard. She answers the question in the last paragraph of her essay that "the subaltern can't speak" because of the way society is structured, and that the intellectuals must speak for them (104). In "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism" (1985), she emphasizes the importance of historical specificity in the interpretation of literary texts. She warns the dangers in reading a nineteenth-century text from a twentieth-century feminist perspective without a proper knowledge of the time in which the text was produced. Postcolonial feminist criticism thus calls for an allegiance to historical, social, and cultural specificity and differences. As bell hooks remarks, it requires "strategies of communication and inclusion that allow for the successful enactment of this feminist vision" (*Talking* 24). And this vision is one that is sincerely inclusive of diversity.

Over the last few decades, postcolonial feminism has become an increasingly important dimension of a wide range of disciplines. Today, most Western feminists accept that racism and colonialism cannot merely be seen as the concern of non-White or non-Western women. In recent times, feminist critics from various parts of the world have contributed in bringing about social change, in making visible the hierarchical difference, and in redefining its meaning.

5.2.2 Black Feminism: Black Feminism is a philosophy that calls for Black women's liberation from the trifold oppressions of racism, sexism, and classism. Contemporary Black feminist criticism was encouraged by the Civil Rights Movement, and expanded in juxtaposition with the Second Wave of feminism and the Black Power and Black Arts movements, which clearly were dominated by White women and Black men respectively. The movement rose in the United States as a result of White supremacy and patriarchal dominance on enslaved Black women, and attained a wider audience in the 2010s with the growing force of social media. Black feminists vehemently argued that gender and racial divisions abate the potency of the mainstream feminist and anti-racist movements.

African Americans wanted equal rights for every individual, irrespective of race, language, ethnic origin, or belief. Over the years, they have fought hard for their objective to acknowledge, and take pride in the cultural variety of their people. Throughout history, mainstream feminism was negligible to the issue of race, considering it to be less important to patriarchy. Moraga and Anzaldúa strongly attack this disregard of White women arguing that racism certainly have an effect on people's lives, except the "white women who can "afford"

to remain oblivious to these effects" (162). Audre Lorde has also opined that "white women focus upon their oppression as women and ignore differences of race, sexual preference, class and age" and that there is "a pretence to a homogeneity of experience covered by the word sisterhood that does not in fact exist" (116). Black feminists have therefore vigorously fought to challenge this ignorance of racism.

If we look at some of the landmark works that led to the expansion of Black feminist criticism, we see that Gloria Jean Watkins popularly known as bell hooks has been one of the great popularisers of Black feminist theory and criticism. Titled after Sojourner Truth's speech, hooks' 1981 book *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism* articulates how the stereotypical representations that were set during slavery still affect Black women in contemporary times. Further, *From Margin to Center* (1984) offers a more inclusive feminist theory, calling for a reformation of the cultural structure of power and challenging feminists to consider gender's relation to race, class, and sex, from which the concept of intersectionality came into being. *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (1992) is another collection of critical essays, in which hooks argues for alternative ways of looking at and talking about blackness and representation.

In recent times, the systematic experience of gender inequity has necessitated the voices of African American feminists. The literary works of Audre Lorde have also immensely contributed to the field of Black feminist criticism. Lorde was one of the most lucid advocates for collective aims between straight and lesbian feminists, who vigorously fought for the significance of difference in the resistance of racism, sexism and heterosexism. Her 1984 essay *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* became an important text in queer theory as well as Black and women studies. Here, Lorde argued that "survival is not an academic skill" but a learning on how "to take our differences and make them strengths, for "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (112). She enthusiastically argued for recognition of multiplicity whereby in choosing coalition, the differences among people is not overlooked.

The first ever complete critical study that closely examined the literary tradition and position of Black women in America was Barbara Christian's 1980 book *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition*. Here was Christian's representation of the fallacy of the general cultural stereotypes imposed on Black women, and goes on to demonstrate the ways in which African American writers responded to these stereotypes through their character

representation. *Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives on Black Women Writers, 1985-2000* published in 2007 is another extensive collection of essays and reviews which demonstrates Christian's relentless efforts to develop Black feminist criticism. Her works helped bring Black women writers like Alice Walker and Toni Morrison into academic and popular recognition. Kimberlé Crenshaw, Angela Davis, Roxane Gay, and Patricia Hill Collins are other leading Black feminists who expanded the field in different ways. They went on to explore sexuality, multi-generational association and conflict, African diaspora, as well as the continuing influence of African culture upon African American literature. Above all, these Black feminist critics have been essential in reclaiming Black female sexuality.

Black feminist criticism, with an established publication of anthologies and book series, has now been established in mainstream organizations. The formation of the African-American Women Writers Series at Beacon Press by Deborah McDowell, and The Schomburg Library of Nineteenth-Century Black Women Writers by Henry Louis Gates Jr. were two of the most wide-ranging and valuable publishing undertakings. Anthologies such as Gerda Lerner's 1972 volume *Black Women in White America* and Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa's 1981 collection *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, Michael Bennett and Vanessa D. Dickerson's 2001 volume *Recovering the Black Female Body: Self-Representations by African American Women* have all contributed new ways in the advancement of the field.

African feminism is sometimes associated with Black Feminism or African Womanism. However, although these concepts are intimately tied, their ideologies do differ on some grounds. African feminism for instance, specifically addresses the complex experiences and cultural distinctiveness of continental African women and not on the diasporic African women. Black feminism, then, is a philosophy that distinguishes itself from White feminism, and calls upon Black women to celebrate their own specificity while opposing racism and sexism. Womanism, which developed out of the Black feminist movement, is also focussed on the experiences and concerns of colored women, especially Black women, while also aims to ensure the interests of humanity at large that is irrespective of gender. "Womanism is to feminism as purple is to lavender" defines Alice Walker (xii). These concepts thus differ to some extent but they do largely support the feminist movement and their ultimate goals of gender equality.

Intersectionality is another key concept of Black feminism coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectionality addresses the multiple failures of Black women within the movements of feminism and anti-racism. Crenshaw proposed that oppression comes in multiple forms in her discussion of the various types of intersectionality ranging from structural, political, to representational. Intersectionality is as such essential in understanding and addressing all possible barriers to human interests. Crenshaw's main aim of this concept was to provide a prism to find and repair the failures of yesteryears and create a foundation for a far broader and stronger coalition towards building a better world.

Misogynoir, coined by queer Black feminist Moya Bailey in 2008, is again a key concept that comes under Intersectionality but refers more specifically to the anti-Black misogyny that Black women face in visual and popular culture. Misogynoir is therefore a specific type of misogyny directed towards Black women in the United States, which exposes the conditions of a society that fails to notice the systems of violence that are very much structured in the lives of Black women. Misogynoir thus calls a response that is transformative, to deconstruct the institutional practice of violence in any form.

Further, the theory of Triple Oppression created by Black socialists in the US such as Claudia Jones is another key concept in Black feminism. Taking cues from a long-held tradition that recognized the oppression of Black women as distinctive, and their liberation as fundamental to achieving equality, Jones contributed an awareness of their triple oppression of capital, patriarchy, and racism to traditional feminism. One is never really free when one or more of these oppressions still prevails and so while Jones popularized the concept of Triple Oppression, she also articulated a socialist feminism that took into account not just race, but the disparate struggles of all working women. This paradigm is also aligned to Double Jeopardy coined by Frances Beale in 1970, and Jane Crow coined by Pauli Murray in the 1940s.

Black feminist criticism would not be complete without a mention of feminist critics who are not Black. As mentioned earlier, in the new millennium period, Western women came forth to stand alongside marginalized women. Some of the most significant figures in this group are Barbara Johnson, Michael Awkward, Madhu Dubey, Kevin Everod Quashie, and several others, who have made major contributions to Black feminist theory. The appearance of these Western feminists on Black feminism is in itself a progress, signifying the heightened visibility of Black feminism on literature, and on society at large.

Literary criticism has served as an important vehicle in appropriating and reversing dominant means of representation and colonial ideologies. Women fiction writers of African descent in America have also consistently and intensely contributed to the growth of Black Feminist criticism. Addressing in their texts the struggle of African American women against the social and psychological torment in trifold dimensions, the need for sexual and economic empowerment, and the prospect to transcend borders, as well as their fervent approaches of self-formation, self-recovery and self-expression, fictionists such as Tayari Jones, Toni Morrison and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, to name a few, have fought for freedom. Condemning racist White male and White feminist critics and sexist Black male critics, they draw attention to the marginalization of Black women.

5.3 A Black Feminist Critique on the Select Narratives: Black feminist criticism refers to a body of critical and creative work written by Black women in the United States. A lot of the federal government programs, civil rights movements, and education programs have all had a positive impact on the Black women's situation, but they still fall victims to the tri-dimensional factors of race, class, and gender subjugation. This led to the emergence of the Black feminist consciousness. In the academy today, Black women enjoy a more rewarding benefit than ever has been, engaging in permanent and established position.

Born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, Jones is a prolific African American writer, who is best known for her novels *Leaving Atlanta* (2002), *The Untelling* (2005), *The Silver Sparrow* (2011), and *An American Marriage* (2018). Jones spent most of her childhood in Southwest Atlanta, and just as Baldwin who sets his narratives in Harlem, Jones' stories and literary imagination also finds center stage in Atlanta. Jones wrote at a time when situations were ameliorating for colored women in general, with all the advancements and movements of yesteryears. She provides a Black woman's point of view by presenting female-centric narratives, in which women characters are coming-of-age. Their journey however has not been unproblematic.

Gender roles hold an important position in Jones' writings, alongside race and class. Jones clarifies the notion that people have about African American culture as matriarchal, owing to the immense responsibility that women take on. She says that women take on responsibility only in the absence of men, that in "the black culture here in the US, we have a crisis of masculinity" (https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/in-the-black=culture-here-in-the-us-we-have-a-crisis-of-masculinity-1.4199709). A lot of their men have either been incarcerated

or dead at a young age, leaving the women with no choice but to take up the men's role as the head of the family. And this is exactly what happens in the narratives.

Patriarchy is one of the characteristic writings of feminism and is also a major concern in Jones' fiction, wherein she vigorously fights against male dominators. "Traditionally, patriarchy granted the father nearly total ownership over wife or wives and children" and "Classically, as head of the family the father is both begetter and owner in a system in which kinship is property" (Millet 67). The view of patriarchy over the years has undergone a huge transformation in many parts of the world nevertheless we see that it is still shaped by the underlying idea of men above women. As Adichie has remarked, "If we do something over and over again, it becomes normal. If we see the same thing over and over again, it becomes normal" (*We* 13). Likewise, if we keep seeing only men as the primal head of everything, it starts to seem natural to accept the women as the "Other" the "Second Sex." Because humans are communal beings, we incorporate and unconsciously assimilate ideas from our society. The gender roles defined in the narratives adheres to this point, revealing the limited choice of women.

Patriarchy begins at home and one cannot refute the serious power inequity at home. Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* has been a huge inspiration for Jones in writing a feminist novel, addressing the anguish of women basically told from the viewpoint of a male character. It taught her that gender equality was not just about society, but also about her individuality. Through the male protagonists James and Roy in *Silver Sparrow* and *An American Marriage* respectively, we get to know the thoughts, feelings, psyche, and distress of the female characters Dana, Gloria, Chaurisse, Laverne, and Celestial.

The entire plot of *Silver Sparrow* is shaped by the bigamist James Witherspoon's secret life. James has two families in Atlanta, the public and the private, who demands the secret family to live by his sayings. James' action therefore confines his secret family to live in the shadows of his main family. The women characters here manage their lives around James, struggling to come to terms to his wills. James even had to keep her secret child, Dana, away from her hopes and dreams in fear of being exposed to his dual life. She and her mother Gwendolyn are thus marginalized. And because everyone wants to be in his favour, the daughters want him as a father and the women want to occupy the position of the wife, James is able to get away. He knows that Laverne was not going to give up her marriage and Gwen was determined to stay too after bearing a child under scandalous circumstances and being

disowned by her father. It was painful for the father to not only see his daughter leaving her husband, Clarence Yarboro, for whom he worked, but also because this reminded him of his wife Flora, who ran off when Gwen was only three months old. Jones thus presents a vivid portrayal of life and sexual awakening in Atlanta, Georgia, in the 1980s as experienced by the teenage sisters, and in the 1950s, when the shame of being unmarried and pregnant shaped their own mothers' lives.

Laverne and James received their marriage license only on the second attempt because at first, the Henry County judge would not give them the license looking at Laverne's unwillingness despite her mother's constant persuasion. Laverne did not know yet if she wanted to be married to James, and to take up the role of a wife. The second judge however sold them the license without any interrogation. Everything happened before Laverne could make sense of what was happening and make a decision of her own. At fourteen, young, ignorant, and naïve, there was nothing anyone could do when she got pregnant and had to leave school. She had not even been aware of the consequences. Laverne was impregnated at an early age and was practically forced into child marriage as she was only fifteen years old when she got married to James. After the license was made, Laverne fears that "she will go to her grave feeling that she had spent almost her whole life as a wife, without ever having been a bride" (178). When she lost her first child, she no longer want to go back home but stay with James and his mother, more because she had no choice in a judging society. When James' dual lives are gradually exposed, Laverne begins to question her worth. With Grandma Bunny gone, she had nobody by her side. Chaurisse, herself being angry and broken, would ask her mother to stop droning and stand up for herself. "Mama," "Grab a broom. Put sugar in his gas tank. Something" "I just want you to be more …" (313). All these highlight the very little choices that were laid down for women.

The things that happen in the story takes place because Black women were forced to work as domestic labourers. Throughout history, Black women had been the most browbeaten members of the American society as she has been the object of continual exploitation. Although some White women spoke of sexual equality, on the whole they had no intentions of working together with Black women. The relations of race and sex thus exacted a heavy toll on the Black woman. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, no Black woman held a job beyond that of menial job. Laverne's mother Mattie, James' mother Miss Bunny, and Raleigh's mother Lula, worked long hours for White families. Theirs was still a

generation that worked tedious jobs under White folks. Both Bunny and Lula were only fifteen years old when they were house-cleaning for the Whites. And even though it was the year 1942, far afield from slavery, Lula felt like she was living on a plantation. The systematic exclusion of Black women from other privileged areas of service continued to dominate their lives. And so while freedom opened new paths for Black men, most women were confined to old problems that were only exacerbating with time.

When Miss Bunny informed Lula about the vacancy of an overnight girl needed by a new White family, her utmost concern was, "What's the husband like?" "I can't go through this all again" and here we see how Black women's bodies were still commodified by White men (120). Although a redbone girl herself, Lula did not want her son because his face reminded her of her White owner who raped her. Bunny had to take baby Raleigh under her care after his mother, Lula, ran off to have a better life. Looking after the two boys all by herself, with the little money she earned after her husband was killed in a paper-mill accident, was exigent. Female harassment is not new when it comes to predicaments faced by women. This is justified when Dana "could hear [her] own voice, shrill with lies" as she explains to James about Marcus that he "has never raised his hand" to her (107). To this day, for most Black women it is still a struggle against racism and sexism.

Just as that addressed by Black feminists, Tayari Jones too reveals the many challenges faced by women of color and the issues that remain prevalent, while also unfailingly addressing the gallant ways in which Black women defy stereotypical gender roles. Jones structures her fiction as a feminist narrative around the oppression of Black men in the United States. The preference of a male child is made obvious in the narratives. Although Ronalda tells people that her mother is dead, the truth is that she is still alive but had escaped with her little brother whom she loved "like nothing in the world" (76). Dana knew that her father too always wanted a son. Growing up with two brothers, Jones always felt that her parents had greater expectations of them. "As anyone who's ever had a brother knows, boys are in many ways the centre of the familial universe" she says (https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/in-the-black=culture-here-in-the-us-we-have-a-crisis-of-masculinity-1.4199709).

The whole basement at Ronalda's place was decorated to show the world how much her father Mr. Harris enjoyed being Black. On the walls were line drawings of men such as Malcolm X, W.E.B. Du Bois, and others. Her little brother was named after an African president Kwame Nkrumah. These little details were inspired by the author's own parents,

who had a picture of her brother on the wall between Malcolm X and Du Bois. “It was clear they had very high hopes for him! So I could understand Dana in her insider/outsider role” says Jones in her conversation with Oneworld (346). Jones confronts that although she had a happy childhood, she grew up in an environment where girl children were not celebrated and valued in the same way as boys.

White supremacy and male primacy has been a painted reality in the life of a Black woman. Her journey of freedom throughout history began with no justness of any sort. Whether young or old, the Black woman was basically left on her own. She was exploited, commodified, and deceived. From the letters she writes to Roy, we come to know that Celestial spent a year at Howard University before Spelman, wherein she met a forty-year-old married Black teacher, Raul Gomez, with whom she was pregnant at just eighteen. Although she had a share of being immoral, with all the false promises made to her by the older man she was left envisioning a future with him. However, after twelve years of marriage, Gomez was not in a state to divorce his wife which brutally shattered Celestial. She had a weight pressing on her mental health that she dolled her way out. Although the sock dolls, which was introduced to her by her aunt Sylvia, was to donate to Grady Hospital initially, every time she made something to comfort a motherless infant, Celestial felt like she was paying back for the abortion she had and the mistakes she had made. In writing an up-close look at marriage, race, and feminism in *An American Marriage*, Jones sees that “people judge [men] as having a kind of masculine authenticity if they seem to be less refined, less educated,” but “there is no incentive for black women to present that way.” She also goes on to expose that society desires their daughters to be ladies “because it’s much more important that your daughter be a lady than your son be a gentleman” (https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/in-the-black=culture-here-in-the-us-we-have-a-crisis-of-masculinity-1.4199709). Roy’s observation of women as men’s cure is also problematic. He believes that at times the only obsession that can cure a man is the inside of a woman, crediting Davina, the woman he sleeps with right after his release from prison, for showing him how to be himself again. This examination of Roy can be generalized in the way women are sexualized.

Jones has voiced out with regard to gender prejudices in various forms. In the art school that Celestial studied, she was one of the two Black students, in which the other was a guy, who was always angry at Celestial for spoiling his uniqueness. This calls attention to Yaa Gyasi’s *Transcendent Kingdom* where Gifty did not want to be thought of as “a woman in science” or “a black woman in science” but rather as “a scientist” (83). Gifty had tyrannical and

misogynistic men like Yao in her small study group who would shut down any of the ideas proposed by women. They are products of a culture that has cultured them with the hidebound notion that men are central to women. Misogynoir comes in various forms and these are fine examples. It is in the ways in which Black women's bodies were commodified, or in the police violence against Black women as is the case with the murder of Breonna Taylor, or in the ways in which a school resource officer knocked Taylor Bracey unconscious in a high school, Florida, on January 2021, or the perception that Black women are threatening and aggressive when they speak up for themselves. Today, we live in a world that is much evolved but our thoughts on gender have not evolved much.

People have always carried the notion that Black women are wild and uncontrollable. Al Green's story in the book, about what a wife does when she finds out that her husband is being unfaithful, suggests how even their violence were taken as a joke. The wife, a Black woman, throws grit on her husband, Al Green, who gets a third degree burn from it. She then goes on to kill herself and Al Green later finds the Lord out of this mess. Jones uses this tragic story which she has been hearing all her life and weaves into the narrative to debunk the notion of uncontrollable Black women rage. There are other recent examples where Black women are stereotypically represented as aggressive and threatening. We see Misogynoir pervading in women's sport media too. The unfair treatment imposed on Serena Williams during her Women's Singles finals match of the 2018 US Open by chair umpire Carlos Ramos, represent a classic case. Apart from the warning given to Williams for damaging her tennis racket, the other two penalties for coaching and verbal abuse spurred controversies. Many male players like James Blake and John McEnroe have made use of much vulgar words than a "thief" against chair umpires but have been left unpenalized. This contrast treatment of Ramos between men and a Black woman is apparent of the biasness within the game of tennis. As a result of the intersection of multiple forms of oppression in the lives of Black women, they are made to feel like an outsider in all areas.

The angry Black woman thus remains a social, political, and cultural typecast that has been used to defame artists, athletes, and political figures. Former US President Donald Trump has a record of reinforcing old stereotypes on different occasions, ranging from calling Kamala Harris, the first Black woman to be elected as Vice President, as extraordinarily nasty and angry to calling a Black American woman journalist as threatening. Even former First Lady of the US Michelle Obama, in her book *Becoming* and in her several interviews, described her bewilderment on being called an angry Black woman.

These are proof enough of the systemic ways in which violence is maintained and justified as a result of hatred towards Black women. There are also other forms of structural violence in which Black women are systematically disregarded in the everyday life such as marriage, which often times are brushed under the carpet with the big constitutional systems such as police violence taking all the highlights. People barely ever talk about the women who are taking care of the house and families when their husbands are incarcerated. And so it is imperative to be expansive when addressing about violence, which is exactly what Jones does in her latest novel as will be studied.

Before college, Jones had not reflected on her gender experience and influence having grown up in an all-Black southwest Atlanta. She says that she understood herself as a "black *person"* more than as a "black *woman*" and that she was really not aware of the complexity for Black women to be "the subject of stories" (https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/03/by-heart-tayari-jones/556010). Once she got into college, Jones began to notice that a lot of the theories of power she understood about race also applied to gender. This was an eye opener to the prolific writer she was to become.

5.4 A Psycho-analytical Feminist Perspective on the Select Narratives: Amid the exclusion of Black women in myriad areas of life, we also see their exclusion in the field of psychological research. There has been a lack of knowledge concerning the untold miseries of Black women practically as well as academically. The field of Psychology was White and male centric for a very long time. The African American psychologist Robert Val Guthrie has opined that in psychology, "even the rat was white," which accounts the curtailing of Black psychologists by their White counterparts (1). Books like Guthrie's have helped in psychological change in America.

Feminism, psychoanalysis, and literary criticism have so much in common than may have been stated by early histories. For the most part Freud's theory depends on a gender-marked narrative which problematized many of his early women followers. Many of his women patients went on to become psychoanalysts themselves and while some of them remained loyal to Freud and his theories of femininity, others began to offer modifications. Around the time in the 1950s when women were nothing but housekeeper and child-bearers, Freud's theorisation of women as subservient and powerless became conceivable to the general public. It was only in the early 1960s that a new generation of women activists began to

question and challenge at a different intensity. Two groundbreaking books, *The Second Sex* (1953) and *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) by Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan respectively, confronted and well argued against gender prejudices. In the wake of de Beauvoir, Friedan, Kate Millett, Germaine Greer, and Barbara Smith, a large number of books cross-examining and critiquing male-authored texts in terms of its sexist portrayals of women abounded. The characterization of women as virgins, mothers or whores, were subject to analysis, as women painstakingly confronted the bases of these boundaries. Many female-authored texts began to transcend these disciplinary boundaries.

Women in general have contributed extraordinarily in the development of the field of psychology, but these women psychologists were often overlooked when it came to canon formation of the texts. As a result of the non-inclusiveness and misrepresentations of women, feminist psychology emerged along with the Association for Women in Psychology both in the late twentieth century, a period that witnessed booming challenges to male-centric psychological theories. The representations of racist and classist assumptions were however sidelined by White feminist psychologists and so women of color called on scholarly communities to expand the contexts of feminist psychology, making sure that it is inclusive of every communal perspective.

Black women's insights were frequently absent from mainstream psychology. Despite the vigorous attempts by some feminist psychologists to diversify the perspectives within the field, it still failed to incorporate the experiences of all women. A lot of the scientific research conducted on Black women has only been examined from a pathological point of view, and so new concentration on the intimate examination of Black women dealing with unfair realities along with the mental health consequences was looked-for. Black women's psychological perspectives are a must in order to build an inclusive treatment approach with regard to psychotherapy. Black women's oppression is severe as it is trifold however the discarding of their psychological anguish from literature dwindles the value of mental health treatment that they need. Black women therefore advocated the urgent demystification of this non-inclusive body of research.

In the past, psychology was used to advocate systems of oppression, as evidenced by the use of psychological research in the eugenics movement, based on the Binet-Simon intelligence test ranging from idiots, imbeciles, and morons. The purpose of eugenics was to improve the human race through the reproduction of humans with desirable traits, but this took a negative

turn when non-White Americans were discriminated as carrying undesirable characteristics, which the movement sought to get rid of. In addition, the pathological views of Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities that were endorsed through biased psychological testing and assessment further add to this point. But while the field of psychology was misused by some racist psychologists, it has also immensely contributed in better understanding of the multifaceted aspects of racism. Proficient on human behavior, psychologists have long studied systemic racism and contributed to recognize its deleterious effects leading to positive changes over the years. Both Intersubjective theory and Trauma theory have also contributed in the contemporary psychoanalysis of the complexities of gender and culture not only in theory but also in clinical practice.

Black women have made groundbreaking contributions to the field of psychology even in the face of extensive intersectional oppressions. It was only in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Movement that psychology became socially-engaged and diverse. And women of color undeniably added to these changes, by presenting their distinctive perspectives and proficiency to understand and better the world. But even before that, we see few Black women already getting into the field of psychology striving for inclusiveness and constructive change. To this day, Black women continue to redefine borders by breaking barriers, and persist to contribute to the field of psychology.

In recent times, women have come up with a multimedia initiative under the title "I am Psyched!" to look at the brilliant and intrepid history and contemporary contributions of women of color in psychology. Today, Black women work transversely in all areas of psychology and sectors of society. According to a 2017 report, women make more than half the members of American Psychological Associations (APA) by 58%, and according to Center for Workforce Studies (CWS) data, female students outnumbered their male counterparts in psychology graduate programs in 2014 by 75% (Clay 18). New data from APA's CWS has also highlighted that there will be an increase in the demand for non-White psychologists in the US by 24% by the year 2030. However, the pressing concern is whether psychology will be able to meet the demands of these changing structures of population with racial prejudice at the backdrop.

So long as scientific practices are dominated by White supremacy, there is no access to total authenticity. It is thus imperative for psychologists to self-examine themselves and work their way out of any racial biasness in order to generate a fruitful result. Psychologists around the

globe are now challenging research norms, and building bridges, as a result of which the research of Black women psychologists today is not only getting recognition, but is also funded, published, researched, and cited. Here is a chart in a nutshell to demonstrate the contributions of Black women in the field of psychology over the years:

Year	Name	Contribution
1933	Inez Beverly Prosser (1895-1934)	The first African American woman to receive a PhD in educational Psychology at the University of Cincinnati, Prosser examined the effects that racial inequity have on the psyche of African American children in her comparative study of their social adjustment in racially integrated and segregated schools. Her greatest legacy remains her contribution to ameliorate the educational system for all students.
1934	Ruth Winifred Howard (1900-1997)	One among the first African American women to be awarded a PhD in developmental psychology at the University of Minnesota, and a determined activist for mental healthcare, Howard is best known for her recognition of and contribution to the particular needs of marginalized communities.
1935	Alberta Banner Turner (1909-2008)	Pioneering African American psychologist, Turner earned her PhD at Ohio State and went on to become the Director of the Ohio Bureau of Juvenile Affairs. A civil rights and women's rights activist in the field of psychology, she incorporated ideas in bringing about important reforms in the field of education, gender and racial equality, as well as in de-segregation.
1940s	Mamie Phipps Clark (1917-1983)	A noted woman psychologist, Clark conducted the groundbreaking doll studies alongside her husband Kenneth Clark, which elucidated the unconscious impact that internalized racism has on Black children and on the development of racial identity and self-consciousness in children. It was highly influential in the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education case, and her works continued to inspire further research in the field of developmental psychology.
1959	Keturah Whitehurst	The first African American psychologist licensed in Virginia, and also the first African American woman to intern at the Harvard

	(1912-2000)	Psychological Clinic, Whitehurst mentored a number of Black psychologists. She developed her College's first counseling service, and co-founded The Children's House. She also worked on task forces that dealt with teenage pregnancy, drug use, and AIDS. Her contribution to psychology is expansive that goes beyond her work.
1969	E. Kitch Childs (1937-1993)	Even amid the growing race-based segregation in Chicago in the '60s and '70s, nothing could hamper Childs from opening her own practice that provided therapy to underserved groups. As both a psychologist and social activist, with the prime focus on the experiences of Black women, she cultivated resiliency and strength among her clients. Childs' work emphasized on how feminist approaches to therapy would promote self-understanding and empowerment.
1980	Janis Sanches-Hucles (1951)	The second person of color to be awarded a PhD in psychology at the University of North Carolina, Hucles unswervingly works in making psychology an applicable and reachable subject to ethnic minorities. She continues to study and contribute to women and leadership, ethnic minorities and diversity, and also to mental health services.
1993	Aaronette M. White (1961-2012)	A passionate scholar and a strong social activist, White has contributed essential research to understanding and organizing anti-rape advocacy in Black communities. She has also made groundbreaking contributions in understanding the lives of African Americans, and influenced social, political, liberation, and feminist psychology, in addition to women and African studies.
2003	Hortense J. Spillers (1942)	In examining the relationship between psychoanalysis and African American literature and culture from a Black feminist perspective in *Black, White, and in Color: Essays on American Literature and Culture*, Spillers pointed that psychoanalytic theory may only be applied to African American literature and culture, on account that the traumatic marks on the body of the slave constitute "an American grammar" that is transferred across generations within

		African American culture (209). Spillers brought these issues central to psychoanalytic thought and critical race studies into productive tension with one another, which inspired many other critics to produce psychoanalytic readings of African American narratives.
2011	Olivia Juliette Hooker (1915-2018)	The first African American woman to enter the US Coast Guard in 1945, and one of the last known survivors of the Tulsa race massacre, Hooker's psychological contribution was focused on child development and learning disabilities. She also contributed extraordinarily in helping women overcome hard times and pursue better education and job opportunities, for which she was attributed the American Psychological Association Presidential Citation in 2011.
2014	Jennifer Lynn Eberhardt (1965)	Eberhardt's brilliant contribution was her examination on the consequences of the psychological association between race and crime, and the effects of racial stereotypes on criminal sentencing that made her a recipient of MacArthur Genius Award in 2014. She was also elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 2016, and her works have contributed to training law enforcement officers and state agencies to better their judgments. Her findings continue to provide invaluable insights and directions for further research into how racial prejudice permeates at every level of the American criminal justice system.

These women's impact in the field of psychology and especially in the lives of Black women during a time of racial and misogynistic strain is beyond measure. Apart from the above mentioned names, there are many other women psychologists from across the globe working for a multicultural and multiracial cause today. The achievements of these women demonstrate the substantial gain when psychology, or any other field for that matter, is inclusive of diversity, for diversity brings people with a variety of ideas and experiences together to develop the processes by which problems of any kind can be ameliorated. The psychological analysis of African American women will be studied under the following subjects – The American Penal and Justice System, Bigamy, and Class, Privilege, and Race.

5.4.1 American Penal and Justice System: Hate crimes are common when it comes to American penal system. In her association of the psychological with race and crime, Jennifer Eberhardt has brought an authentic representation in which racial bigotry steep deep into the domain of American criminal justice. Making use of an actual record of criminal defendants convicted of a capital crime, Eberhardt elucidates the unjust stringent punishments that Black victims were confined to. *An American Marriage* in many ways, like Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk*, criticizes and challenges the American justice system. Tayari Jones reveals the untold repercussions that these unfair incarcerations have on the lives of African Americans. The narrative reveals how the corrupt American penal system can destroy families, placing them at a social disadvantage from which it is difficult to pull through.

Roy is a young, middle-class Black man who falls prey to the codified racism of the American criminal justice system. As a woman, writing from a man's perspective can be challenging. But Jones mentions in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times* that all her life as a Black woman, she has known the Black male story and therefore she was aware of their struggle and predicament, and of the sense of anxiety and fear of prison or the police that made it less complex for her. In the author's own words, "It wasn't a foreign territory" (https://www.latimes.com/book/la-ca-je-tayari-jones-20180309-htmlstory.html). Making use of a single family, the narrative centers on the consequences of a cataclysmic injustice on Roy and Celestial who have been married only for eighteen months. It delves deep into the subjects of class, incarceration, love, family and marriage, with the persistent racism of the justice system at the backdrop. These subjects work beautifully in this delicate story with a bigger message about the blatant inequity in American society. While the novel accounts the physical and psychological torments of the male protagonist, it also throws ample light on the psyche of his wife Celestial. Because, even though Roy fights against the penal system from the inside, Celestial must fight her own battles on the outside.

The relationship of this newly married couple has already been showing general signs of distress at the time of Roy's conviction. For example, before the incarceration, Roy accepts other women's phone numbers when he goes out with friends that bothers Celestial and makes her suspicious. Nevertheless they move past this issue. Their vastly different economic backgrounds also lead to their constant arguments because while Roy was on the come-up, Celestial was raised in an upper-class cosmopolitan family. Furthermore, Olive's scepticism of her daughter-in-law, Celestial, only exacerbated their stressed relationship. Celestial's

artistic career was also problematic to them because while she wishes to handcraft her own one-of-a-kind dolls for sale on fine art, Roy who is working to establish himself in the business world wanted to create a mass-manufactured luxury toy. But none of these personal as well as professional issues were enough to divide the two. They were, in fact, in the process of establishing a business of their shared dreams when their lives were overturned by Roy's imprisonment, ruining not just his budding career but also his life. Roy's wrongful conviction adds to these relatively minute marital stresses that brings the relationship to its breaking point.

Although very little of what happens to Roy in prison is directly narrated, his twelve years sentence has a profound effect on his character and personality when he is released. Just as he tells Celestial, "Even if you go in innocent, you don't come out that way" (248). After Roy's incarceration, the narrative form shifts into an epistolary style, illustrating their painful emotions in letters as they battle their tribulations individually as well as jointly. While the couple continue to exchange their letters, which is moving and intimate, we also notice that something is unspeakably broken in their struggling long-distance marriage, caught in the tentacles of injustice, loneliness, and fear, which can be psychologically taunting for an eighteen-months-old marriage.

A man who is completely isolated from his family and not even allowed to attend the funeral of his mother who died while he was in prison, Roy slowly begins to see that even when he gets out, his life will look nothing like it did before the penal complexity. When Roy is ultimately released, it becomes clear that his time in prison has irrevocably changed him. He finds himself prone to stints of violence and anger that frighten both himself and those around him. At one point he even forces making love to his wife. The following morning, he guiltily reflects on this moment as the outcome of his faulty incarceration. Later, when he and Andre fight over Celestial, the latter is surprised by Roy's ferociousness. Through these examples, Jones highlights the deep, lasting effect that incarceration has on a man's psyche.

Back then, incarceration was thought to have something to do with being guilty but the American penal system proved Big Roy and his race wrong. Roy knew that he had a lot of years left after his discharge, but he could not help counting those he had lost. Davina tells Roy that "[it] was just the wrong race and the wrong time. Police are shady as hell. That's why everybody is locked up" (169). But when precisely will be the right time when these illegal penal systems continue to function. The fact that Roy picked soybeans when he was in

prison illustrates how even after having a degree from Morehouse College, he was working the land like his ancestors. This serves as a classic representation of neo-colonization under White supremacy.

There has been a lot of attention on the over-incarceration of Black men, and less attention is paid on the women outside prison. Although Roy is dealing with a terrible miscarriage of justice, his suffering is not the only thing that is of concern. Jones sought to look at the collateral effects of incarceration, and the way society looks at women's roles in these relations. Women are the caretakers of the incarcerated men. But people converse very little about what is being sacrificed by these women. This can be because of the poor idea that women are defined by their relationships to men. Roy's incarceration forces Celestial into a forlorn state as her world is upturned overnight. Aside from being separated from her husband, Celestial who at one point longed to have a child with Roy, considers it pointless given their situation and decides to have an abortion. Roy had also been integral in the development of her career as an artist, but his guiding presence is no longer possible. Celestial could not even bring herself to seal the flaps on the sturdy cardboard box, which contained her hand-made dolls for sell, as the memory of ripping tape troubled her. When memory gets the better of her and cannot hold back her tears irrespective of the place and time she is in, Celestial would blame it on allergies or an eyelash irritation.

Celestial mentions in one of her letters to Roy about the incident she had near an intersection, where she and Andre passed by a little boy with his mother. That boy looked like Roy, and she frantically asked Andre if he saw him, if he was Roy. This brings to mind the "evocative cues" that Dr. Perry has mentioned (28). Here, the sense of sight triggers Celestial's traumatic remembrance of her husband in the prison and her system at the top of the brain that can tell time shuts down. She writes, "A voice in my head that was not my own said, *A baby prisoner*" (63). She goes on to explain that the next thing she knew was to find herself on her knees on the sidewalk in front of a water hydrant, embracing it like a small stout child. The whole thing was destroying her.

Celestial was mentally tired of all that was happening in her life. Her dad was still writing checks to pay for her wedding, when their marriage has been in a pathetic condition. She worked long hours at the shop, and then drove for hours to Louisiana to spend the night with her in-laws, who were not even fond of her. Her husband was not at fault, but there was only so much she could do as a Black woman. She tells Andre, "You don't know what it's like to

be standing in the line to get in to see him" in the prison, "it's different for women. They treat you like you're coming to visit your pimp… Like you're a delusional victim" (157). It breaks Celestial to know that "Women's work is never easy, never clean" (285). There were times when she would look in the mirror and cannot quite recognize herself.

Whatever happens in the book is not mere fiction. The judge and jury chose to believe the testimony of White prosecutors over a Black victim. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, "one in three Black men" will be incarcerated in their lifetime, and according to the US Sentencing Commission, Black offenders receive "10 percent longer" sentences than White offenders for the same felony in the federal system (https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2012/03/13/11351/the-top-10-most-startling-facts-about-people-of-color-and-criminal-justice-in-yhe-united-states/). Andre is considered a privileged person for not having being incarcerated in a racist society. Just living an everyday life without being imprisoned was a luxury for Black men like Andre.

Celestial finds solace in the company of her long-time friend Andre, with whom she spends nearly three years as partners. But this did not come easy to her as she never imagined herself to be the kind of woman with both a husband and a fiancé. All the dolls crammed at her sewing room that were of varying complexions and genders looked like Roy, and Andre had learned to make his peace with this reality. Imprisonment thus not only takes an emotional and fiscal toll on the person being incarcerated, but also on everyone close to the matter and individual.

5.4.2 Bigamy: Ever since the Morrill Anti-Bigamy Act was signed on 1862 by the 16th President of the United States Abraham Lincoln, bigamy has been a federal crime under US law and remains so even to this day. This act was reinforced by the Edmunds Anti-Polygamy Act of 1882 which was signed by the 21st President of United States Chester A. Arthur. Polygamy similarly remains illegal, and its practice is criminalized in all states of America until recently, i.e., in February 2020, when the Utah House and Senate decriminalized it. Although polygamy is illegal throughout most parts of the world, there are certain religious and cultural customs that sanction its practice. But when it comes to bigamy, there is no such religious sanction and is banned in almost every parts of the world. There has been a spike in the practice of polygamy in America since 2001, according to new results. Americans are now far more accepting of polygamous marriages than ever has been. The United Nations Human Rights Committee condemned "polygamy" as "an inadmissible discrimination

against women" and called for its urgent abolishment (http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/gencomn/hrcom28.htm). The same could be called for bigamous practices.

We have seen in the preceding chapters that trauma is caused by a number of stressors. Trauma can be applied to a wide gamut of life events, and divorce of parents is one experience that can cause profound trauma on children. Divorce for most children is "really like a death" in the words of therapist M. Gary Neuron, as mentioned by Oprah Winfrey in her conversation with Dr. Perry (36). The children feel pieces of themselves being torn apart, and greatly shapes their self-worth. An in-depth study of Black women that are vulnerable to panic attacks and agoraphobia found that those who have experienced the early loss or separation of a parent via parental divorce, death, or loss of contact, are at higher risk for the development of certain forms of anxiety that may even limit their repertoire of coping skills (Neal-Barnett 84).

It is a universally accepted belief that growing up in a happy home with a robust parent-child relationship is significant for a healthy psychological development that refrain children from mental, social, and educational problems. However, about 40 to 50 percent of married couples in the United States go through divorce, and the percentage for the following marriages only increases. The US has the sixth highest divorce rate in the world, and statistics have shown that in every thirteen seconds there is one divorce in America, and that half of all children in the US witness the end of a parent's marriage, and forty-three percent of children in the US are being raised without their fathers (https://www.wf-lawyers.com/divorce-statistics-and-facts/). As such it is evident when Ronalda tells Dana, "So many kids, black kids especially, are hungry in their hearts for a daddy" (291). The crux of the narrative is the complex dynamics in modern-day marriages as it explores bigamy, infidelity and illegitimate children. Jones has here explored a subject that has become common in modern society.

Inspired from her own family, Jones wrote *Silver Sparrow* as a gift to her half-sister who shares the same father. As such, this is the most personal of all of Jones' writings that touches upon controversial subjects and evokes scores of emotions. Among the many issues such as discriminations based on gender, race, and social class, the novel also talks about the complex life of families that are caught in bigamous practice. Bigamy is a major theme in *Silver Sparrow*, as set clear from the beginning line of the narrative, "My father, James Witherspoon, is a bigamist" (3). James was already ten years married when he first

encountered Gwendolyn, who was working at the gift-wrap counter at Davison's downtown. "When most people think of bigamy, they imagine some primitive practice taking place on the pages of *National Geographic*" "Some people said it was a cult, others called it a cultural movement" "Whatever it was, it involved four wives for each husband" narrates Dana (3-4). The narrative explores the psychological impact of such a system on the children, spouses, and extended families.

Dana and Gwen have to grapple with the restricted presence of the father figure in their lives being the "other" family. As Dr. Perry lucidly remarks, "… *neglect is as toxic as trauma"* and in their case, the absence of the male figure adding up to the trauma of pain, rage, and disgrace, intensified their fragmentation (159). Neglect is most vicious in an individual's early life as it is at this stage that the brain is rapidly growing, and that hampers the necessary stimulus required for normal development. What Dana struggles from is splinter neglect that Perry talks about. "Splinter" neglect is a kind of neglect when an infant, toddler, or child grows up in a household where "loving" is outsourced (165).

When Miss Russell asked the class to draw pictures of their families, Dana drew all the people she knew to be family – her father James, his wife Laverne and their daughter Chaurisse, James' brother Raleigh, her mother, and herself. On learning about the drawing, James warns Dana that "what [they] do in this house has to be a secret" (8). When asked if his other wife and girl is a secret too, James tells her, "Dana, you are the one that's a secret" (9). This revelation was overwhelming for a five-year-old girl that would go on to daunt her psyche. To have a father who instilled in his child the burden of being a secret and not given the love and affection was no different than not having one, for Dana. The real blow comes to Dana when she not only has to live a secret life, but to live with that shame of being a secret.

Dr. Neal-Barnett has stated that a child exposed to unpredictable or extreme stress becomes "dysregulated" (37). Clearly, humans experience and perform best when there is a balance not only in the body systems, but also with family, community, and the environment. "We elicit from the world what we project into the world; but what you project is based upon what *happened to you* as a child" (Perry 58). When the child's cry for support and guidance goes unmet or is responded to with anger or punishment, the child is out of balance. Gwen wanted her daughter to have a father, as much as she wanted a husband for herself.

The book has two parts, narrated by the half-sisters. The first title is taken from the gospel hymn "His Eye is on the Sparrow," meaning that God watches over the smallest thing. Dana,

the secret child, believes that she is the sparrow, the smallest of all. But her half-sister Chaurisse perceives her as a "silver girl," a name she gave for natural beauty (197). The theme of "half-sisters" is recurring in African American literature regardless of the time and space. And one of the reasons is because of bigamous and polygamous practices, as is the case here with Dana and Chaurisse. These half-sisters are different to the half-sisters Esi and Effia that has been studied in the fourth chapter. After their first encounter at the drugstore at SupeRx, they were no more strangers. Although Dana knew Chaurisse as the other daughter of her father, she had no idea who Dana was. On finding Chaurisse at the civic center wearing the same waist-length rabbit fur as her, Dana feels utterly disappointed that James had deceived her by making her believe that he had won it for her in a poker game. "Why had he burst into my home in the middle of the night, letting me believe that he had seen this coat on the poker table" "and thought of me, and only me?" Dana wondered in exasperation (45). Dana and her mother only get to spend the Wednesdays with James. Knowing that the other family get more time, love, and attention, Dana develops a feeling of jealousy, which eventually aggravates with time.

Dana wanted to be like James' other girl and becomes obsessed that she would go with her mother to trail Chaurisse and Laverne even though the more they saw them the more they were hurting. Whenever they go surveilling, Dana and her mother were both anxious and eager. Dana also would call James' unlisted home number just to hear Chaurisse's voice. Furthermore, without her parent's knowledge, she would also track Chaurisse down on several occasions, and manages to befriend her while still concealing her identity in fear of her father. The role and act of the parents have a gigantic influence on an individual's view of the world. A recent study at Harvard found that the most powerful factor concerned with depression was related to connectedness (Perry 261). The "history of the childhood relational health is as important as, if not more important than, their history of adversity" in determining his/her current mental health (262). Jones brings forth the message that every child is legitimate through the narrative point of both the daughters, as she felt that the story was limiting by just taking the viewpoint of one of these characters or without their mothers'.

In May of 1987, their lives turned into a movie when the whole truth comes to light and there were "no real life models" for their "new reality" (320). The mental torture that Dana goes through at the scene where the father was called by Chaurisse, on account of her broken car on their way to a party, is a psychological blow even to the readers. She had to lock herself up in the bathroom till her mother appeared on the scene. On learning that his secret wife was

on the way, James was anxiously willing to leave his illegitimate child alone in the dark only to save his identity. Then, the mental torture that Chaurisse had to go through at the same scene as a result of the shouting, crying, and confusion, and later on learning about her father's secret family is severely disturbing. Then again, we also see the psychological torment that the mothers had to go through, especially by Laverne on discovering that her loving husband, about whom she always bragged at the salon, had been cheating on her all this time. Gwen had been living with mental distractions on an everyday basis as a secret wife, and in want of a husband all to herself. James was a bigamist and Laverne was his wife. "But was [Gwen] his wife, too?" questions Dana in frustration, stating that "It's a shame that there isn't a true name for a woman like my mother," who had to use words such as "*concubine, whore, mistress, consort*" to describe herself and none of these seemed fair (4). Black women were often associated with derogatory names such as these, in addition to many others that Black feminists and psychologists sought to do away with.

To build a healthy friendship becomes difficult for the two half-sisters because envy, resentment, and insecurity gradually come to dominate their once loving relationship. We see towards the book's end that Dana had gone to the soiree, where her father and Laverne were renewing their vows, to ask Chaurisse if they could be sisters because they both were at no fault with whatever unfolded into their parents' lives. Similarly, Chaurisse too comes to meet Dana on a different occasion. But clearly, they are unable to amend what has been broken.

Jones thus delves deep into the psyche of the children and how bigamy can affect their self-worth and identity. It illustrates the effect that abandonment has on children and how it moulds their perception of the world and human relationships. After *Silver Sparrow* was published, the author mentions that a lot of people came to tell her that s/he is a silver sparrow daughter/son, and in this gift of language to those who experience what she wrote about, in bringing a language for the illegitimate child, or a love child like Dana, Jones served the purpose of being a writer.

5.4.3 Class, Privilege, and Race: The psychological analysis of racism is noticeably absent not only in the studies of postcolonialism, but also in many other literary, sociological or cultural studies as extensions of postcolonial thought. This leads to a wide array of knowledge imbalances. Because human psychology is closely connected to and formed by the socio-political and historical forces of its circumstances, this aspect needs to be addressed. Most psychological research on racism is conducted within the United States more

because racism, which is not innate but learned and adapted, is deeply intertwined within the fabric of American society, often playing out in unrecognized ways. Black women have long argued about how psychiatrists often overlook the psychological impact of racism in the lives of racial minorities, and how they reflect oppressive governing social values.

Racism is structural, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized. Racial stereotyping and devaluing of non-White ethnicity are as extensive on an individual level as it is on an institutional level, thereby leading to further tension. There is a profound connection between racism, racial life events, and psychological health. Black women deal with stress in more complex ways than their White counterparts, for it is not as difficult for White women to seek support from others as compared to Black women. Research reveals that comparatively, Black women are more prone to undergo psychological sickness but also more averse to seek treatment owing to mistrust and concerns of discrimination and inaccurate diagnoses among Blacks. Studies also show that statistics in relation to Black women's depression rates are either absent or unclear. As per the findings of Dr. Angela Neal-Barnett, "Either these women could not admit to being stressed, or they were unaware they were stressed" (21). One of the main reasons in this uncertainty and in the misdiagnosing of Black women is due to the constant misinterpretation of their cultural differences and the biased approach of the practitioners on validating claims of biological differences and inferiority of Black women.

In addition, Black women were often brought up with the existing belief that they are strong Black women. Black women are no doubt greatly resilient, with the ability to rise against overpowering odds. Most Black women however envision that being vulnerable is weakness and failed to acknowledge their trauma because to acknowledge that they are stressed out or need help indicates that they are no longer the strong woman that they and society believe them to be, which only worsens their anxiety. As stated by Dr. Neal-Barnett, "The opposite of strong is weak, and to pair the words weak and Black woman is to create an oxymoron." In a study conducted by Dr. Neal-Barnett, the self-identified Strong Black Women did not admit to being stressed even in stressful situations, but the blood pressure and heart rate readings, which were being monitored, told a different story than what they said or filled out in a diary detailing their activities and emotions (20). Black women psychoanalysts and psychologists thus call for therapists to self-assess and recognize their biased treatment towards the marginalized. Jones stands in solidarity with these Black women in the demand to understand

and make conscious effort to attend to the experiences of the Black women that have extensively been neglected.

Jones grew up in an all Black middle class part of Atlanta, and also studied in an all Black women college that it was not until she went to Iowa that she realized she belonged to minority race. Growing up, all her teachers, doctors, and the people she knew were Black and so although she was aware of American racism, it felt like a myth to her for a very long time until she had to experience it herself. When writing her fourth novel, Jones initially resisted the title because she did not want to call it "An American Marriage." She felt like they were making her book something that was not hers because she has never been called an American without actually adding the prefix 'African' to it. She came to it only when a friend said to her that "This story is American," not just because "America incarcerates more of its citizens than any other western country," but also because "you are American" and that "If you want to reject this title, don't reject it because you don't feel you have a right to it, because you do" (https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/in-the-black=culture-here-in-the-us-we-have-a-crisis-of-masculinity-1.4199709). The marriage of Roy and Celestial is an American marriage in its truest sense because the possibility for the general Black Americans to be psychologically imperiled under distorted courtrooms has been and continues to be at higher stake.

Roy and Celestial were so in love before the tables were turned, and Roy was dragged from the hotel room of being accused of raping a woman about his mother's age, whom he encountered on his way to take ice water at the hotel. Twelve years sentence is what they gave him. Roy's mother used to work as a maid at the same hotel, Piney Inn, at a time when Confederate flags hung in the rooms. The two epochs that saw considerable increase of Confederate monument placements and flags in US history were firstly around 1900-1920 and secondly from the mid 1950s into the 1960s. Political journalist David Graham argues that "… the erection of Confederate monuments has been a way to perform cultural resistance to black equality" (qtd. in Neroni 52). The Confederate flags may have been removed from the hotel rooms, but the racist societal attitudes they represented live on.

Roy was almost born at the Inn, but Olive determinedly refused to let her son enter the world under a symbol of the Confederacy. But tragically, Roy is arrested in the same place. At the trial, Roy felt sorry for the complainant as she narrated her unpleasant story in the courtroom ruining his life. She spoke with awareness, "with a mouth quivering with fear but also with

hurt and rage" "as though she memorized her statement, using textbook terms to describe her own body and what had been done to it" (127). Being the gentleman his mother raised him to be, Roy carried her ice back to her room. Because of her injury, the woman had trouble operating the window and so he helped her with it, and also fixed the toilet for her. He even warned her about the doorknob that was let loose and asked her to double-check as he leaves. Who knew his little deed of kindness would cost him his youthful years in prison.

Twelve people in the court and not one of them believed Celestial's evidence that "Roy couldn't have raped the woman in room 206 because [they] had been together" (38). She was hoping for a scientist to come and testify about DNA, expecting a detective to burst into the courtroom for everybody to see that this has been a huge mistake, hoping to leave the courtroom with her husband, and telling people at home how "no black man is really safe in America" (39). Although it is demoralizing to have Roy's appeal denied by the state appellate court, it is not surprising given the racist system in America. One of the underlying ideas of the novel is that, one cannot separate personal from political. Everything that happens to Roy cannot simply fall under private life when the narrative is affected by larger public and systemic forces.

When Roy arrived in Atlanta, he felt so close with the city and felt that he had his whole life ahead of him. Like any Black Americans, he had all the hope that came with the civil rights and Black power benefits but gradually, the American justice system backed by systemic racism proved him wrong. Black men had been wrongfully imprisoned over the years. Celestial knew that it happens to people, "but by *people*," she had not the slightest thought that it could be them too. (46). Despite having the money, a competent lawyer, a perfect family, and his innocence, Roy is tried and sentenced to twelve years in a Louisiana prison. Jones offers us snapshots of how powerful the influence of a White woman's word can be over a Black man's life. Even outside constitutional racism, we find the issues of systemic racism and the ways in which Black men are psychologically jeopardized. The famous phrase "Look! Mama, a Negro!" by Fanon finds echoes in contemporary Black literature because such kinds of derogatory remarks are still apparent (*Black* 84). In Jones' narrative, we see this line reliving in the words of a little White girl whom Gloria encounters at the grocery store. Pointing at her, the girl remarked, "Look, Mommy! A baby maid!" (62). Racial prejudice thus still remains an immense struggle in most parts of America.

When Black students, Ikeria Washington and Layla Temple of West Point High School in Mississippi, were named 2021 valedictorian and salutatorian, there was fuming demand for a recount by White parents. The whole system has hence collectively failed the general public. Originally from Indiana, Ronalda has seen the depraved racism that exists in American culture and these ideas horrify her so much that they manifest themselves in the form of conversations like she has with Dana. When Dana showed Ronalda the brochures of Mount Holyoke, her reply was, "Are you sure you want to live up there with all those white people?" (151). This validates the obscure feelings that Blacks still carry. Although she agrees with Dana that it is a good school, she worries that her friend, who has lived in an all Black community all her life, knows nothing about what is it like to be Black. Ronalda is assertive in telling Dana, "You get out to Holyoke with those white people and you will see exactly what I mean" (151). Her thoughts about racism serve as a decisive factor of her alienation and warn her friend of the possible consequences.

Similarly, Big Roy was reluctant to send Roy at the ten day trip to Paris even though it was sponsored by Mr. Fontenot, because he knew that being the only Black kid on the trip, it will be his word against theirs if something goes wrong. Looking at the "NO SMOKING" signs at the restaurant, James whines that just when they took down the "No Coloreds" signs, they had to come up with a new way to keep him out (228). In connection to this, Raleigh says that "If it ain't one thing, it's another" (165). This clearly denotes the new ways of colonizing colored people in America.

One of the classic symbols of racism in Black women's lives is the skin and hair politics. In most of the fictional works of Black women, we find one or more incidents in which the dark-skinned girl wishes to be either white or light-skinned with good hair. Hair serves as a major symbol of choice and confidence even in Jones' *Silver Sparrow*. Throughout the novel, Jones uses hair to epitomize beauty. Dana, who had long, beautiful hair like her mother, was admired by everyone and consequently considered to be more beautiful than Chaurisse. Appearance is one chief cause of social anxiety for most Black women. Society is constructed in such a way that they are inclined to see themselves through the eyes of others and not their own. Dana was the Silver girl, and Chaurisse was considered unattractive. This is an obvious outcome of the valuation she was presented with as a child and which she internalized. This recurrent subject of the distorted standards for Black women's physical beauty in the writing of Black women indicates how deeply they have been affected by the

discrimination based on hair texture and skin color lines. Today, this social division has to a great extent lessened, but some vestiges are still apparent.

From the stories printed by Westcott and Venema, we see that many Black women were bullied because of their hair. While some had to wear wigs, some had people sticking things into their hair. Salons, according to Esme Allman, are "safe spaces for black women" that have to deal with racism on a daily basis (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-sh/my_hair_is_a_symbol_of_pride). As a child temporarily taken by caretakers when her mother fell ill, Denise Noble recalls the "traumatic" moment when her long plaits were cut off simply because "they didn't know how to deal with black hair" (ibid.). Her thick long hair was her identity as a Black woman and it was robbed from her.

Often in the social construction of beauty standards, Black women were a misfit because they neither were white, nor did they have straight hair. This interiorized race consciousness gave birth to Black women's insecurities in their own skin. As Dana describes, nobody called her mother anything but 'brown skin' owing to her ordinary Negro girl's face. This elucidates the revolutionary doll studies conducted by Kenneth and Mamie Clark of the unconscious impact that internalized racism has on Black children. Many Black women began to chemically straighten their hair, with all the burning sensation on the scalp, in want of achieving the beauty standard that they saw on TV and magazines. However, not everyone could afford this strange equalizer because it was highly priced and there laid the bigger anxiety.

With the increased demand and changing dynamics in hair styling, especially with the natural and artificial braid craze that came into vogue in urban communities, the mounting competition and culture clash within Black communities took notice. Ytasha Womack has incorporated this mounting stereotypical representation between African and African American braiders in her book *Post Black,* by taking stories printed by the *Chicago Reader.* "I didn't appreciate the signs that I saw Senegalese braiders hanging on their shops when they started coming over here—authentic African hair braiding," said the American-born celebrity braider Taalib-Din Uqdah in Washington, D.C., "as if what we'd been doing was fake" (Womack 62). Amazon Smiley, an African American braider in Chicago, had opened her business in the city in the late 1970s, and launched an international braiders association with a thousand members consisting largely of native-born Black braiders to show that they were capable braiders too. While the African stylists claimed that American-born braiders simply did not know how to braid, other American-born stylists in the story complained that African

braiders would not share their hair suppliers or trade tips. This is one example of intraracial racism at its unpleasant state.

Class and privilege are equally important in African American culture as race, but people often sideline the former. The reason, Jones articulates, is because in the course of segregation and violence, it becomes difficult to focus one's attention to the issue of "class difference between cousins" "when your father's being murdered" (https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/in-the-black=culture-here-in-the-us-we-have-a-crisis-of-masculinity-1.4199709). Jones demystifies the idea that the central conflict of Black lives is only understood to be racism, by concentrating *Silver Sparrow* on class and privilege more than race. Unequal privilege is something that the characters experience regardless of their class or status. For example, when Andre goes to Eloe to find Roy, he meticulously does the driving because he was well-aware that his nice car combined with the color of his skin makes him suspicious to law enforcement. After all, his Mercedes M-Class had gotten him pulled over a half-dozen times in the last three years.

Celestial's father has always reminded her about how lucky she was that she gets to "eat every day," and that nobody has ever called her "nigger" to her face (211). When he takes Celestial to the emergency room at Grady to show her how poor Black folks were treated when they got sick, Gloria intervenes saying, "This is how progress works" "You have it better than your daddy and I have it better than mine" and that their daughter should not be treated "like she stole something" (211). To be alive and be able to have food on the table was something we should all be grateful for, but the fact that Black parents had to remind their children of how lucky they were to live a normal everyday life without being incarcerated, highlights the barriers and unfairness meted against Black communities.

The escalating class divisions among Americans is one of the most important and overlooked factors. This discrepancy in privilege plagues African Americans so much that parents felt the need to change their children's upbringing. Roy for instance mentions that part of his plan as a parent was to never mention picking cotton. "I'm not going to remind my kids that somebody died in order for me to do everyday things" Roy says, because he does not want his kid sitting up in the movie theatre and be thinking about the fact that "sitting down eating some popcorn is a right that cost somebody his life." Celestial too was determined to never mention that "they have to be twice as good to get half as much" (8). As Jones opines, these conversations about class, privilege, and equality are "something that we need to learn" and be taught "to talk about a lot of things at once" (https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/in-

the-black=culture-here-in-the-us-we-have-a-crisis-of-masculinity-1.4199709). These various forms of distress on the Blacks' psyche are painstakingly addressed and challenged by Black women novelists, in addition to an assortment of other subjects that needed urgency, which went on to get featured in the literary canon formation.

5.5 Debunking Canon Formation by Black Women Novelists: African American Studies at large was not given due recognition as a genuine field by White institutional academies. Black studies had been established since the late nineteenth centuries, but it was only after the outburst of students' strikes in the late 1960s and early '70s that many universities came to recognize the omission of Black intellectuals and their groundbreaking contributions. We know today that the works of Black women writers are important chronicles of their survival, and a mirror of their social and historical realities. As this section critiques the question that revolves around canon formation, it also outlines the progression of Black women writers.

Introducing Black Studies into the academy saw an outbreak of subjugated knowledge that revolutionized how we look at society, culture, politics, and values. But while Black studies were gaining prominence in the fields of literature and academy, Black women writers were slow to progress as their voices were deliberately sidelined. Although the African American story has been told since the time of slavery, there has been an unfair and deliberate omission of the Black women by the literary establishment. The literary representations of women over the years predominantly came from the writings of men. Women writers were working with limited resources, and the scarcity of women-authored theories about women became the problem of those who were leading the way such as Kate Millet and Patricia Meyer Spacks. Black women articulated their creativity, regardless. Literature became an important vehicle for Black women novelists to express and protect gender politics that subjugated women, and literary analysis became an essential part of their methodology. The still many restrictions but also their new found freedoms urged Black women to write more than ever in the early modern age. They took the roles of both a creator and a reader of texts. From pamphlets to poetry and devotional literature to pragmatic books, Black women became active participants in literary culture.

From the means of women writers and early feminist activists, African American women novelists went on to create new works of art, while also contributing new ways in re-reading early texts. By the 1970s, the focal point moved to literary representations of women, by women writers, and for women readers. The American canon was largely biased given that

most of the texts displayed man's supremacy over women that were designed for male readers. As Judith Fetterley says, the barrier of American culture is not "the emasculation of men" but the "immasculation of women" (xx). She opines that as a reader, the woman must expand an alertness of such narrative strategies, and make conscious effort of being resisting. But Showalter went a step further advising feminist critics like Fetterley that "If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, and the limited roles women play in literary history," then "we are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but only what men have thought women should be" and therefore puts forth the idea to move on from this position ("Towards" 27). Showalter felt the importance of transforming the female reader's separation from male-authored texts to her identification with female-authored texts. Reader, author, and character thus came together in what Showalter saw as a shared "female subculture," in which the focus on women enabled new methodologies (28). This outlook aided in novelizing feminist criticism.

The Black person as a character, irrespective of gender, was part of American literature long before he even began writing himself. And it is an obvious recognition regarding how he was presented into the world of literature by over-mastering White writers written exclusively for Western audience. In the many decades that the Black individual has been hugely talked about, he was made nothing but a genre stereotype. Many writers refused to see beyond the skin colour and as such failed at projecting the true Negro in literature. To elevate the Negro into important position of hero or heroine in fiction was a far reach for many decades.

In *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (1992), Toni Morrison analyzes what she calls "Africanism" or obscure Black presence in canonical American literature. She confronts how the presence of Blacks in the US, which helped shape American culture and the meaning of American literature in numerous ways, has had no importance in the origin and development of American literature. Edward Said's 1993 work *Culture and Imperialism,* also draws attention to postcolonial "responses" to colonial discourse, issuing a call for what he terms "contrapuntal reading," a method that calls for reading of great canonical texts "to include what was forcibly excluded" and "to draw out, extend, give emphasis and voice to what is silent or marginally present or ideologically represented" (66-67). A lot of Black writers as such called for a deep-seated reinterpretation of the American canon.

Black women novelists were determined to do what it takes to debunk these forceful stereotypes and went on to create colored women protagonists. Women from the outset have been consumed with the subject of racial and gender prejudices that for many decades, this preoccupation limited their literary aspects. But what can come out of people that have long been held in physical and mental bondage. In recent years though, the Black artists cover humongous other subjects that need urgency, while still engaging in the subject of the past. Like Jones, a lot of the contemporary African American women writers are deeply committed to the modern Southern story.

Black women novelists began to address subjects which hitherto had been missing in their writings. They began to be subversive rather than being subservient. Many Black women writers began focusing on their physical and psychological oppression. Beginning with the first novel by an African American woman, *Our Nig* (1859) written by Harriet E. Wilson, the issues of slavery and the aspiration for freedom were addressed. *Iola Leroy* (1892) written by Frances Harper is also one of the earliest novels by a Black woman that addressed subjects such as abolition, interracial relationships, and women's education. Some of the groundbreaking novels of African American women include *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) by Zora Neale Hurston, *Jubilee* (1966) by Margaret Walker, *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and *Sula* (1973) by Toni Morrison, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970) and *The Color Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker. Most of these works centred on female protagonists and here was the shift of Black women from stereotypes to characters.

The writings of African American novelists hugely contributed to the expedition and aspiration in changing patriarchal structures and relationships of inequality within the private and public spheres. Their works were a classic of the American canon, which covered important periods of American history, and talked about the restrictions and barriers of Black women to their womanhood by some White feminists and Black people. They recounted gender inadequacies, and their battles through independence. The further republication of African American novels during the nineteenth-century that have long been unavailable, and the critical discourses on those recovered texts that have flourished since the 1970s, have not only led to a profound re-examination of traditional critical evaluations of the African American fiction, but also incorporated a large variety of novelistic genres. Black culture and experience, after all, was one of a kind that called for special methods of fictional representation. Black women fictionists did not allow the expectations of White audiences and institutions to distort their talent. As much as their works inform and instruct the general

public about moral agency within the structure of African American culture, they significantly also address and make visible the characteristics of Black women's ethical issues.

The literary and the political were definitely closely knitted. From Harriet Beecher Stowe to Louisa May Alcott, from Margaret Fuller to Sojourner Truth, African American women brought to light a discourse that recognized the freedom of the female subject. Women's liberation, in many ways, came through the analysis of literature. Kate Millett artistically related the sexual to the questions of politics and power, and in so doing, came up with the term 'sexual politics' that attracted key discussions. Fiction was a crucial means through which Black women engaged with politics in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The practice of consciousness-raising enabled Black women novelists to discuss the sexual and racial politics of their lives with the objective to generate new understanding and political strategies based on their personal as well as the general Black women's experience. Their writings not only critiqued literary history, but also challenged canonical thinking.

Tayari Jones speaks for all women even though her narratives invested in a particular race and class. Jones initially wrote *An American Marriage* from the point of view of the female protagonist, although centring the plot upon the unlawful judgment of her husband. However, some of the author's early readers did not favour this idea as they felt that the misery of the male protagonist, Roy, had been given less importance. They wanted more of Roy and so the author was, at one point, disheartened to continue the work because she did not want to make her male character so central. She wanted to pay more attention in exploring the outlook of femininity and domesticity, the feeling and response of a Black woman whose husband is wrongfully incarcerated. Not wanting to lose readers, while also not wanting to abandon her central idea, Jones began to rewrite the narrative, showing the multi facets of her female characters in a male-centred storyline. And so although the story has Roy as the first point-of-view character, it also has the narration of Celestial, along with Andre speaking in alternating chapters.

Jones recalls a conversation she had at a party with one of her Black male friends regarding her work. She told him that she was writing a novel about a woman whose husband is wrongfully incarcerated. "It's about a lot of things. And she doesn't actually 'wait' for him in the traditional sense," Jones tells her friend and he "jerked away." Simply visualizing the male character's story as anything other than the center caused him to physically shrink back.

To this, Jones questions if "it's that deep?" that she is "not even allowed to *think* about it?" (https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/03/by-heart-tayari-jones/556010). Black women writers like Jones went on to write about what needs to be addressed, questioned, and challenged, rather than what her publishers, agents, or the misogynistic society demanded. Having a disagreement with her editors over the ending of *An American Marriage*, Jones was not willing to publish the book at all. Jones did not write for her agents although she was having a hard time getting her work published after her third novel. And as we all know, the end result is historic.

Since the late twentieth century, there has been a profound decentring of the prevailing canon formation of the literary world. Hence, while no African American novelist had won the Nobel Prize for Literature before the mid-1980s, Toni Morrison comes first in 1993. Today, they are rightful recipients of many other prestigious awards such as Pulitzer and Nobel prices. Currently, much of the groundbreaking and most vibrant contemporary fiction is being produced by Postcolonial writers, whose works derives from and reflects upon the experiences of colonization and its aftermath. Among the zenith are the African American women fictionists with their assorted forms and techniques. The literary field that formerly included the texts of only some of the famous White novelists such as Jane Austen, George Eliot, Charlotte and Emily Brontë, and Virginia Woolf, began to overflow with a widespread and diverse collection of Black women authors.

The field of literature is in the midst of a resurgence of Black study today, with a large number of books and researches on Black Americans well undertaken, which continues to embark with promising writers. Today, university syllabuses across the world are inclusive of literary works written by Black women. Progressively more, not only the women writers but also the male writers today present female-centric novels, shedding light on the heroism of women. No longer unvoiced or unseen, Black women authors went on to create heroic and insubordinate women characters who exerted exuberance and power. Finally there was heroic composition of the female voice in literature.

5.5.1 Heroism in the Black Female Voice in Contemporary African American Fiction: It is not recent to see Black women redefining history and borders of gender roles. Since the time of slavery Black women like Harriet Tubman who led slaves through sticky situations to freedom have always been voicing out their aspirations. Today, there is a rich history of Black women taking charge in various fields and activities, with women such as Oprah

Winfrey, the first Black woman multi-billionaire and the greatest Black philanthropist in American history, Michelle Obama, the first African American woman to serve as the First Lady of the United States, Beyoncé Knowles, one of the world's best-selling recording artists, and Serena Williams, one of the greatest female tennis players that the world has seen.

Many women today are expressive and like to explore and experience with everything and do not shy away from opportunities. As Ytasha Womack says, "It's what our predecessors fought for. It's called choice" (162). Black women now emphasize more on self-expression and being themselves, a trait which was uncalled for in the past as they were demanded to be strong and overcome situations beyond their power, and sacrifice for the family and children. In the analysis of Jones' female characters, crucial questions of self and subjectivity come into sight. They find the need to deconstruct the post-Second World War ideology of woman as submissive wife, mother, and homemaker.

Although Morrison's *Song of Solomon* has Milkman as the male protagonist, the story does not only revolve around him, as Morrison craftily goes on to tell the story in a way that helps the reader understand male privilege, and in a way that women's stories are not sidelined. The women are often unseen and unheard to Milkman, but when he is obligated to look at Lena, Corinthians, and their mother Ruth, the reader cannot help but follow him. When Milkman is in conflict with Lena, women can feel the significance in the way she rebukes him by referring to his incapability and physical qualities, in the way she shames him and ultimately makes herself visible. This is further reiterated in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, when Janie, who is frequently pestered by her husband Jody about her age and appearance and who has always been submissive to his imperious nature, finally let loose her frustration in front of the store crowd and insults his sagging body reminding him that he is not getting any younger either. These, in addition to Dora's silent resistance in walking out on Freud's treatment, are scenes where the woman dares to cross borders and counter the powerful phallus. She says the unsayable, thinks the unthinkable, and does the undoable.

Celestial is in many ways a modern version of these characters, who defy social construct rules in her own way. This finds evidence in the way she thinks, act, love, and exert power. She wants to live the life she wants and not the one that has been laid down by her husband or the society. Roy needs Celestial to come see him in prison, to put money on his books, to keep their lawyer on his toes, to remind him of the man he once was. He tells her, "I feel like I need and need and need and it's wearing a hole in the fabric" (81). Roy needs her but

Celestial needs herself too. Roy writes to Celestial in one of his letters saying, “I’m innocent” and she writes back, “I’m innocent, too” (84). This sums up the novel’s main concept that we can be compassionate towards the victim, and make his voice heard, but not at the expense of having to represent his wife’s needs and ambitions as trivial.

Being married to an incarcerated man is a major sacrifice. Yet, Celestial does extremely well in balancing her personal and professional life. When Roy had a false impression concerning Celestial’s answer at her interview on the subject of her inspiration in making dolls, she makes him know that it was a special occasion for her. “Maybe it was selfish, but I wanted to have my moment to be an artist, not the prisoner’s wife” (67). Although Roy felt that his wife was ashamed to tell them that he was in prison, Celestial was aware that her possibility for improvement in her profession will be greatly weakened by having her product associated with penal complexity, by mentioning about her husband’s imprisonment. As a Black woman, Celestial had to make the White folks believe that she is an excellent doll maker and there was no room for errors.

Homer’s “The Odyssey” had a huge inspiration on Jones’ *An American Marriage*. Initially, Roy fell in love with Celestial’s independence, someone that he cannot control. However, after his arrest he wanted a more traditional version of his wife. She was expected the same as what Odysseus wanted from Penelope, submission. “Roy is like Odysseus” with “this huge challenge” and “he wants to find a clean home and a faithful wife waiting on him at the other end” Jones remarks (https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2018/02/16/585928927/an-american-marriage-redefining-the-american-love-story). But things have changed, and Celestial is no Penelope. These two women characters are a perfect quintessence of the transformation in gender roles over the years. Celestial is a modern woman who cannot just sit idly and wait for her man while she personally has a lot on her shoulder. She understands that she is not in the same distress as her husband nonetheless she too is in great pain and feels that she cannot continue to live this way. No one knows how long will Roy be behind bars, or whether he will ever be exonerated. As Gloria tells her, “You always run toward what you want… brilliant but impulsive and a tiny bit selfish” “But more women should be selfish” “Or else the world will trample you” (211). Celestial has endured so much to be married without actually being a wife for so long that she finally decides on leaving Roy. She was not abandoning him in his distress, as she will be there for him in ways she could render such as in continuing to keep his commissary up to date and visiting him as his friend, but she

could no longer go on to be his wife. When Roy goes to meet his wife for the first time after his release from prison, Roy could see that Celestial had made her choice.

Celestial is not the only woman who possesses heroic traits, who could voice out and exercise her choices. The female characters in *Silver Sparrow* are also unapologetically themselves. This is Jones' literary and political account of gender mobility. From a very young age, Dana is apparent to be a bold little girl, from the way she stands her ground, the way she protests when she wants to know or get certain things, or the way she fearlessly confronts Chaurisse and her mom. She is someone who delights in the thrill of taking risks. Despite the warning from her father, Dana tracks Chaurisse down and with time, the girls befriend each other. They grow into beautiful women with dreams and ambitions. The emerging of working-class women was one of the revolutionary vanguards in history. We find women having different ambitions in the narrative. This is a solid way of breaking stereotypical representations of women to be fixed only to breeding and taking care of the household. Ronalda was not worried about college applications. She had always had the desire to go to Southern University in Baton Rouge as she had long admired the school's marching band and hoped to be chosen as a Dancing Doll.

Although the novel is set in Atlanta, Georgia, during the 21st century, it covers three generations. Dana's mother initially had dreamt only about marriage. Hers was a generation that got women busy in learning to be a wife. Although she knew that so much had revolutionized for Black women like her and was grateful for these new opportunities, and even though she was the very first colored woman to hold the post as a Gift-wrap girl, it was not what she wanted to do as she never really dreamed of jobs. But time made her ambitious and sensible. When she was young, she took a few classes to learn travel-agenting, but somewhere in the mid-seventies she shifted to night courses at Atlanta Junior College to become a licensed practical nurse. With her babysitting pay, she also bought a new Commodore computer. It was always a moment of pride for her whenever she mentioned about this purchase with her own money.

Laverne, then, had the life she wanted with a husband and a daughter. She converted the garage of their house into a two-station beauty salon named 'The Pink Fox.' With the increased demand in hair styling, salons were at rise in America, with some women making four to five hundred dollars per head. The salon, with its two pump chairs, shampoo bowl, and three hooded dryers, represented a generation's worth of progress from the days when

Laverne sat on the front steps calling customers for her mother. By 1967, Laverne was making decent money renting a chair at a salon on Ashby Street. Although at one point she was worried about if she had to move out of the house, divorce her husband, and even lose the beauty shop, all because James did not know how to behave, she was not losing what she had fought hard for.

When Dana was about ten, her mother wanted her to enjoy the benefits of extra tutoring in science. When James was reluctant about it, Gwen confronts, "Why not? Is it because she's a pretty girl?" "I have read that parents don't make the same investment in the minds of their good-looking daughters" and these words had been a general stipulate for women at large (33). The reason for James' reluctance was not only because it would cause them money, but also because her other daughter was taking classes at the Saturday Academy. And one of the basic rules in the house was that, if Chaurisse was participating at any event, then Dana had to step aside. This was the consequence that Dana had to pay for being a love child. However, despite these restrictions and rules, Dana had her way of doing things, of voicing out. Towards the book's end, she cuts off her beautiful hair for which she had long been admired, in parts to demonstrate that she is not going to live for the preferences of men, and for society's beauty standards. As she narrates, "people say, that which doesn't kill you makes you stronger. But they are wrong" "What doesn't kill you, doesn't kill you… Sometimes, you just have to hope that's enough" (340). She had made her peace with everything that had happened to her, and with that hope she was determined to raise her daughter, Flora, differently from that of her own upbringing. A hope, that is profoundly built in the new millennial Negro.

5.6 The New Millennial Negro and The American Dream: Throughout history, it has been a far cry for African Americans to achieve the American Dream. There is not a doubt that even today there are scourges of racism, segregation, and dissension in the lives of African Americans and these are painful realities, but again not the only realities. In the new millennium, people have learned to invest in stocks, commencing their own business, transforming the arts world, and young Black professionals who have a largely entrepreneurial spirit and highly educated were on the rise. We see the rise in the number of Black businesswomen in America even amid the Covid-19 pandemic. As per Harvard Business Review, "17% of Black women are in the process of starting or running businesses" as compared to "just 10% of white women, and 15% of white men" (https://hbr.org/2021/05/black-women-are-more-likely-to-start-a-business-than-white-men).

Record has it that African Americans were America's highest educated immigrant group, with half of the population holding Bachelor's degrees. The often cited remark about Black Americans that there are more Black men in jail than in college has taken a different shift today. Womack has explored the argument put forth by the psychologist and journalist Michael Strambler in the Baltimore Sun that "as a whole, there are more black men in jail and prison than in college—but there are more college-age black men in college than in jail and prison" (19). Although the high school dropout rate for African American teens in some cities hovers around 50%, which is another disputed statistic, record numbers of African Americans by age twenty-five are high school graduates, and more African Americans attend college than ever before. Simply put, there are new dynamics redefining African American lives.

Barack Obama's Presidency in 2008 not only marked the nation's history for being the first Black American to win the election, but this achievement gave voice to a new era and changed the concept of leadership and possibility in America. Today in the face of new millennial Negro, we see the recognition of African Americans in leadership roles, their inclusions in the highest level politics, and also in finance and investing. Each year Black Enterprise identifies America's largest Black-owned businesses ranging from technology to manufacturing and from food services to banking. When Black Enterprise published their first ever annual report in 1973, the total combine sales for the Top 100 companies totalled a mere $473M. Four-and-a-half later, these Black-owned companies have a combined revenue surpassing $25B, and employing more than 70,000 workers nationwide (https://www.blackenterprise.com/be100s/top100/). Throughout the decades, many of the companies appearing on the lists had been household names producing everyday products. Today, we have a number of CEOs who collectively oversee billions in business assets and exert enormous power across the globe. Black Enterprise, which aimed at bringing attention to the resilience and the stature of Black businesses as a whole, remains a vital backbone to the American economy. All these groundbreaking roles redefine what African Americans are capable of achieving.

Celestial and Roy are the epitome of both the American Dream and the new millennial Negro. Roy is a young executive from Eloe, Louisiana, who, until his twelve-year sentence, had accomplished all his targets, such as a job that more than paid the bills, a four-bedroom house with a big lawn, and a loving and supporting wife. As a fine arts student concentrating on textiles and folk art, Celestial soon becomes a successful artisan, a doll maker. Celestial opens a retail business with her father, Franklin Davenport, and has a solo show in which she

exhibits all her works. Taking inspiration from the things she saw around her, she made her dolls that even won her a contest through the National Portrait Gallery and went on to get featured in an article in Ebony Magazine.

Similarly, although Laverne and James were born poor, they were soon living a comfortable middle class life. And they were determined to defend that comfort from anything. Dana has seen her father in his driver's outfit and a hat more than in his regular clothes. However, "when it's your own company and you picked the uniform yourself out of a catalog," "when it was ordered in just your size and didn't need to be hemmed or let out," and not worn to work for White people, then there was no disgrace in it because he was his own boss (28). James always insisted that Dana ride behind, and taught her to never touch the door handle under any circumstances, and to "*never, ever scoot*" because "*Black people need to become accustomed to luxury"* (118). Raleigh was good at photography too, and so James would tell him of the possibilities in making good money if they could bring his skills to the business. None of this would be possible twenty years ago.

Over the years, it has been hard to diagnose disorders on non-White skin owing to the fact that medical professionals were not trained to diagnose skin conditions on colored people. Today, we have individuals like the medical student Malone Mukwende, with his creation *Mind the Gap: A Handbook of Clinical Signs in Black and Brown Skin* as a guide to help other medical professionals diagnose clinical signs on colored people. We also have groups like The British Association of Dermatologists that have updated their undergraduate handbook that is inclusive of a wide range of skin types. Their latest version of the handbook has increased to eighteen images of non-White skin types from just one. Even when it comes to beauty lines today, there is unquestionably a more-inclusive range and shades of skin-care products. All these initiatives contribute in re-shaping the way cosmetology and medical education is being taught.

The appearance of a Black woman officer towards the end when Andre and Roy were having the big fight further highlights the changing dynamics in the historic nature in America. Roy's conviction that gets overturned five years after his sentence is another bright example of such changes. The court overruled his remaining sentence as "Gross prosecutorial misconduct" which basically meant that the prosecutors cheated and so, "in the interest of justice," Roy was released (90). This echoes George Floyd's recent justice declared by the Hennepin County District Judge. The accused, Derek Chauvin, was sentenced to 22.5 years in prison on charges of second-degree unintentional murder, third-degree murder, and

second-degree manslaughter for the murder of Floyd, a Black man. This decision by the court brought forth positive changes to the American discourse on race and justice. The murder of Floyd catalyzed global protests calling for reformation of US policing practices and the systematic treatment of Black lives. Not only has justice been served through the imprisonment of the White police officer, but the Pulitzer Prices, which are the most prestigious awards in American journalism, also conferred a special award to Darnella Frazier, the Black woman behind the spurred protests against police brutality, for daringly filming the murder of George Floyd.

Furthermore, America today has the most diverse administration in history with Karine Jean-Pierre as the first Black woman in thirty years to address White House press corps on behalf of the US president in the White House briefing room. From having a dream to living the American Dream, whatever little and big achievements that African Americans have achieved, is accredited to nothing but their persistence, patience, and hard work. Who would have thought that Celestial's father, a high school chemistry teacher, would land upon a discovery that would make him go from being a barefoot boy from Alabama to the mad-scientist millionaire he is today. As he called for a broad restructuring of American society in his first nationally televised address to a joint session of congress, President Joe Biden remarks, "We have to prove that democracy still works, that our government still works and we can deliver for our people" (https://youtu.be/M-AqSYODI-Y). The way Black victims are given legal justice today, the way Juneteenth is established as the first federal holiday since 1983, in commemoration of the end of slavery in the US, are all steps toward deliverance, toward achieving the American Dream.

On learning that his life is ruined, that he has lost his car, job, and his wife, Roy is enraged. In his desire to repossess what he has lost, he hurts himself and the people around him. Just as the author says, "the question of the book isn't who gets the girl? The question is, how do we all live together?" (https://www.latimes.com/books/la-ca-jc-tayari-jones-20180309-htmlstory.html). Roy realizes that he has lived his life "through the vast generosity of women" and in his self-introspection, he is finally able to find his way. Even if Roy settles with Davina, and Celestial with Andre, we find that they both keep exchanging letters, informing each other about their lives. At the end, we find that Roy has found a home in Davina and at peace with his new life. "This is home. This is where I am" he writes to Celestial (306). One of Jones' unique skills is the fact that she employs the point of view of the central characters, and in so doing, the readers gets to grasp their emotions to the fullest,

and understand why they do what they do. Through her characters Jones reveals how self-examination is something that demands urgency.

Reduced to subservient marginality, Black women were assigned a fixed place as an inferior species of humanity. Black women writers, in their critical and expansive literary works, felt the need to challenge and analyse the complexities of gendered subjectivities. We have seen how one's knowledge flanked by psychology and race can help people in better understanding of cultures and differences. Part of these inadequacies is caused by racism in which White women were non-inclusive of their Black counterparts, and sexism where many psychologists believed that gender is insignificant in treating emotions as made clear in the Western dichotomy in constructing feminine and masculine meanings as emotional and rational respectively. Black feminists and women writers went on to build counter discursive thoughts against traditional feminism and canon formation in order to construe a more flexible and open-ended construction of women's gender identities, sexual choices and life destinies. They have audaciously redefined history, and to this day, contemporary Black women writers stringently work towards eradicating any biased borders and any sense of discomfort to their social, cultural, political, and psychological existence.

Although history has not been kind to Black women's writing, they nonetheless acquired far greater visibility as both creator and consumer of texts. It is only when academies, leaders, citizens, and society at large self-introspects and examines the self, and builds empathy by rooting out the unconstructive 'isms' of life that mankind will witness the true essence of freedom. As a way out from the long-term consequences that racism, sexism, and classism have on the lives of Black women, and on African Americans at large, Jones stalwartly believes that it is imperative to change the echelon of psychoanalysis that is more inclusive of differences, and changing the perspective of binary oppositions, as well as incorporating evenhandedness, empathy, and respecting multiplicity. Above all, Tayari Jones has portrayed through her narratives that constructive change is always possible.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Postcolonial countries have witnessed massive transformations over the years even amid the myriad forms of upheavals and violence, which led to different interpretations and representations. In contemporary America, while some were hopeful of the American Dream, others were drained of fighting the same cause in a different light. In the course of such varying estimations, this study has circumspectly examined both sides of the coin to present a non-bias outlook. This is achieved by taking into account the select contemporary African American novelists, and critiquing their texts through the rubrics of Postcolonialism.

We have seen over the years that critics have tried to identify connections between the two fields of postcolonial theory and African American culture, which helped in understanding colonialism not only as a means of taking control of land and its people, but of appropriating the means of identity. Making use of the key concepts and ideas formulated by major Postcolonial exponents such as Homi K. Bhabha, Edward Said, Gayatri Charkravorty Spivak, Frantz Fanon, Ania Loomba, Leela Gandhi, Robert Young, Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin, and Gareth Griffiths in connection to the various socio-political, psychological, cultural and historical aspects that constitute the very fabric of African American lives, the preceding four chapters have been examined.

To do away with color prejudice, which African Americans have been struggling with, is long overdue. As it has been studied, the system of racism unjustly holds colored people back from various opportunities, in addition to the great toll it takes on their psycho-social wellbeing. This study strives to refocus the consciousness of African Americans, the way these groups of people are perceived and represented not only in the everyday life but also in the academy, through the select revolutionary narratives of James Baldwin, Colson Whitehead, Yaa Gyasi and Tayari Jones, breaking new literary grounds and bringing new possibilities for the Black community at large. These writers' determined ways in eliminating the imbecility and inequity based on color and gender, introducing subjects that were considered taboo, psychological awareness, new forms of trauma and identity crisis, as well as enlightening people about African American literature and culture have made a substantial contribution to American literature at large.

Literature has been a powerful tool for African Americans to counter prevalent racial stereotypes, to reinforce self-awareness, to call for resistance, and advance Black pride. We

have seen that from the late colonial period until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861, the writings of African Americans generally took the form of autobiographical narratives in the form of slave narratives that contributed to the propaganda of the abolitionist movement. Not only has African American literature luminously contributed to American literature and culture today, but has also contributed to world literature in general. This transformation has been recorded at all the levels of reading, writing, publishing, and criticism, supported by a number of national and international awards.

As this study has demonstrated, one cannot sideline the assorted impact that the historical, social, political, psychological, religious, and cultural movements and events had in the discussion about the literature of African Americans. These experiences are apparent to have brought out the best in the Black writers of its time and also had profound consequential impact on the writers that followed. The confrontational socio-political activism provided an important context for understanding the developments in the writings of African Americans. The various liberation movements raised the consciousness of many African Americans about the relationship between imperialism, colonialism, and racism. It is here that the Blacks began to question the importance of voicing their grievances that led to the abolishment of various segregationist practices and bettered the conditions of African Americans in many aspects of life. These achievements nonetheless have been hard fought.

Beginning with the tradition of orality and slave narratives, we have seen how African Americans led to the expansion in the field of literature. Slavery is the historical force that continues to dictate contemporary racial politics and so these traditions are extensively used by the contemporary writers in addition to their distinctive skills. As Rushdy has stated, the modern-day narratives of slavery have consciously asserted an important space in American fiction “for acts of courage, expressions of love,” and the vast manifestation of “cultural ingenuity by those people whose enslavement did not cause them to lose sight of their humanity” (“The neo” 104). The presence of race-based discriminations in African American literature is recurrent as a result of a community that is profoundly rooted in the experiences of racial hatred, subjectivity, slavery, violence, and trauma. The emphasis of writers is seen shifted toward recounting the individual and racial progress with time, but the narratives of slavery is manifested even to this day.

Colonialism, although not always in its traditional essence, has been the focal point of African American literature and this is because of the enduring political and cultural forces of colonialism that they have experienced. In contemporary times, colonialism takes form in

many other structures that led to the coinage of neo-colonialism, as narrativized by the fictionists in this study. Racism in the United States emerged as a key political and social issue, and amid a hostile White world, Blacks profoundly turned to Christian faith and discourses for a place of safety and an emotional sense of balance and self-assurance. Church has always been an important factor for African Americans in withstanding various forms of trauma throughout history, and this is one significant subject that the select novelists elucidate.

In order to present the complete segments of Black life authentically, contemporary writers connected their characters' stories to the historical, aesthetic, emotional, and intellectual values of the Black community. One clear distinction of the contemporary period has been the expansion of outlook, and their development of diverse forms and genres to put this outlook in the picture. The contemporary African American writers were at ease to discuss the less explored subjects, to demystify stereotypical demonstration, and extensively made use of Black protagonists as a mouthpiece of the greater Black Americans. Contemporary African American novel that continues to hold centre stage is not limiting as it puts forth a variety of modalities, typically subject to a deconstructive approach. Reading Black experiences became an essential standpoint to re-interpret the past in addition to the American culture and society. While their novels raised questions about the possibility of recovering from the history of slavery, they also challenged the prospect of moving forth from its effects.

The Atlantic slave trade, the apartheid system in South Africa, in addition to the colonial rule of Africa, are some of the most abhorrent institutionalized racism in the world history that left an indelible mark on the African Americans at large. This is largely because every African individual was placed into a distinct racial condition and categorization, with every bit of their life controlled by White extremists, specifying whom to marry, where to live, which occupation to hold, and what to achieve. Physical, psychological, and emotional torment was inevitable as the power that the White authorities exercised over the Blacks was a totalitarian regime that used torture as an organized method for social control. The literature of the Blacks as such traces the egregious act and psychic destruction that colonialism left in the African culture.

One undeniably notices a difference in the treatment of fiction after the emergence of Richard Wright into the African American literary scene, with James Baldwin breaking new literary

ground with his iconoclastic explorations of various racial and social issues. Although labelled as an alarmist owing to his iconoclastic stance, Baldwin did not put an end to his concern for the improvement of human conditions. Black consciousness was one of the driving forces in the proliferation of African American literature, and the expressions of Black power intensely find voice in the works of Baldwin. Addressing new questions and presenting new possibilities for the Black community, Baldwin served as a spokesperson for the communal struggle of African Americans, and distinctively deconstructed any stereotype against marginalized people, represented here are the gay, colored, and economically underprivileged individuals. Baldwin's intellect combined with the basic question of humanism remains his most significant legacy worldwide. He not only brought awareness to racial, political, social, and sexual complications but also questioned various thoughts and ideologies that need to be addressed.

As studied in the second chapter, Baldwin brought to light the important responsibility that writers bring to bear in the growth of the individual and society, in his explorations of a broad range of subjects and themes. Baldwin used his own choice of words in transcending the common themes of African American literature, and through his fictional works such as that selected for this study *Tell Me How Long The Train's Been Gone* and *If Beale Street Could Talk*, Baldwin has laid emphasis on the process of action rather than fixed outcome. Baldwin's thoughts were clearly not only engaged around the struggle of Black men to survive in a White world, but also the far more serious question of the self. He made it possible for people to discern that American society can come to peace with its history.

Baldwin's art is a metaphoric representation of American realism, and in his study of race and chauvinism, imprisonment, White privilege, homosexuality, as well as inter-racial relationships in a multicultural society, the select fictional texts have endowed with a suitable substantiation of the way things are. His narratives have skilfully accounted the failure of Western multicultural nations with ethnically diverse people to peacefully co-exist, by looking at the social structure on which African Americans were based during the 1960s and '70s in America. This study has also examined the author's fictionalization of his concerns on physical imprisonment during the period 1968-73, and also demonstrated his long considered thoughts on psychological, emotional, and intellectual imprisonment. The conception of religious hypocrisy and Christian faith that is apparent in most of his fictional works is also looked at, in addition to the representation of the despairing existence of thousands of colored people though the horrifying circumstances of Harlem experienced and characterized by the

Black families. Baldwin provides a contrapuntal reading, enabling the emergence of colonial arguments that might otherwise remain hidden. Baldwin's literary works not only concentrated on the changing dynamics of the continuing severe racial and identity crises but also presented possibilities to cope with such eventualities. His works explored the endless potentials of language, of thought, of spirituality, and of mankind.

While Baldwin unfailingly reflected Black social reality in America, Colson Whitehead has looked at the traumatic experiences of transgenerational African American community and the scores of unfulfilled promises of the present America in his realistic representation of the American chattel slavery. Considering the trauma of slavery that had impacted thousands of Africans, the third chapter has examined the African American experience through the analysis of postcolonial trauma theory. This examination is substantiated in the author's integration of an entire cultural experience into the epic journeys of his characters in *The Underground Railroad* and *The Nickel Boys*. In connection to the postcolonial trauma studies, Whitehead called for an urgent need to decolonize trauma studies by distinguishing the universalized contexts of traumatic events, and considering the particular kinds of traumatic suffering that takes place, as well as the ways in which it is narrativized. Debunking the Eurocentrism of Trauma studies, Whitehead has created a new way of examining the trauma of African Americans by focusing on their experience specifically.

This study has explicated the many forms in which the trauma of slavery is carried. Following the tradition of the neo-slave narrative and with an emphasis on the historical Underground Railroad, Whitehead has brought to light the lasting impact of slavery by addressing how African Americans still fall victims to the prejudice, sadism, and segregation of race. It is not surprising to see slavery taking central spot in African American creativity due to the lasting impact it had upon the Black lives. Whitehead has alluded to the relentless mental trauma that the characters struggle with, in order to move past the darkness that they have physically escaped. Despite umpteen efforts, both the Nickel boys and the slaves at the plantation find themselves haunted by the conditions of the past, such as slavery, either resulting from their own experience or from their collective memory, because the present is deeply shaped by one's past, community, and the society in which h/she lives in.

In these descriptions, the readers get to re-examine the oppression and trauma that has been enacted upon colored people throughout American history. All these experiences are a symbol of the marginalized Black people who fall short to recuperate from traumatic past as a

result of being victimized by the end number of discriminations in America. The reason that the African American populace are generally traumatized is because marginalization is a deep-seated trauma in itself and they have been marginalized in varied forms for many centuries. The dominance of Whites over their lives has caused untold havoc re-enacting in various contemporary practices. In contemporary times, the traces of colonialism in the lives of colonized subjects are found in their grievances and unhealed traumas.

In the formulation of the concept of home in antebellum and postbellum America, Whitehead has shed light on the feeling of homelessness faced by the African Americans who have been othered in the United States' historical narrative. Even though the concept of home differs in both the narratives, we find that the characters must flee from bloodthirsty humans through an endless labyrinth of dreadful impediments in order to belong. Through their own movement in the narratives, they witness the pluralized African American experiences, and bring together their own history of forced relocation.

Derived from history in every respect, Whitehead has created a fiction to make his statement of the physical, sexual, psychological, historical and cultural trauma inflicted on African Americans, in addition to the unflinching nature of American narcissism. Whitehead has also revealed anew the utter importance of discussing slavery and a reassessment of slavery's history in his talk about the millions of men who have been ruined by trauma, inferiority complexes, anxiety, hopelessness and debasement through the select classic works. Whitehead has thus taken multiple events and transformed them to fit his narratives, and in so doing, he arrives at the function of postcolonial trauma theory in decolonizing the traditional trauma studies.

This study has also examined how defining the aftermath of colonial trauma only in terms of its limitations becomes problematic for postcolonial literary studies, because the premises of social activism, recovery, and resilience are left ambiguous. However, while Whitehead has talked about racial progress of African Americans by presenting an optimistic and realistic end to his narratives, he has also addressed their restrictions. Thus, Whitehead remains both hopeful and distrustful of the future on account of the fact racial bigotry still run rampant throughout American communities. Although this is an unquestionable part of the American reality, it is not the only reality as substantiated from the changing dynamics of African American identity and race in a changing society, which has been illustrated through the

postcolonial psychoanalysis of Yaa Gyasi's texts *Homegoing* and *Transcendent Kingdom* in the fourth chapter.

This study has examined how the author sought a more extensive foundation for African American identity than that imposed by slavery and the United States. The most lasting legacy of colonialism is conceivably psychology in its enormity, resulting in the absolute division of the colonized people. The black-white relationship has created a huge psycho-existential complex that Black writers aim to debunk through psychoanalysis. Gyasi has articulated how a proper understanding of the psychological issues behind race and racism becomes viable to constructively revolutionize a society filled with racial prejudices. Through the works of various psychoanalysts such as Derek Hook and Sheldon George, this study has looked at how both traditional and critical psychologists and psychoanalysts have sidelined the study of the psycho-political constancy of racist desires. Without engaging with the ideas of the bodily, sexual and the unconscious, the various aspects of postcolonial racism remain unchecked, resulting in the failure to tackle with the psychological dimensions underlying colonial supremacy. Many forms of postcolonial study have also discarded the psychological analysis of racism and colonial power. One of the greatest contributions to postcolonial and race theories by postcolonial psychoanalysts as such, has been the employment of the psychoanalytic formulations to address the social injustices and bring about resulting changes.

Memory undeniably has a bearing to a person's identity, and both the narratives of Gyasi benefit from this analysis on memory as evidenced from the characters' identities, which are largely affected by their past. Through their narratives, postcolonial African American fiction writers challenge the notion of identity as fixed and confined to certain geopolitical borders. Gyasi has focused on the experiences of diaspora, alienation and psychological fragmentation that colonialism stimulated within colonized people, including those who dwell in their homeland, as well as those who reside in the host country. The memory of slavery is central to the formation and collective representation of African American identity, however with that being said, the identity of an African American should not be limited to this memory alone and this is what Gyasi expounds in her narratives. Postcolonial studies aims to reconstruct a collective identity through collective representation, evoking the need to narrate new groundwork which includes reinterpreting the past as a means toward reconciling present or future needs. Orality, as observed by Najita, "provides a language to articulate a new mode of belonging based upon genealogy that leads out of and beyond the traumatic past" and even

"through and out of colonization" (23). Gyasi clearly honours the struggles of the past to give meaning to the present. Making use of ancestral storytelling, she has presented coming-of-age characters, who although have been deeply affected by their ancestors' experiences of slavery, these do not limit the potential for achieving new horizons.

Colonization purposely disintegrated traditions, shattered the unity of families and society, which caused immense dysfunctionality and various psychological issues. Fragmentation, as such, had been an inevitable part of postcolonial African American identity ever since the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade. As is well known, this resulted from the ignorance and lack of focus on the part of the racist White authorities into the investigations for the innumerable transgressions committed under colonialism.

Beginning with the slave narratives, African American literature indisputably testifies individual and communal traumas that continue to influence the world of literature up to this day. Their literature is an endeavour to represent the fragments, fissures, and the long silences of trauma and memory. "This process" in the words of Shane Graham "is not merely therapeutic" but also "constitutes a highly political act, a blow struck against a regime that systematically inflicted trauma to silence its opponents" (224). This study has elucidated the sense of misfit felt by the mulatto figure because of their biracial identity, as symbolized through the immigrant characters in the narratives that are faced with a sense of psychic and social alienation as much in their home as in the foreign country. Making extensive use of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* in connection to Gyasi's characters, it has been observed that Black children, being exposed to various fallacies and discriminations, experience a psychological trauma that becomes inherent to their individual behavioural personality. One constructive possibility as seen through Gyasi's narration in helping those ethnically marginalized people overcome such trauma and cultivate a healthy psychological relieve is building a strong connection to their culture and history.

Gyasi has shed light on the modern forms of slavery taking shape in contemporary times, and also laid bare the problems of language, and civilization at large, which remains a central concern of postcolonial studies. Like Baldwin, Gyasi too has talked about the intense wrestle between science and religion in the lives of African Americans. While there are many surface-level indicators of racial progress, there are also existing powerful stereotypical practices that dictate Black identity that have significantly impacted not just their cultural identities but also their psychological wellbeing. Through various factors of racism such as

the colour hegemony over the other, failed inter-racial relationships, issue of language, the determining of Blacks' identity through their blackness and associating everything with whiteness, the Blacks' struggle for human existence and their desire to be like their White colonizers by putting on a white mask, Gyasi has effectively covered America's multifaceted racial injustices and substantiated the generational ordeal of the Black communities.

This study has closely examined the differences between implicit bias and racism, which really applies to the current American situation. Taking Dr. Perry's illustration of the hierarchical organization of the human brain further in this chapter, it has been observed that an individual or a group can have genuine anti-racist beliefs, but those same persons can still enclose implicit biases, resulting in trivial racist jokes, comments or behaviour. As such Dr. Perry has explicated the necessity in understanding the "sequential processing in the brain" "to load the lower parts of our brain with all kinds of associations that create our worldview" (236-240), which is imperative in the understanding of one's own mental health and that of the others. This study has also confronted the African American problem of representation, because although they were unified by forced subjugation, their discussions concerning proper representation were varied. African Americans were for a very long time represented on account to slavery as inferior beings, but the advent of education and media along with the intensifying Black Consciousness enabled them to represent themselves in a different light as shown in this chapter. The African American experience thus characterizes the potential to surpass its historical conditions and create something distinctive in world history.

Yaa Gyasi has conscientiously looked at various subjects through the daily life experiences of her hybrid characters, in their quest to make a home, and hopes of achieving the American Dream. The author has accounted the generational psychic ordeal among diasporic communities, while also presenting their intense psychological wrestle between science and religion. Taking Postcolonial trauma theory further in this chapter we see how narrativization of trauma permits insight into the details of colonial past as a way to integration of the traumatic memory. Amid existing racial differences, Gyasi has drawn attention to confronting complicity of her race with White supremacy, and also overcoming psychological turmoils.

Amid the mounting racial tension, the blending of postcolonialism with psychology and contemporary feminism makes conscientious effort in getting rid of racism. Tayari Jones has voiced out gender prejudices in various forms through her female characters. Amid the exclusion of Black women in myriad areas of life, we also see their exclusion in the field of

psychological research. Black women's oppression is severe as it is trifold however the discarding of their psychological anguish dwindles the value of mental health treatment that they need. Black women therefore advocated the urgent demystification of this non-inclusive body of research. Although the core political strategy of feminism remains the same, contemporary feminism has called for the importance of being conscious to differences in achieving their ultimate goal. The psychological analysis on African American women has been examined in the fifth chapter through the American penal and justice system, the subject of bigamy, as well as class, privilege, and race.

In her application of the concept of borders as not just a dividing line between countries but also in the many ways where differences across the world lift power differences, Jones has redefined the history and borders that had long subjugated Black women. This chapter has looked at the emergence and progress of African American women writers who developed counter discourses of the tri-dimensional oppressions of capital, race, and gender through Jones' select narratives *Silver Sparrow* and *An American Marriage*. Both these texts are coming-of-age that provides various forms and practices in relation to wider socio-economic developments of African Americans in America. In writing an up-close look at marriage, bigamy, race, erroneous incarceration of Black men and its effects on women and family, Jones has articulated the everyday challenges faced by women inside and outside of home, while also looking at the intimate association of the personal and the public by placing the personal details of the lives of the characters within the larger social and political forces in contemporary America. In the narration of the subject of bigamy, Jones has principally illustrated the toxicity that abandonment and neglect has especially on children, and how it moulds their perception of the wider world and human relationships.

Through the various ideas promulgated by mainstream feminism and by postcolonial and Black feminism specifically, Jones' narratives have conveyed patriarchal power structures where women were denied the positions and opportunities given to men, and how women challenged stereotypes and debunked the various borders that had been set for a very long time by colonialism and patriarchy. Feminist literary criticism helps to look at literature in a different light such as to examine the language and symbols that are used in literature, and how they are gendered, as well as to consider how the portrayal of female characters reinforce or undermine sexual stereotypes. With key concepts such as Womanism, Intersectionality, and Misogynoir, Black feminists have massively contributed in reclaiming Black female sexuality. Misogynoir comes in various forms and Jones has given ideal

elaboration, such as in the commodification of women's body, the police violence against Black women, the perception of Black women as threatening and aggressive when they speak up for themselves, in the stigmatization of women, and in their non-inclusiveness by male classmates and co-workers. Black women have made groundbreaking contributions to the field of psychology even in the face of extensive intersectional oppressions, presenting their distinctive perspectives and proficiency to understand and enhance the world and this study has closely examined the select narratives through a psychoanalytic feminist perception based on the diverse works of these Black women.

Drawing on the subjects of gender roles in her writings alongside race and class, Jones has provided a Black woman's point of view by presenting female-centric narratives that dynamically stood against patriarchy and male dominators. This study has essentially accentuated the Black feminists' principle that one cannot recognize the experiences or challenges of the Black women by only looking at the experience of Black men. As a result, Black feminists stressed the importance of looking at the unique experiences of Black women in particular. Tayari Jones speaks for all women although her narratives invested in a particular race and class. Her narratives reiterated the profound connection between racism, racial life events, and psychological condition. Jones stands in unison with the Black women psychoanalysts and psychologists in the demand to make conscious effort to attend to the experiences of the Black women that have extensively been neglected, and also with the general feminists in building a different and fairer world by raising both the sons and daughters in a different way. It is not recent to see Black women redefining history and borders of gender roles, and Jones has given a lucid presentation of the heroism in the Black female voice.

Throughout history, it has been a far cry for African Americans to achieve the American Dream. Undoubtedly, there are scourges of racism, segregation, and dissension in the lives of African Americans even today and these are painful realities, but again, not the only realities. As a way out from the long-term consequences that racism, sexism, and classism have on the lives of Black women, and on African Americans at large, Jones stalwartly believes that it is imperative to change the echelon of psychoanalysis that is more inclusive of differences, and changing the perspective of binary oppositions, as well as incorporating evenhandedness, empathy, and respecting multiplicity.

Looking at the advantages and disadvantages that the African American writers possess by virtue of being Black, there is an inevitable resentment found in their works resulting in militancy, hatred for race and self, or hatred for the whole of American society, which can effect in presenting a blind eye and a deaf ear for the good things enclosed in it. There is also the undeniable repetitive subject matter of the pervading evil of racism that often overshadows their artistic excellence. With regard to the characterizations, the characters normally become the mouthpiece of the creators in the function polemicizing that can make them less appealing owing to their limited-sidedness. Consumed by the monotonous demonstration of injustices meted out to them, African American novelists fall short to liberate other sensitivity such as humor or romance in their characters. In their aim to represent the utmost truth, some of the writers fall short to constitute art.

However, the African American writers provide a comprehensive insight of social reality, with real problems and conflicts far from most of the American literature that is overladen with pompous artistic presentation that is meant for audience to be entertained. The historical, psychological and emotional force with which they bring their narration to light is commendable. In spite of the inevitable presence of resentment in the narration of the African American novelist, his social experience is no doubt an artistic gain. To be part of a society where there are recurrent problems of racism, his experience cannot entirely be imaginary. There is strength and profundity in this Black realism, enabling the writer to put into words the various human afflictions without actually romanticizing them. In addition, these writers have, in the contemporary times, incorporated new themes that are far from the stereotypical representations of African American literature that have limited them to fixed subject matters. African-American-authored texts have not only inspired humongous individuals that have been marginalized and subjugated to authenticate their grievances with audacity over the years, but have also generated the indefinite possibilities of mankind to rise beyond misfortunes and face new challenges.

All the mishaps, injustices or successes that occur in the narratives are not mere fiction. Everything that happens to the fictional characters that have been studied cannot simply fall under private life when the narratives are significantly affected by larger communal and systemic forces. The remark made by Gifty about the various conversations that Raymond and his friends had, ranging from prison reform to climate change, the opioid epidemic to many other such subjects, becomes relevant about African Americans in America. She

arguably remarked, "*What problems do we solve by indentifying problems, circling them*?" (*Transcendent* 72). Although the boys considered it important to have an opinion, Gifty saw no point in all their talks. Clearly, the talk about racism has been on for ages but the question that remains is, how far has the matter been resolved? Because the troubles of race undeniably scuttle deep in American culture, institutions, and national psyche even in contemporary times and the deep-rooted cultural traumas are still very much present among African Americans. And this is just one aspect of the many negative isms in America. Nevertheless, present day America is also apparent to be more inclusive of differences, as can be seen reflected in the most diverse administration in American history, a growing number of Black businessmen and women in America even amid the Covid-19 pandemic, justice being served to Black victims such as that represented by George Floyd in real life and Fonny and Roy in the fictional narratives, and most importantly, the African Americans are now being part of achieving the American Dream, which would not have been possible twenty years back. Therefore, it comes to which side of the African American beliefs are we laying a bet on, such as that suggested by Whitehead who is optimistic yet doubtful of America or that of Jones who is self-assured of a better America.

Today the general acceptance of racial discrimination has abated as a result of education and morality but as this study has shown, the unconscious racist *jouissance*, and the connection of blackness with it is blatantly visible that remains one central sign of the severe racism in the United States. Through the interweaving of counter-discourse, resistance, memory, race, and psychology, the select contemporary African American fictionists authenticate the notion that until this link is disconnected, racial discrimination will continue to have a structuring role in the social order, because the unconscious investment is the primary mainstay of racism's intransigence. The variety of subjects that these authors have expounded work beautifully in the narratives with a message about the blatant inequity against African Americans in America resulting in their diverse social, political and psychological impediments, while also bringing in new possibilities and confrontations. These authors have necessitated the development of close association, empathy, of transcending borders and changing the language and consciousness of the people by shedding light on the areas rendered invisible, for the community to move towards a more evolved world.

Exploring the various strands of Postcolonial concerns, this study has been conducted to closely critique the lives and experiences of contemporary African Americans through the select narratives, but because these narratives are multifaceted that extend over large areas

and subjects, it cannot be limited to one single theoretical approach. Therefore, the subjects discussed can be expanded through other forms of literary theory and criticism. African American studies have had a widespread development from postcolonial studies, and is related only in a complex way, and therefore it is open to further discussions. It can also be expanded within the frame of Postcolonial studies as it is in itself an expansive field. Taking Crenshaw's concept of Intersectionality in the fifth chapter for instance, this study has specifically focused on the African American women, but it can be further expanded because intersectionality is something that everybody experiences. Persons with disability, or people who are homosexual, are some classic examples. Furthermore, the research has been conducted using descriptive qualitative method and a close textual reading, but it can be expanded using alternative methods.

Blending interpersonal dialogues and various historical and socio-political documents, James Baldwin, Colson Whitehead, Yaa Gyasi, and Tayari Jones have lucidly illuminated some of the most inhuman practices in post-colonial American society, and made important literary contributions for social ramifications. Despite some of their qualms resulting out of their subconscious traumas caused by the past experiences, these writers stalwartly believes in doing away with the 'isms' of life and in witnessing an enhanced America. Although these authors have differed on some grounds such as in their characterization, time period, or in the ways of amplifying their thoughts, their narratives are unanimously a representation of Black excellence at its finest, and a purpose to normalize the notion that Black men and women have a right to present the full gamut of human emotion. What these writers share in common is the importance of becoming culturally sensitive, to be inclusive of people that are different from one's own culture and people that may challenge one's preconception. Another important aspect that these writers unanimously share is the impact that adversity has on individual's psyche, and how the sense of connectedness ameliorates in counterbalancing such adversities. They have demonstrated the urgency of paying attention to African American men and women with their distinctive queries, in attaining racial consciousness and thereby incorporating accurate policies for a more evolved world.

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