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**IDENTITY ISSUES AND RACIAL INTERACTION
IN ALEX LA GUMA'S *A WALK IN THE NIGHT* (1962)
AND RICHARD WRIGHT'S *NATIVE SON* (1940)**

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Identity Issues and Racial Interaction
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Wright's *Native Son* (1940)

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the substance of this dissertation is entirely the result of my own investigation and that due reference or acknowledgement is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

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Abstract

Focusing on two major works, Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*, this dissertation aims to discuss the black/white interaction and identity issues of the non-whites, in the USA and South Africa. It examines how otherness is enacted in the inferiority complex that the dominant power exerts on the "subaltern", and how psychological and physical oppression and segregation of the "Other" are the factors of their identity crisis. Following the concepts of Post-Colonial theories, this study investigates Hegel's master slave dialectic from a philosophical perspective, examining the notion of the Self and the Other and considering it in La Guma's and Wright's discourses. Relying on the Fanonian theories, this study, also, examines the inferiority complex and violence of the "Other".

My dissertation, first, illustrates how Richard Wright and Alex La Guma use Naturalistic elements to set the Manichean world in the abovementioned novels, showing the essential characteristics of the oppressive environment, focusing on the non-whites' struggle with poverty, racism and injustice that determine their fate and behavior. After that, it studies the manifestations of frustration and anger of people marginalized and oppressed by the racist environment, focusing on Bigger Thomas' and Michael Adonis' psychological disorientation, examining how their behavior manifests itself in their violent reactions.

The most interesting finding was that the frustration of subject races, in Jim Crowed America and Apartheid in South Africa, has led to their downfall: Bigger Thomas ends on an electric chair and Michael Adonis ends up as a gangster. It has revealed that the psychological perplexity caused by racism has led to the instability of Bigger's identity and his existential crisis, and led Michael Adonis to his inferiority complex. Moreover, this study asserts that the consequential accumulation of stress and the need for individuality lead the subject races to act with violence. In fact, examining Bigger Thomas' and Michael Adonis' violent behavior has confirmed Fanon's theory of the therapeutic violence that frees its subjects from their inferiority complex, despair and inaction; through violence, though it costs him his life, Bigger Thomas finds his lost self, and Michael Adonis affirms his individual will.

Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DECLARATION.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
CONTENTS.....	vii
General Introduction	1

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework

1. The Self and the Other Concept.....	8
2. The Self and The Other Concept Considered in La Guma's and Wright's discourses	13
1.1. <i>A walk in the Night</i>	14
1.2. <i>Native Son</i>	19
3. Fanon's Theory of Inferiority Complex and Violence	23

Chapter Two: Aspects of Racism in *Native Son* and *A Walk in The Night*

1. The Nature of Racism in <i>Native Son</i>	29
1.1.Physical Environment in <i>Native Son</i>	31
1.2.Social Determinism in <i>Native Son</i>	33
2. Apartheid Laws (The Infamous Decalogue) and their Dramatization in <i>A Walk in The Night</i>	37
2.1.Physical Environment in <i>A Walk in the Night</i>	38
2.2.Environment and Determinism in <i>A Walk in the Night</i>	44

Chapter Three: Locked Attitude in Black/White Relations

1. The Confined Attitude in Black/White Relations in <i>Native Son</i>	48
2. The Confined Attitude in Black/White Relations in <i>A Walk in the Night</i>	59

Chapter Four: Violence

1. Violence in <i>Native Son</i>	71
1.1. “How Bigger Was Born”	71
1.2. Bigger Thomas as a Rebel	73
1.3. Family as an Agent of Oppression.....	75
1.4. Bigger Thomas’ Fractured Psyche	77
2. Violence in <i>A Walk in the Night</i>	83
2.1. Violence of Michael Adonis	85
2.2. Violence of Willieboy	86
2.3. Constable Raalt as a Figure of Oppression	88
Conclusion	92
Selected Bibliography	98

Introduction

Living on the margin or being the “Other”, particularly in a multicultural society, signifies having one’s identity negated. In this respect, it is important to examine the characteristics and manifestations of “otherness”, and subalternisation of subject people in literature, by focusing on two major writers, the American Richard Wright and the South African Alex La Guma.

As a matter of fact, racism- this belief of superiority of one race over another, in this case the superiority of whites over the blacks, seems to have dehumanized both, the colonizer and colonized; and it made men inflict dreadful distress on his fellow men, just because the latter has a darker, *different*, skin tone. Regarding the topic at hand, we will deal with the notion of otherness from the perspective of racism.

This study bears on the time of Jim Crow in America and Apartheid in South Africa. Jim Crow was a set of laws, passed between 1876 and 1965, separating two communities, blacks and whites. Racial segregation was mandated in all public facilities: public schools, public transportation, restrooms, theaters, hotels, churches, restaurants, swimming pools and even in cemeteries. Of course, conditions for white Americans were much better in comparison to those offered to African Americans.

South African Apartheid, on the other hand, was an institutionalized system of racial segregation and discrimination in South Africa between 1948 and 1994, guaranteeing geographical separation between the whites and non-whites. The government enacted a series of legislative Acts: segregation in employment, urban residential segregation, segregation in the countryside and prohibitions on African land

Introduction

purchase, removing and restricting the rights of 'non-whites' in every possible sphere. "Many facilities and services—from education and health, to transport and recreation—were progressively restricted and divided on a racial basis, more tightly than under the 'Jim Crow' laws in the United States" (Beinart & Dubow, 1995, p. 4). In addition to that, in order to control the flow of cheap African labor to the white cities and mines, the white government enacted the Pass Laws. Consequently, Jim Crow and apartheid subordinated the non-whites physically and psychologically and denigrated them to a position of inferiority in all spheres of life.

In 1960, during a march to protest against the Pass Law and in crude retaliation, the South African police shot dead sixty-nine unarmed black men, women and children; hundreds were also injured in Sharpeville, just outside Johannesburg. A few weeks after that, a state of emergency was declared due to an unsuccessful attempt to assassinate the Prime Minister Verwoerd. In the same year, along with 155 other prisoners, Alex La Guma stood the infamous Treason Trial, accused of "terrorist" activities. In that time *A Walk in the Night* had been completed. However, it was not published until 1962 at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, by Mbari publication, because La Guma's works were banned in South Africa. (Abrahams, 1985, p. 46)

In 1940, *Native Son*, described to be Wright's "most powerful work" (Bloom, 2007, p. 11), was published by Harper's and was selected by the influential Book-of-the-Month Club. Wright epitomized the most profound consequences of more than two hundred years of enslavement and segregation of blacks in North America. Throughout the 1930's, and with the rise of industrialism, a flood of African American

Introduction

citizens moved from the south to the north toward over populated areas such as the South side of Chicago where *Native Son* takes place. The dehumanization of African Americans during slavery had been followed by Jim Crow Laws to keep the African Americans controlled and dominated.

The African black writers could find great similarities between their own experience of racial discrimination and that of the African American blacks. The similarities between Southside Chicago and District Six, where the two novels under study take place, do not result from the fact that they are both non-whites areas, but that they were both ghettos. R. M. July highlights the similarities between the two areas, that the “people [are] living in crowded tenements amidst dirt and disease, lacking the means for a normal family life with its security, its childhood pleasure and adult satisfactions, constantly brushing against the brutalized amorality of criminals, develop characteristics and attitudes of identifiable similarity” (qtd in Chandramohan, 1992, p. 34).

Residential segregation in South Africa and the United States presents a wide system of racial injustice. The geographic separation of the non-whites within a hardly restricted section of the urban environment- in this case, District six and South side Chicago- compels the non-whites to live under extremely brutal conditions and to suffer a social world of poverty, lack of education, squalor, crime and rampant violence. Massey and Denton affirm that “segregation confines these unpleasant by-products of racial oppression to an isolated portion of the urban geography far removed from the experience of most whites” (Massey & Denton, 2001, p. 16).

Introduction

Moreover, “apartheid not only denies blacks their rights as citizens but forces them to bear the social costs of their own victimization” (Ibid).

Alex La Guma and Richard Wright were both political activists- Both of them were members of the Communist Party- and militant writers who committed their personal and professional lives to fight the injustices of Apartheid and Jim Crow Laws, respectively in South Africa and the United States of America. *A walk in the Night*, and *Native Son* depict the violence and injustices of the systems. Both of them are naturalistic stories where the character's fate is predetermined by the suppressive environment.

There are similarities between Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night* and Richard Wright's *Native Son* regarding the themes and characterization. Both authors portray parallels concerning the type of the characters portrayed, their social and economic background, and the link between the characters and their milieu. In *Native Son* the main character Bigger Thomas, accidentally, kills Mary Dalton, the daughter of his employer. In the same way, in *A Walk in the Night* Michael Adonis accidentally kills Uncle Doughty, an old white Irishman who lives in the same tenement. In fact, the two authors chose a naturalistic treatment for their novels, showing the reader that the non-white characters are doomed, because of the social, political, and economic set up that conditioned them, and which they cannot control. Moreover, the two works depict that the non-whites “suffer a collective impotence due to the systematic suppression, negation, and destruction of their being by the [segregative] regime” (JanMohamed, 1983, p. 276).

This dissertation aims to discuss, in literature, the black/white interaction in the USA and South Africa that have been subjected to an uneasy relationship between dominant communities and subject races. The notion of othering as an implicit way to establish domination has indeed been an important issue dealt with by Richard Wright and Alex La Guma in their respective novels *Native Son* and *A Walk in the Night*. These works are thought to be adequate illustrations of the topic at hand.

This research work examines identity issues of African Americans and black South Africans as treated in Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Alex La Guma's *A Walk in The Night* respectively, focusing on racism against blacks. In fact, both novels invite comparison regardless of the fact that they take place twenty-two years apart in different continents and in broadly different cultures. Each can be considered as postcolonial in that each illustrates an unbridgeable gap between marginalized, non-whites and wealthy whites. Furthermore, though they come from different backgrounds, they deal with approximately the same issues, namely racism, oppression, segregation, violence and alienation.

The purpose of this study is to analyze in the above-mentioned novels how psychological and physical oppression and segregation of the "Other", in this case the non-whites, are the factors of their identity crisis. It will attempt to examine how this otherness is enacted in the inferiority complex that the dominant power exerts on the "Other", the "subaltern". Furthermore, it will study the consequences of the oppression on the non-whites' psyche. The object of this dissertation is also to show how

Introduction

dialectically Wright and La Guma are in the process of writing back to the center to break this circle of hegemony.

The core of my study will focus on racism and the psychological aspects in Richard Wright's and La Guma's aforementioned literary works. Therefore, my analysis will follow the concepts of Postcolonial theories to show the identity issues in the aforementioned works. To be able to study the Self and the Other Concept, we need to study Hegel's master-slave dialectic and his theory of recognition. Furthermore, The Fanonian theory will be an adequate means to scrutinize the inferiority complex and violence of the "Other". In this regard, Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) will be suitable to conduct this study. Additionally, we would rely on some other theorists and critics, such as Abdul R. JanMohamed, Balasubramanyam Chandramohan, Albert Camus, and Harold Bloom, to accomplish our study.

Chapter One is devoted to the study of the notion of the Self and the Other from a philosophical perspective, relying on Hegel's master-slave dialectic. After that, I will examine the notion of the Self and the Other from the standpoint of Postcolonial studies. Chapter One will, also, consider the notion of the Self and the Other in La Guma's and Wright's discourses. After that, it will explore Fanon's theories of inferiority complex and violence.

Chapter Two of my dissertation attempts, first, to illustrate how Richard Wright and Alex La Guma set the Manichean world in their novels *Native Son* and *A Walk in the Night*; and how the whites and blacks, are separated, focusing on the

Introduction

physical environment. It will show essential characteristics of the lives of the non-whites focusing on their struggle with poverty, racism and injustice. Second, it will study how the authors employed Naturalistic elements to recreate the domineering society and the oppressive environment that determine the behavior and fate of the underprivileged.

Chapter Three of this dissertation is to study the manifestations of the frustration and anger of people marginalized and oppressed by the authorities in power. This Chapter will, hopefully, lead to an understanding of the nature of Bigger Thomas' and Michael Adonis' psychological disorientation and to an examination of how that behavior manifests itself in their actions. It will study the psychological consequences of an environment characterized by prejudice and racism, as exemplified in the plots of the two novels.

Chapter Four of my dissertation is devoted to study the theme of violence in the two novels, *Native Son* and *A Walk in the Night*, in regard to Fanon's theory of violence as cathartic way to liberation. After that, it will scrutinize some features of the main characters' personalities, focusing on the reasons for their recourse to violent actions. It will revolve around some of the factors that lead the characters to go beyond the commonly accepted forms of civility and restraint, in a situation of race and class division.

Chapter One

Theoretical Framework

The notion of Otherness is multifaceted; its broadest meaning is linked with class, gender, nationality, race, religion etc. Regarding the topic at hand, we will deal with the notion of otherness from the perspective of race. We intend to examine the issue of otherness in regard to the black/white interaction in countries that have been subjected to an uneasy relationship between dominant communities and subject races. Actually, the notion of othering as an implicit way to establish domination has indeed been a significant issue dealt with by the American Richard Wright and the South African Alex La Guma, in their respective novels *Native Son* and *A Walk in the Night*.

This first chapter of this dissertation seeks, first, to highlight the ideology of Otherness from Hegel's philosophical perspective, explaining the Self and the Other dichotomy, what he, Hegel, calls Master-Slave dialectic. This chapter will, also, consider the notion of the Self and the Other in La Guma's and Wright's discourses. After that, it will explore how Fanon's theories of inferiority complex and violence can be relevant to this study.

1. The Self and the Other Concept:

The notion of the Self and the Other is not a recent phenomenon. In his book *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, in philosophical terms, demonstrates the idea of the other as a foremost component in self-consciousness. He argues that one only acquires self-consciousness by being involved with an "other". In other words, in considering a difference between one and another person, a feeling of alienation is created, and one tries to resolve it by a synthetic

approach. The resolution is presented in Hegel's master slave dialectic. In this respect, Hegel argues that by seeing the other, one recognizes that this other is different from themselves, and gives oneself identity through the other. The first encounter with another sets off a dialectic, which results in both finding their places in the world. (Frame, 2014)

These two beings are locked in what Hegel calls "a Life-and-death struggle" (Hegel, 1977, p. xvii). This struggle's resolution will decide on their position in the world. As, perhaps, both focus on being in the upper position, one has to "give in" to resolve this antipathy. He, Hegel, argues that the master and the slave "exist as two opposed shapes of consciousness; one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is lord, the other is bondsman." (Hegel, 1977, p. 115). In other words, the two opposed consciousnesses find their places in the Master-Slave relationship by nature; the one who values liberty is the master and the one who values life is the slave who submits to the master to survive (Frame, 2014).

Their positions have become clear in the world, now; one is the master and the other is the slave. The master, who has no contact with nature, produces nothing and oppresses the slave, who works with nature and produces something of value to be only used by the master. Thus, this work grants the slave true knowledge about nature that the master cannot have. Accordingly, for Hegel the "master" is a "consciousness" that identifies itself only in mutual relation to the slave's consciousness - a process of

conciliation and mutual interdependence. The master “is, therefore, not certain of being-for-self as the truth of himself. On the contrary, his truth is in reality the unessential consciousness (the slave) and its unessential action.” (Hegel, 1977, p. 117).

By way of explanation, the master and slave recognize their own existence only in relation to, or “reconciliation” with the other. Therefore, there is a mutual dependence between the master and the slave, amongst the many implications of the master-slave dialectic, rather than an antagonism of dominance to subordination. As a matter of fact, the master identifies himself only in opposition to the slave. Therefore, the master needs the slave to legitimize his relative privilege.

Hegel presents the master-slave dialectic as an explanation of both the emanation of self-consciousness and the need for recognition, as mentioned earlier, in his book *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). Frantz Fanon, in criticizing western colonialism, takes issue with Hegelian master-slave dialectic encounters. In a colonial context, Fanon analyzes and reinterprets Hegel's theme of recognition, in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), providing a particular study of the relationship between the white colonizer and the Black colonized, the “master” and the “slave”. He states that “the master differs basically from the master described by Hegel. For Hegel there is reciprocity; here the master laughs at the consciousness of the slave. What he wants from the slave is not recognition but work”. (Fanon, 1952, p. 220)

According to Fanon, it is important to highlight the need for recognition to transform "subjective certainty" into "objective truth". Moreover, he agreed that

recognition requires a life risking struggle to be reached. Particularly, Fanon highlights the importance of reciprocal recognition to have “identity”, “self-worth” and “dignity” (Bulhan, 1985, p. 114). However, Fanon argues that the white ‘colonizer’ is not in quest of recognition from the slave. In Fact, the white master wants the black slave to work for him. Moreover, the concept of humanity is problematized by Fanon. He argues that

Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose his existence on another man in order to be recognised by him. As long as he has not been effectively recognized by the other, that other will remain the theme of his actions. It is on that other being, on recognition by that other being, that his own human worth and reality depend. It is that other being in whom the meaning of life is condensed.

(Fanon, 1952, p. 216/217).

Therefore, one is only human if recognized as such. One’s humanity is entangled with the other due to the need or desire for recognition. Undeniably, the white colonizer sees the black man as a slave because he does not conform to the white man’s standards. Thus, the black man is considered as a “machine-animal-man” (Fanon, 1952, p. 220) and is there only to work. Accordingly, the white colonizer affirms himself as the master. (Villet, 2011).

Homi Bhabha is one of the critics that rejects the conception of the antagonistic colonial relationship for the reason that the ambivalence of the colonial presence “makes the boundaries of colonial positionality – the division of self/other – and the question of colonial power – the differentiation of colonizer/colonized – different from both the Hegelian master slave’ dialectic – or – the phenomenological projection of ‘otherness’” (Bhabha K. H., 1985, p. 150). Regarding the same focus,

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak sets forth that she is critical of the binary opposition colonizer/colonized. And she tries to study the heterogeneity of “colonial power” and to unveil “the involvement of the two parts of that opposition as it makes “the disciplinary enclave of the critique of imperialism” (qtd. In Parry, 2004, p.14).

In fact, another scholar, Benita Parry, argues that “Fanon’s writing is directed at liberating the consciousness of the oppressed from its confinement in ‘the white man’s artifact’” (Parry, 2004, p. 13). In other words, the dichotomy inferred by colonialist thought, white as the superior and black as its contravention, is shown to be fundamentally fixed in discourse, “Manichaeism delirium” that is the characteristic pairings: “Good-Evil, Beauty-Ugliness, White-Black”, that function to distort the “dialogical interaction of self with other selves, constitutive of and indispensable to being, and coterminous with consciousness, into the conflictual self- other colonial relationship”. (Ibid).

Actually, Fanon’s works show that “the colonized, as constructed by colonist ideology, is the very figure of the divided subject posited by psychoanalytic theory to refute the myth of humanism of a unified self.” (Parry, 2004, p. 15). Deprived of the right to selfhood and estranged from his native culture, the colonized is condemned to exist in an ungenuine condition. Fanon reveals that for the black man, “to speak is to exist absolutely for the other.....but above all, to assume a culture, support a weight of a civilization” (Fanon, 1952, pp. 17-18). Therefore, the colonized associates the colonizer’s culture and whiteness with humanity. Accordingly, “The Negro..... will be

proportionately whiter -that is, he will come closer to being a real human being -in direct ratio to his mastery of the [colonizer's] language" (Fanon, 1952, p. 18).

2. The Self and The Other Concept considered in La Guma's and Wright's discourses:

From the perspective of Postcolonial studies, the "Other" refers to the person different from one's self. This difference is marked by external signs such as race, gender and ethnic groups. As defined by Martin Jones, Othering is "a term, advocated by Edward Said, which refers to the act of emphasizing the perceived weaknesses of marginalized groups as a way of stressing the alleged strength of those in positions of power" (Jones, 2004, p. 174). As far as literature is concerned, the "Other" is the representation of all that is inferior, lacks purity and identity, not appropriate to the European standards. As Edward Said notes, the European imperialist represents the superior "center"- the "Self", and the colonized represents the inferior "periphery"- the "Other". One can note that Postcolonial studies have brought an insight into the notion of the "Other".

Indeed, in colonial literature, the colonized black Africans are described in dehumanizing ways. In Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902) for instance, the Africans are represented as cannibals, savages, have faces like "grotesque masks", wild, ugly, primitive and many other dehumanizing descriptions. On the other hand, the colonizer is represented as the educated conqueror who colonized Africa to civilize its population. However, from the point of view of Homi Bhabha, "the objective of colonial discourse was to construe the colonized as a population of

degenerate types on the basis of racial origin; in order to justify conquest” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 70). To say it differently, western people claimed the inferiority of the so-called “subject races” to legitimize hegemony.

Regarding the novels chosen for this study, both works recall Edward Said's perception of the self and the Other. In *A Walk in the Night*, the whites may represent the Self and the non-whites symbolize the Other. Apartheid, as a system of hegemony in South Africa, classified the whites as masters and the non whites as slaves. In this respect, the relationship of Constable Raalt and Michael Adonis, for instance, is the relationship of “power, of domination, of varying degree of a complex hegemony” (Said, 1978, p. 5), which is what Hegel calls “the master-slave relationship” (Kain, 2005, p. 169). Similarly for Wright's *Native Son*, the Jim Crow Laws place The Daltons at the “top”, they are the masters, and Bigger Thomas and his family are at the bottom, the slaves. Indeed, both novels, *A Walk in the Night* and *Native Son* portray the binary opposition between the whites and the non-whites.

1.1. *A Walk in the Night:*

Alexander Justine La Guma was a colored South African. Growing up in District Six, the predominantly ‘colored’ area in Cape Town, and being the son of a political activist, made of Alex La Guma a radical political activist and a militant writer who committed his personal and professional life to fight the injustices of apartheid in South Africa. He started his writing career in the *New Age*, a *left-wing* weekly, where he reported critically on South African politics and published his first short stories.

Following the steps of militancy of his father Jimmy La Guma, Alex La Guma became a member of the Communist Party and a member of its Cape Town district committee until 1950. He was also a member of the South African Colored People's Organization the chairman of the African National Congress branch in London and the African National Congress representative in the Caribbean, Cuba. Due to his Political activities, his works were banned in South Africa and he had to publish them abroad. More importantly, La Guma was arrested, along with 155 political leaders, for the charge of treason that was brought against him, in 1956. He was imprisoned for five years, during which time he stood The Treason Trials. However, after his acquittal, he frequently suffered police harassment and imprisonment. He was confined to his own house for five years from 1962. Nonetheless, in 1966, he went into exile in London. Then, he moved to Cuba where he spent the rest of his life as a representative of the African Nation Congress (Barratt, 1998).

Alex La Guma's life and fiction rightly reflect the non-whites' predicament in South Africa and the effects that the segregative system, apartheid, produce on them. La Guma spent his youth in South Africa that was still colonial, where the non-whites were considered as evil and the source of trouble (JanMohamed, 1983). Actually, South Africa, under apartheid, corresponds to Fanon's description of the colonial world as the "Manichean world" (Fanon, 1961, p. 41) where "The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare admit it, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil." (Ibid). According to Abdul R. JanMohamed, the manichean

organization had reached its peak in colonial South Africa. He affirms in this regard that “the colonial mentality is dominated by a manichean allegory of white and black, good and evil, salvation and damnation, civilization and savagery, superiority and inferiority, intelligence and emotion, and self and other” (JanMohamed, 1983, p. 272). As a matter of fact, La Guma's protest fiction tried to give voice to the silenced marginalized non-whites, in South Africa.

Moreover, the reactions of La Guma towards his society, his involvement in the antiapartheid politics, his imprisonment and exile, as mentioned above, endow him with a direct knowledge of the South African non-whites predicament. Indeed, as a Cape Town citizen and a political activist, La Guma reveals the reality of the oppressive system in South Africa in his works: *A Walk in the Night*, *And a Threefold Cord* (1964), *The Stone Country* (1967), *In the Fog of the Seasons' End* (1972) and *Time of the Butcherbird* (1981). His fiction is “characterized by photographic portrayal of events, vivid style, and realistic depiction of social facts and sympathetic presentation of oppressed, poor groups in apartheid South Africa” (Nwagbara, 2011). Abdul JanMohamed argues that “the substance and style of [La Guma's] fiction reflect the drastic attenuation of black life in the apartheid society of contemporary South Africa” (JanMohamed, 1983, p. 10). Although La Guma's main concern was the Cape colored population, his aim was to “destroy apartheid and restore equality and justice to all South Africans” (Barratt, 1998, p. 268). In addition to that, his novels have one basic common issue: “the marginality of life for the non-white in South Africa”

(JanMohamed, 1983). In brief, La Guma's fiction concerns racial oppression and represents the effects of the manichean division imposed by apartheid in South Africa.

A Walk in the Night, upon which part of this study will focus, narrates the events of only one night in the slums of South Africa, in District Six, that are sufficient to mirror the predicament of the non-whites under apartheid. It depicts the violence and injustices of apartheid. In fact, *A Walk in the Night* is a novella of revelation; it portrays the reality of South Africa in fiction during the 1950s, "the abnormalities in the system of apartheid [and] the brutalization to which non-whites are subjected" (Asein, 1987, p. 45). The novella gained instant critical recognition and was considered as his most significant work of fiction. Wole Soyinka claimed that La Guma "had managed to do in 91 pages what African writers had been trying to achieve for years" (Quoted in Breidlid, 1999, p. 2).

The oppressive segregative structure of apartheid portrayed in the novella and the focus on the dissolution of District Six that has an impact on the characters show the "deterministic dimension of the tragedy" (Balutansky, 1990, p. 14). Consequently, some critics considered *A Walk in the Night* a naturalistic story where the character's fate is predetermined by the suppressive environment provided by apartheid. (Ibid)

Vladimir Klima is one of the critics who considered La Guma as "the chief representative of South African Naturalism" (Klima, 1976, p. 257). Furthermore, B. Chandramohan argues that there are three notions which make of La Guma a Naturalist: the parallels between La Guma's narrative style and Emile Zola, as both

writers focus on minute details in their descriptive passages; the parallels between the American Naturalists Frank Norris, James Farell and Theodore Dreiser in stating the idea of environmental determinism; and that La Guma shares the pessimism intrinsic to Naturalism, his characters are destroyed by the forces of their social environment. (Chandramohan, 1992, pp. 31-32).

Moreover, Balutansky affirms that Naturalism is obvious in the novella, *A Walk in the Night*; and that La Guma seems to employ naturalistic techniques. However, the various other elements found in the novella such as the prevalence of irony and the opposition of appearance (static plot) and reality (political movement) defy generalization (Balutansky, 1990, p. 14).

The critical interpretation of *A Walk in the Night* as naturalistic has met some opposing voices. In his criticism, JanMohamed states that the novella “verge[s] on Naturalism” (JanMohamed, 1983, p. 275) and that La Guma’s style is “quasi-naturalistic (Ibid, p. 276). Moreover, along with JanMohamed, Balutansky does not view La Guma’s work as Naturalistic and considers that it has an optimistic rather than the pessimistic vision that naturalism can suggest. They rather adopt the Lukacsian view that Naturalism is a static method to represent reality (Chandramohan, 1992, p. 32). Anyway, one can argue, as in Mkhize’s opinion, that “*A Walk in the Night* is naturalist in style but critical realist in perspective”. (Mkhize, 1998, p. 36)

Overall, in the naturalistic parallels’ of the critical debate of La Guma’s works, B. Chandramohan points to a link with Afro-American naturalism. He

considers that there are similarities between La Guma's *A Walk in the Night* and Richard Wright's novel *Native Son* regarding the themes and characterization (Chandramohan, 1992, p. 32).

1.2. *Native Son*:

Richard Nathaniel Wright, the grandson of slaves, grew up in the southern states of America, where he, along with his family, suffered from racism and the Jim Crow Laws. During his infancy, Wright had moved from one town to another in the south of America where he did several part-time jobs, attended irregular classes and learned hard lessons, to which he referred later "the ethics of living Jim Crow". In 1927, he moved to Chicago. In 1934, he became a member of the Communist Party and Harlem editor for the *Daily Worker*, a communist newspaper. Wright was attracted to Communism because he opposed "untenable cruelties of capitalism" (Warnes, 2007, p. 9). In 1942, however, he left it, because he lost faith in Marxism and felt his comrades' "professed commitment to combating racism and inequality was less than firm" (ibid).

Wright started his writing journey with poems, articles and stories for, the abovementioned newspaper, the *Daily Worker*. Wright wrote about the injustices and hardships that black men had to face in Jim Crowed America. Some of his works are *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938), *Black Boy* (1945), *The Outsider* (1953), *Savage Holiday* (1954), *White Man, Listen* (1957), *The Long Dream* (1958) and *Eight Men* (1961).

In his autobiographical work *Black Boy* (1945), Wright states that “All [his] life had shaped [him] for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel” (Wright, 1945, p. 286). In addition to that, reading H. L. Mencken, Theodore Dreiser and Fyodor Dostoevsky gave Wright a new perspective “in which [his] own intellectual consciousness was not routinely denigrated, in which vulgarity was denounced and prejudice ridiculed and in which he could come to realize his superiority over his racist aggressors” (Warnes, 2007, p. 5).

Native Son received an immediate critical recognition. “[I]nterest in Native Son . . . revived in the sixties and continues to the present. The novel has been widely translated and reviewed abroad. Along with his fourteen other books, Native Son brought its author global recognition and a permanent place in American literature” (Quoted in, Warnes, 2007). This novel depicts the Jim Crowed America of the 1930s; America that is divided into two worlds, “the white world and the black world, and they are physically separated. There are white schools and black schools, white churches and black churches, white businesses and black businesses, white graveyards and black graveyards, and... a white God and a black God.....” (Wright, 1940, p. 437). The novel is set in the poor, lowly segregated ghetto of Chicago’s South Side. It tells the story of Bigger Thomas, the African American young man who is the fusion of “the only Negroes [Wright] know[s] of who consistently violated the Jim Crow laws of the South (ibid).

Many critics have dealt with the biological determinism, social determinism or Marxist determinism found in Wright’s *Native Son*. The determinism found in the

novel is the outcome of Wright's reading of American sociology, literary realism and Marxism. These texts shared the idea that economic or social classes cause limitation of free will and produce a certain kind of individuals. As far as literary realism is concerned, the text that this belief produced an aim to associate the moral degeneration of the main character to social forces that are out of his control. Some of the writers of literary realism are Dostoevsky, Emile Zola, Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser and others who practiced the more methodical and apparently scientific form of realism that Zola called naturalism. (Warnes, 2007, p. 36)

Similarly to Alex La Guma, Richard Wright chose a naturalistic treatment for his novel *Native Son*, showing the reader that Bigger Thomas is doomed, because of the natural, social, political, and economic forces that shaped him, and which he cannot control. From a naturalistic standpoint, Bigger Thomas is a creation of his racist oppressive milieu that denied him all kinds of opportunities because of his black skin. Struggling with social, political, and economic forces that he cannot control, Bigger Thomas finds himself controlled by his fear, anger and frustration that forces him to react with violence, and which eventually lead him to his downfall. Moreover, according to Yolanda Williams, "these factors make him a victim of the social Darwinist idea of biological determinism (the survival of the fittest) and Marxist determinism, or class struggle, in which the bourgeoisie, represented by Mr. Dalton, is now an overwhelming force that destroys the like of Bigger Thomas" (Williams, 2011, p. 327).

Naturalism in Richard Wright's pen notifies that Bigger Thomas is doomed, destroyed, overtaken by greater forces. That is, "The overwhelming crushing of naturalistic elements: [his poverty, his helplessness in pursuing any real dream, his frustration, his fear, his violence, and his otherness] over Bigger Thomas shows him as a victim, an object/patient of forces he cannot control" (Williams, 2011, p. 336). Nevertheless, Bigger Thomas' condemnation (metaphoric and judicial) leads him to find his humanity, his being, "best expressed in a surprisingly oxymoronic association of rationalism and existentialism: 'But what I killed for, I am!'" (ibid). This declaration contradicts the obliteration processed by elements of naturalism. Therefore, the naturalistic elements take Bigger Thomas from nothingness to being. Consequently, he becomes the doer, the controller of his deeds instead of being the victim, which Naturalism suggests (ibid).

On the whole, Wright's main aim, according to Louis Menand, was to paint racial injustice "in primary colors straight out of the naturalist paintbox" (Beavers, 2007, p. 93). He wanted to apply the ostensibly objective naturalistic techniques to show the day by day lives of black people in America.

3. Fanon's Theory of Inferiority Complex and Violence:

As the bulk of my study will focus on racism and the psychological aspects in Richard Wright's and La Guma's aforementioned literary works, my analysis will

follow the concepts of Post-Colonial theories. In this regard, Fanon's *White Skin; Black Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) will be appropriate to fulfill this study. In addition to that, we shall rely on some other theorists to develop and compare viewpoints.

The Martiniquan psychologist Frantz Fanon studied the structure of colonialism and the social relations between the colonizer and the colonized, in his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). Fanon's other book *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986) is his weapon to oppose the oppression of black people and to analyze the feelings of otherness that Black people undergo in a White dominated world, due to the enslaving practices of colonialism. Fanon focused on the image of "the Other" in the white mind, because this image of the colonized Other played an essential part in the making of the colonizer's self.

Fanon examined the psyche of colonized people. Although his method applied mainly to the North African colonized, it offers a view to the psychology of colonialism in general. In his work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), he came up with a diagnosis of inferiority complex of the colonized, the subaltern. Moreover, in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon portrays the Manichaeian aspects of colonialism and focuses on the psychological effect of colonial oppression where he examines violence of oppressor/oppressed in a colonial context.

Fanon believes that, through a broad promulgation of negative racial stereotypes, the colonialist manages to preserve and perpetuate the paradigms of

subjugation. According to this racist discourse, the black is associated with “tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetichism, racial defects, slave-ships,... sin, darkness, immorality ” (Fanon, 1986, pp. 112 and 192) . For instance, Michael Adonis is checked by the police systematically. Because he is colored, he must have stolen the money he has or must have “dagga” (La Guma, 1962, p. 11). As for Bigger Thomas, “It would be thought that he was trying to rob or rape somebody” (Wright, 1940, p. 44), if he is caught wandering in a white neighborhood. Moreover, “The black man is the symbol of Evil and Ugliness” (Fanon, 1952, p. 180). On the other hand, the colonizer is, supposedly, blessed with the white color as the symbol of “Justice, Truth [and] Virginity” (Ibid, p. 180). In the two aforementioned novels, the whites represent the Police and the court of law, whereas the blacks represent the criminals. Consequently, Fanon believes that this racism created in the black subjects, such as Bigger Thomas, an inferiority complex, which he affirms is a “massive psychoexistential complex” derived from the “juxtaposition of the black and white races” (Ibid, p. 14).

In pursuit of explaining the inferiority complex, Fanon turns to the writings of Alfred Adler. In fact, Fanon keenly affirmed Adler's concepts of inferiority and superiority complexes to reveal the psychopathologies prevalent in the colonial situation, such as Jim Crow and Apartheid.

In *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon explains the devastating alienation that the black colonized categorizes with white standards that make blackness evil. This devastating alienation starts with the black colonized contact with the white

colonizer's culture. Moreover, while the adaptation of authority, or superego, begins in early age for the white child, it is different for the black child, he "become[s] abnormal on the slightest contact with the white world" (Fanon, 1952, p. 143). Fanon explains the pathological consequences of the internalization of the white brutal superego that the black child is injected with and proposes that negritude can be seen as a consequence. That is, negritude is a reaction antagonistic to the white values that denigrate the blacks (Oliver, 2004).

More to the point, the neurotic black man who suffers from an inferiority complex is relentlessly concerned with "self-evaluation and with the ego-ideal" (Fanon, 1952, p. 211). By way of explanation, whenever the black man is in contact with somebody else, his feeling of inferiority preoccupies him of comparing "whether he is less intelligent than I, blacker than I, less respectable than I." (Ibid). This obsession with self-evaluation by comparison is a desire to lead, a struggle for superiority and more precisely an inferiority complex that makes "the Negro ...seek... to protest against the inferiority he feels historically. Since in all periods the Negro has been an inferior, he attempts to react with a superiority complex" (Fanon, 1952, p. 213).

However, in explaining the inferiority complex, Fanon examines the constitution of the colonized self identity where the indigenous' otherness is confirmed by the colonizer's thought and culture and which thrusts the indigenous to rebel. (Parry, 2004, p. 15) According to Fanon,

Every colonized people..... in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality, finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation...where... The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the [colonizer's] cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness...

(Fanon, 1952, pp. 18-19).

Accordingly, Fanon explains the effects of adopting the colonizer's effects on the mind and body of the colonized. He comes up with the diagnosis of emotional anomalies caused by the colonial situation. His analysis clarifies that psychic mechanisms of projection are associated with economic, material and physical conditions that shape the subject and object of projection.

Nevertheless, Fanon refuses the Adlerian theory that neurosis is a matter of personality, particularly when it is displayed as an inferiority complex. While Adler blames the comparative reasoning of inferiority/superiority manifested by the neurotic on an innate stance of the individual toward the environment, Fanon claims that the inferiority complex of the colonized is not an innate stance of the individual but a social one that is caused by the environment, to obliterate his ego (Fanon, 1952, p. 215). The Adlerian neurotic suffering from an inferiority complex splits the world into a binary opposition: a superior self against an inferior other to comfort the neurotic's own ego against the environment. (Oliver, 2004, p. 25)

All in all, the colonized are oppressed by the stereotypes projected by the colonizer that cast them in a world where they are defined as evil and not fully human. Moreover, he attributes the black man's "inferiority complex ...[to] a double process:

primarily, economic; subsequently, the internalization—or, better, the epidermalization—of this inferiority. (Fanon, 1952, p. 13)” As a matter of fact, Fanon reckons that the internalization of the fabricated images of inferiority has intensely devastated black men’s consciousness. Therefore, his purpose of psychoanalytic theory is to free the black colonized and put an end to his inferiority complex that reinforces the dominating colonial role.

On the other hand, Fanon’s concerns in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) relate to the psychological consequences of colonial oppression and possible solutions of liberation for the oppressed people. He begins by describing the world of colonialism, that “The colonial world is a Manichean world” (Fanon, 1961, p. 15); a world cut in two opposed zones. The colonized zone is “hungry ..., starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light” (Fanon, 1961, p. 39). Indeed, in *A Walk in the Night*, the colored area, District six, is one of palpable hostility, of fury, of extreme poverty, and of decadence. Regarding *Native Son*, Chicago’s South Side is a poor area inhabited by blacks. However, the colonizer zone is “well-fed”, “its belly is always full of good things”, “strongly built”, “brightly lit” (Fanon, 1961, p. 39). Accordingly, this Manicheism “dehumanizes the native” (Fanon, 1961, p. 42).

In addition, Fanon argues that “violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect” (Fanon, 1961, p. 94). For this reason, Fanon advocates an act of violence to unify the oppressed to break the colonialist sphere of hegemony. In this regard, Fanon theorizes that violence has three phases. In the first phase, it is the

violence of the white colonizer against the non-white colonized, where the latter are passive and undergo the pains of the white violence. Regarding the second phase, the colonized react with violence but against each other because of the lack of consciousness of the real source of their oppression, the colonizer. However, in the third phase, the colonized obtain a certain degree of consciousness, which enable them to see clearly who they should fight to get rid of their oppression.

Although the protagonists in both novels are in a state of rebellion, they are overtaken by the pressure exerted by segregative laws. They are still presented as victims rather than derelicts. The naturalistic treatment applied to both novels is a suitable medium to dramatize the issues at stake and the dramas of the protagonists.

Chapter Two
Aspects of Racism *in Native Son* and *A*
Walk in The Night

Racism- this belief of superiority of one race over another, in this study the superiority of whites over the blacks, seems to have dehumanized both the conqueror and conquered; and it made men inflict dire sufferings on his fellow men, just because the latter has a darker, *different*, complexion.

Chapter Two of my dissertation seeks, first, to show how Richard Wright and Alex La Guma set the Manichean world in their respective novels *Native Son* and *A Walk in the Night*; and how the two nations, the whites and blacks, are separated, focusing on the physical environment. Precisely, it will approach essential aspects of the lives of the non-whites showing their struggle with dreadful poverty, racial discrimination and prejudice. Second, it will demonstrate how the authors used Naturalistic elements to recreate the authoritarian society and the oppressive environment that determine the actions and reactions of the underprivileged.

1. The Nature of Racism in *Native Son*:

Black people were captured in Africa and shipped to the New World plantations to be sold as slaves, as from 1619, because they provided cheap labor and lucrative business. Slavery continued up to the execution of The Emancipation Proclamation. Nevertheless, slaves did not gain their freedom until the end of the Civil War (1861-1865). Soon after that, however, the southern states passed the Black Codes to restrict the civil rights of freed slaves (Brown & Webb, 2007) and to keep blacks unskilled, uneducated and landless, with no legal protection or rights as American citizens.

Adding up to the Black Codes, Jim Crow Laws were enacted between 1876 and 1965 to separate the two communities, “creating two worlds in which whites and blacks were kept apart from one another as far as possible” (Brown & Webb, 2007, p. 1). With “separate but equal” motto, they mandated racial segregation in all public facilities: public schools, public transportation, restrooms, theaters, hotels, restaurants, swimming pools and even in cemeteries. Nevertheless, conditions for white Americans were much better compared to those available to African Americans (Klarman, 2004). As a matter of fact, African Americans could never be fully integrated in the USA.

Native Son is considered as a social protest novel in which Richard Wright questions the morals of the “Jim Crowed” America. He protests against the discrimination and deprivation of the blacks in America. Richard Wright sets *Native Son* in the visibly divided society where the Blacks struggle in dreadful poverty without hope of progress.

This part of my discussion seeks to draw attention to how Wright demonstrates clearly the Manichean world existing in America by focusing on both the colonizers and the slaves or the former slaves' zones. Wright shows the deprivation, frustration and alienation of the blacks in the “Jim crowed” America through Bigger Thomas, shedding light on how an oppressive environment leads its subjects to destruction. In both novels, the “social environment is blamed for the destruction of the individuals” (Chandramohan, 1992, p. 33). The first part will be devoted to the physical environment, focusing on both the whites' and blacks' zones; it will show the world in which African Americans have to struggle with poverty, segregation and

injustice. Then, it attempts to show how the environmental oppression determines the fate of its underprivileged people and leads them to their downfall, paying attention to the psychological effects engendered by racism.

1.1. Physical Environment in *Native Son*:

The Novel demonstrates the Manichean type of power relations that Fanon discussed in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). The Chicago that Wright depicts is sharply divided between whites and blacks, the haves and the have-nots: “We [blacks] live here and they [whites] live there. They got things and we ain’t. They do things and we can’t.” (Wright, 1940, p. 20). In Fact, the novel echoes a Manichean duality of White/Black, master/slave, rich/poor, oppressor/oppressed and self/other where Wright focuses on the African Americans’ lives through Bigger Thomas, the protagonist, showing how deprivation, frustration, alienation and shame lead to violent acts.

Actually, the world that Wright describes in the novel is divided into compartments, the blacks’ zone and the whites’ zone; this world cut in two is inhabited by two different species where “economic reality, inequality, and the immense difference of ways of life” is evident (Fanon, 1961, p. 40). In his book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1962), Fanon described the Whites’ zone as:

a strongly built town, all made of stone and steel. It is a brightly lit town; the streets are covered with asphalt, and the garbage cans swallow all the leavings, unseen, unknown and hardly thought about. ... the streets of his town are clean and even, with no holes or stones... it is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things. ... is a well-fed town, an easygoing town; its belly is always full of good things.

(Fanon, 1961, p. 39)

By way of illustration, Drexel Boulevard, Forty-Sixth Street, the white neighborhood where the Daltons live, is depicted in the novel as “quiet and spacious... The houses...were huge; lights glowed softly in windows. The streets were empty, save for an occasional car that zoomed past on swift rubber tires.” The whites “got everything...they own the world” and they “get a chance to do everything.” (Wright, 1940, p. 44/22/16).

On the opposite binary, there is the zone belonging to the colonized; it is a “place of ill fame, peopled by men of ill repute. They are born there, it matters little where or how; they die there, it matters not where, nor how. It is a world without spaciousness; men live there on top of each other”. Furthermore, the non-white zone is “hungry, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light.” (Fanon, 1961, p. 39)

Bigger Thomas lives in South Side Chicago where the blacks live, which Fanon calls the “colonized Zone”. Throughout the narrative, Wright produces an insight into the dramatic conditions under which the black people of Southside Chicago live, showing their wretched lives. The dwellers of this area are systematically denied the right to education, opportunity or a decent living; they are denied the right to freedom.

The novel opens in the squalid, small one-room apartment in which Bigger Thomas and his family live. It opens with the scene of the battle between Bigger and

the rat where Wright shows the violence and entrapment of his character, highlighting the oppressive environment in which a rat wanders freely in the family's dwelling.

According to Heather Humann, this scene emphasizes that this rat has more freedom than Bigger; it also stresses the grimy living conditions under which the blacks have to live. Continuing in Humann's assessment, this scene highlights Bigger's capacity for violence and foreshadows both Bigger's crime in the sense he is the aggressor and how he will stay trapped the same way he is trapped in the apartment now. (Humann, 2007, p. 150)

Bigger lives in a world where he is very limited in what he can do, because he is black. His dream of flying a plane is impossible in the Manichean Chicago. His friend Gus reminds him of his restricted life: "If you wasn't black and if you had some money and if they'd let you go to that aviation school, you *could* fly a plane," (Wright, 1940, p. 17). In addition to that, his employment is limited to menial jobs. Obviously, Bigger's predicament is due to his material conditions of being. Indeed, "his poverty and lack of opportunity are tied directly to his race and class." (Humann, 2007, p. 151)

1.2.Social Determinism in *Native Son*:

From a naturalistic perspective, Bigger Thomas is a product of his environment, a natural outcome of the Jim Crowed America that has denied him all sorts of opportunity because he is black. Due to the social, economic, and psychological forces that he cannot control, Bigger's actions are controlled by fear, resentment and disappointment, which mainly deprive him of his freedom. What's

more, the factors mentioned above make of Bigger Thomas a victim of the social Darwinist theory of biological determinism and class struggle, in which the bourgeoisie, represented by Mr. Dalton, is now a devastating force that destroys the likes of him, turning them to terrified and disturbed individuals who respond, systematically, with violence. (Twagilimana & Sublette, p. 327)

Richard Wright portrays the mechanism of an oppressive society emphasizing the psychological effect of racism on African Americans driving them into a complex and dangerous state of mind. Oppression leads its victims to react with fear, hatred and violence even against each other. For instance, black people “had always robbed Negroes”; they had raided their fellow’s “newsstands, fruit stands, and apartments”, because “it was much easier and safer to rob their own people, for they knew that white policemen never really searched diligently for Negroes who committed crimes against other Negroes” (Wright, 1940, p. 14). Accordingly, segregation induces its subjects, here African Americans, to turn against each other.

However, committing those crimes against the whites was:

a violation of ultimate taboo; it would be a trespassing into territory where the full wrath of an alien white world would be turned loose upon them; in short, it would be a symbolic challenge of the white world’s rule over them; a challenge which they yearned to make, but were afraid to. Yes; if they could rob [a white man’s shop], it would be a real holdup, in more senses than one. In comparison, all of their other jobs had been play.

(Ibid)

Despite this “violation of ultimate taboo”, Bigger and his gang plotted to rob Blum’s Delicatessen but did not, eventually, do it. However, in his preface “How Bigger Was Born,” Wright states that Bigger Thomas is the fusion of five violent black men who were the outcome of the oppressive America of that time. These “outlaw Biggers” were the only blacks who consistently violated the Jim Crow laws.

Anyway, regarding the blacks’ resentment towards the white oppressor, one can note the moment when Bigger ponders upon his position and tells his friend Gus that:

They [whites] do not let us do anything ... Every time I think about it I feel like somebody’s poking a red- hot iron down my throat. Goddammit, look! We live here and they live there. We black and they white. They got things and we did not. They do things and we cannot. It’s just like living in jail. Half the time I feel like I am on the outside of the world peeping in through a knot-hole in the fence”.

(Wright, 1940, p. 20)

This is a telling image illustrating the black peoples’ exclusion from the social continuum of the United States. Through the binary oppositions of the Jim Crowed America, Bigger sets out the differences between the blacks and whites and considers his restricted choices; “it maddened him to think that he did not have a wider choice”. In this society, he feels that he is in jail while the whites are free. Baldwin observes that Wright’s novel makes of Bigger a victim of his circumstances and his environment that stripped him of his humanity. (Humann, 2007, p. 146).

Consequently and due to the lack of interracial interaction, Bigger is too confused and uncomfortable when he goes to the Daltons’. His uncomfortable attitude

reflects the two separate worlds they inhabit, in which they know too little about each other. However, Bigger's trespassing of the whites' zone leads him to his condemnation by accidentally killing Mary, the white girl.

Nevertheless, Twagilimana and Sublette argue that since naturalism is highly predictable, one may easily find reasons to qualify the novel as somehow simplistic. Consequently, they believe that Bigger Thomas's accidental killing of Mary Dalton makes of him a dangerous psychopath and therefore loses the sympathy that naturalism often imposes on the reader. In spite of everything, African Americans suffered all kinds of exploitation, prejudice, and annihilation, but still did not follow Bigger Thomas's lead. (Twagilimana & Sublette, 2011, p. 328)

All in all, Richard Wright's *Native Son* prepares an inevitably tragic fate for Bigger Thomas once he commits the accidental crime. According to Andrew Warnes, there is an atmosphere of inevitability that pervades Bigger's every move.

[Bigger] had to save himself. But it was familiar, this running away. All his life he had been knowing that sooner or later something like this would come to him. And now, here it was. He had always felt outside of this white world, and now it was true. It made things simple. He felt in his shirt. Yes; the gun was still there. He might have to use it. He would shoot before he would let them take him; it meant death either way, and he would die shooting every slug he had.

(Wright, 1940, p. 221)

From another perspective, however, this passage shows that Bigger's plight is not only a matter of the outcome of a set of forces beyond his control; to a certain extent, it's a matter of fate (Warnes, 2007, p. 34/35). Hunted by the police, stuck on

the snow-covered roofs, Bigger here sees his helplessness; he realizes his predetermined fate. Thus, this passage strengthens the unmistakable innuendo of the novel on the whole, emphasizing that Bigger's criminality is likely to manifest itself, in this oppressive environment.

In a sum, the rat-infested one-room apartment, the impossibility of Bigger pursuing any real dream, his involvement with a gang, his accidental killing, his helplessness, "his frustration, and his violence are all elements that annihilate the protagonist". (Twagilimana & Sublette, *Native Son*, 2011, p. 336) These destructive naturalistic elements over Bigger Thomas prove that he is a victim of forces he cannot control. "Bigger's actions, behavior, values, attitudes, and fate have already been determined by his status and place in American life." (Humann, 2007, p. 146)

2. Apartheid Laws (The Infamous Decalogue) and their Dramatization in *A Walk in The Night*:

The abundance of natural resources in South Africa has attracted many European invaders. The discovery of gold and diamonds in the Orange Free State and Transvaal, lands occupied by Dutch descendents, known as Boers or Afrikaners, sparked the invasion of the English, causing the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902). Despite the Boers' victory in this war, conflicts continued up to the victory of the Afrikaner National Party in the 1948 general elections (Stapleton, 2010). The Afrikaner National Party government legislated the system of racial segregation in South Africa, known as Apartheid. It assured "territorial separation between whites and blacks; a controlled flow of cheap African labour to the white cities and mines;

and a political system that excluded Africans from direct representation in government.” (Legassick, 1995, p. 43). More importantly, Apartheid was a means to guarantee the white domination over the economic and social systems.

Actually, apartheid was based on four ideas. First, there are four distinct racial groups in South Africa: White, Colored, Indian, and Black. Second, the *civilized* whites are the controlling race. Third, white interests should prevail over black interests; the state was not obliged to provide equal facilities for the subordinate races. Fourth, the white racial group comprised the white Afrikaners and the white English speaking population. On the other hand, The Africans formed ten distinct nations-a formula that made the white nation the largest in the country (Thompson, 2001). Needless to say, the only victims of apartheid were the non-white groups. This harsh system, as a consequence, created a spirit of resistance protesting against apartheid.

This part of my discussion seeks to draw attention to how La Guma sets clearly the Manichean world focusing on the colonized zone. La Guma, implicitly, shows the frustration and alienation of his characters through his narrative style in *A Walk in the Night*, portraying the essential aspects of the lives of the non-whites. First, it will focus on La Guma's descriptions of the physical environment where the non whites live and have to struggle with poverty, racial discrimination and police brutality. Then, it aims to show how the characters are confined in an authoritarian society and an oppressive environment that determines their reactions and deeds.

2.1. Physical Environment in *A Walk in the Night*

As a matter of fact, Alex La Guma's novella, *A Walk in the Night*, protests and questions the morals of apartheid, the political contrivance devised to deprive black South Africans of their land and heritage. Regardless of the way it is reflected upon, apartheid is basically one of the hideous facets of colonial action that encompasses the dimensions of prejudice, alienation, exploitation and oppression. Actually, La Guma's fiction aims at undermining the basis of the oppressive government and its power.

A Walk in the Night is set in the ghettos of District Six in Cape Town, South Africa, where gangsters, prostitutes, poverty-stricken families and numerous societal derelicts are doomed "to walk the night", like Shakespeare's ghost. In point of fact, one of the reasons why La Guma called his novella *A Walk in the Night* was that:

The colored community was still discovering themselves in relation to the general struggle against racism in South Africa. They were working, enduring and in this way they were experiencing this walking in the night until such time as they found themselves and were prepared to be citizens of a society to which they wanted to make a contribution. [La Guma] tried to create a picture of a people struggling to see the light, to see the dawn, to see something new, other than their experiences in this confined community.

(Abrahams, 1985, p. 49)

However, District Six, "the main artery of the local world of haves and have-nots, the struggling and the idle, the weak and the strong" (Abrahams, 1985, p. 47), is a depiction of rundown, decaying houses and temporary tin shanties. In fact, the prevalent atmosphere of District Six, in the novella, is one of hatred, anger, poverty,

and decadence that are the logical outcome of a racist and oppressive system. Actually, the very overcrowded nature of District Six makes of it a perfect setting for the delinquents, “but the squalor, the illicit sex and liquor outlets, and its outlawed gambling dens attract to District Six some of the shadiest and most aggressive types.” (Abrahams, 1985, p. 47)

La Guma focuses on the absence of the South African non-white “right to self-fulfillment-the right to elect his own government, to live where he wants, to receive adequate compensation for his labor, to shape his children's education, to marry whomever he wishes” (JanMohamed, 1983, p. 274) by drawing a detailed description of their wretched lives. According to JanMohamed, the societies that La Guma creates in his fiction are politically, socially, economically, emotionally, and legally marginal.

La Guma's narrative style in *A Walk in the Night* provided the key to an effective portrayal of the essential aspects of the lives of the non-whites – poverty, racial discrimination and police brutality. La Guma's strength in showing these aspects is due to his talent of accurate and minute observation of the conditions of deprivation. (Chandramohan, 1992, p. 36)

The deterioration and decay resulting from neglect and abandonment of the tenements, where the non-whites dwell, show very clearly the environmental discrimination and marginalization of the non-whites. By way of illustration, the tall narrow tenement where Michael Adonis lived had once “a certain kind of dignity”,

but *now*¹ the decorative Victorian plaster around the wide doorway was chipped and broken and blackened with generations of grime. The floor of the entrance was flagged with white and black slabs in the pattern of a draught-board, but the tramp of untold feet and the accumulation of dust and grease and ash had blurred the squares so that now it had taken on the appearance of a kind of loathsome skin disease. A row of dustbins lined inside of the entrance and exhaled the smell of rotten fruit, stale food, stagnant water and general decay.

(La Guma, 1962, p. 20)

In another passage:

On the floors of the tenements the grime collected quickly. A muddied sole of a shoe scuffed across the worn, splintery boards and left tiny embankments of dirt along the sides of the minute raised ridges of wood; or water was spilled or somebody urinated and left wet patches... and in the dampness deadly life formed in decay and bacteria and mold....

(La Guma, 1962, p. 32)

In the same tenement the

“staircase was worn and blackened, the old oak banister loose and scarred. Naked bulbs wherever the light sockets were in working order cast a pallid glare over parts of the interior, lighting up the big patches of damp and mildew, and the maps of denuded sections on the walls.”

(La Guma, 1962, p. 22)

Not to mention the condition of the rooms of the same tenement, Uncle Doughty's room is “hot and airless as a newly opened tomb” (La Guma, 1962, p. 24). Moreover, there is Frank Lorenzo's room where he lives with his wife and five children:

“ceiling had been painted white once, a very long time ago, but now it was grey and the paint was cracked and peeling and fly-spotted over the grey. The boards had warped and contracted so that there were dark gaps between them through which dust filtered down into the room whenever anything moved on the roof of the building”.

(La Guma, 1962, p. 32/33)

¹ My emphasis

The above passages are typical of La Guma's narrative style. At surface level they have the Zolaesque quality of emphasis on details. The concentration of details in those passages builds a sort of connection between dirt and poverty which makes this environment unfit for human occupation exposing them to the risk of diseases. Those descriptions are used by La Guma to emphasize the government's neglect and abandonment of the "tenements of the poor" (ibid), where the non-whites live. Moreover, Balutansky argues that "La Guma's vivid descriptions bring to life the alienating turmoil and disruption of the segregated milieu in which his characters are forced to live". (Balutansky, 1990, p. 15) Undeniably, the impressionistic details are employed by La Guma to impress and shock the reader.

However, disruption and decay are not only seen in the physical environment, they are also seen in the way the characters are described, emphasizing the deprivation of the non-whites in a Manichean environment. To illustrate, Michael Adonis wears

jeans that had been washed several times and which were now left with a pale-blue color flecked with old grease stains...the legs were too long, so that they had to be turned up six inches at the bottom. He also wore an old khaki shirt and over it a rubbed and scuffed and worn leather coat His shoes are worn and began to crack in the grooves across the insteps.

(La Guma, 1962, p. 1/2)

Joe is another non-white character who is shattered by poverty. His

trousers had gone at the cuffs and knees, the rents held together with pins and pieces of string, and so stained and spotted... he wore a raincoat that reached almost to his ankles, the sleeves torn loose at the shoulders... [and] his shoes were worn beyond recognition.

(La Guma, 1962, p. 8)

In addition to Michael Adonis and Joe, there is Franky Lorenzo who

wore a singlet and a pair of old corduroys and the singlet was dark with sweat and dust, and the corduroys shiny with wear, and there was coal dust in the grooves where the furry cotton had been worn away. He had an air of harassment about him, of too hard work and unpaid bills and sour babies.

(La Guma, 1962, p. 33)

Anyway, La Guma focuses as much on the visual reaction of the reader as on his supposed sense of smell. Indeed, the evocative use of squalid details of the milieu and the particular scenes that he tries to create brings to life the actions in the pubs and drinking houses and what they reveal of the human condition of non-whites. There is the depiction of the scene in the Portuguese café, for instance:

It was warm inside, with the smell of frying oil and fat and tobacco smoke....Ancient strips of flypaper hung from the ceiling dotted with their victims and the floor was stained with spilled coffee, grease and crushed cigarette butts; the walls marked with the countless rubbing of soiled shoulders and grimy hands. There was a general atmosphere of shabbiness about the café...

(La Guma, 1962, p. 3)

Actually, La Guma's emphasis on the squalid condition of the environment "is to stir the conscience of the reader to recognize it not simply as part of the fiction of the story but more significantly...as a vivid illustration of the South African situation under apartheid". (Asein, 1987, p. 54) Certainly, he intentionally evokes the sordid features of the environment to reveal how the material decay of the milieu causes the moral degeneration and irresponsibility of the characters as a result of their being marginalized and victimized by the white political system

2.2.Environment and Determinism in *A Walk in the Night*:

La Guma, explicitly, draws a portrait of the frustration, alienation and the brutalization of his characters who are confined by the apartheid regime in specific zones where they can live and work. In *A Walk in the Night*, La Guma sets clearly the “Manichean World”, confirming the alleged *superiority* of the whites over the alleged *inferiority* of the non-whites as established by the apartheid system. In the Apartheid mentality, the whites are representing justice, law and order, whereas the non-whites are representing the delinquents that are relentlessly persecuted by the police system.

Actually, in the novella, the police are presented as oppressors, whereas in normal situations, the task of the police is to protect the citizens and assure their security. To impersonate this system, there is the white policeman, Constable Raalt, who represents the police corps hunting and causing the death of the colored boy, Willieboy, just because he is suspected of causing the death of the white old man, Uncle Doughty.

As mentioned in chapter One, La Guma chose Naturalism to show the predicament of his characters. Michael Adonis is confined in an authoritarian society and an oppressive environment that determines his reactions and deeds. However, La Guma makes Michael's experiences plain to the reader through a thorough description of the location and background overshadowed by the Apartheid system. This can be illustrated by the police scene, when Adonis is stopped and checked by the two white policemen for no particular reason. Immediately, Adonis focuses his “gaze at some

spot on [the policemen's] uniforms" (Ibid) to avoid looking at their eyes, for that would be taken as a challenge or a question to their authority. This recognition is instantly followed by a thorough description of the second policeman and his *hands*:

The second policeman stuck his thumbs in his gun-belt and smiled distantly and faintly. It was more a slight movement of his lips, rather than a smile. The backs of his hands where they dropped over the leather of the belt were broad and white, and the outlines of the veins were pale blue under the skin, the skin covered with a field of tiny, slanting ginger colored hair. His fingers were thick and the knuckles big and creased and pink, the nails shiny and healthy and carefully kept.

(La Guma, 1962, p. 10/11)

Willfully, Adonis subdues his fury by focusing his attention on the minute details; a technique that he learnt from experience. However, this description of the exact and tangible immediacy in an implicit way is also employed when Adonis meets Uncle Doughty:

...his face looked yellowish-blue. The purple-veined, grayish skin had loosened all over it and sagged in blotched, puffy folds. With his sagging lower eyelids, revealing bloodshot rims, and the big, bulbous, red-veined nose that had once been aquiline, his face had the expression of a decrepit bloodhound. His head was almost bald, and wisps of dirty grey hair clung to the bony, pinkish skull like scrub clinging to eroded rock.

(La Guma, 1962, p. 22/23)

Adonis focuses his attention on Uncle Doughty's face to repress his anger towards the whites by satisfying his gaze on the vulnerable, worn out *white* body, examining his helplessness.

In addition to that, the police are described in very specific terms to show their harshness, heartlessness and racism: "they had hard, frozen faces as if carved out of pink ice, and hard, dispassionate eyes, hard and bright as pieces of blue glass." (La Guma, 1962, p. 10) Hence, La Guma's style characterizes the frustration and

resentment of the non-whites in South Africa. The immediacy offered by the writer is evidence of his own experiences as a non-white having lived in the District Six area.

Moreover, the technique that Michael uses to contain his emotions involved in his interaction with the white men, either the police or Uncle Doughty, is also used by the narrator to eschew the amplification of Michael's emotions. By way of illustration, immediately after Adonis has been fired from his job, the narrator describes Adonis as follows:

He looked right through [the workers going home], refusing to see them, nursing a little growth of anger ...his thoughts concentrated upon the pustule of rage and humiliation that was continuing to ripen deep down within him. The young man wore jeans that had been washed several times and which were.....

(La Guma, 1962, p. 1)

From describing Adonis's rage, the narrator, immediately, gives a minute description of Adonis's clothing. Therefore, "the concrete and detailed surface of the novella is a deliberate mode of controlling the feelings of the characters and the narrator: rage and violence are violently suppressed by the calm, naturalistic objectivity of the prose" (JanMohamed, 1983, p. 276).

Overall, in *A Walk in the Night*, La Guma sets clearly the world of colonialism, what Fanon calls the "Manichean world" (Fanon, 1961, p. 15); District six where the non-whites live, the colonized zone, is "hungry ..., starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light" (Fanon, 1961, p. 39). Certainly, the non-whites are confined in an environment that is dominated by a system that uses political ignorance

and marginalization as a means of oppression. All in all, the outcome of the Manichean division imposed by apartheid on the non-whites is seen in the way poverty, squalor, injustice and police brutality controls their wretched lives.

In order to cover the particular experience of racial discrimination of the Afro-Americans and the South African non-whites, Richard Wright and Alex La Guma interpreted fin-de-siecle Euro-American Naturalism in their respective novels *Native Son* and *A Walk in the Night*. While Crane, Dreiser, Norris and Farrell tried to demonstrate the failure of the American dream of being successful in the capitalist economy as the reason for the downfall of the characters in their novels, Wright and La Guma blamed racial discrimination as the causal factor for the predicament of their characters (Chandramohan, 1992, p. 33). Both Bigger Thomas and Michael Adonis live in an oppressive environment; they are poor, unemployed and they have accidentally killed white characters that led them to their downfalls.

Chapter Three

Locked Attitude in Black/White Relations

Wright's *Native Son* and La Guma's *A Walk in the Night* display parallels regarding the type of the characters portrayed, their social and economic background, and the link between the characters and their social environment. In *Native Son* the main character Bigger Thomas, unintentionally, kills Mary Dalton, the daughter of his employer. Similarly, in *A Walk in the Night* Michael Adonis inadvertently kills Uncle Doughty, an old white Irishman who lives in the same tenement.

Both novels portray Bigger Thomas and Michael Adonis, whose frustration in “Jim Crowed” America and Apartheid South Africa, respectively, led them to their dramatic end; Bigger Thomas ends up on an electric chair and Michael Adonis joins a criminal gang. The following part of this dissertation is to study the impact of the segregative establishment on the victimized sections of society in their various reactions, laying the stress on the protagonists' delineations by Richard Wright and Alex La Guma. This part of the study will, hopefully, lead to a comprehension of the nature of Bigger Thomas' and Michael Adonis' psychological disorientation and to an examination of how that behavior manifests itself in their actions.

1. The Confined Attitudes in Black/White Relations in *Native Son*:

The Manichean Chicago that Wright depicts in *Native Son* is made responsible for the dehumanization of both the oppressor and the oppressed who, according to Elder, undergo the psychological consequences of an environment characterized by discrimination. In line with Elder's opinion, Wright's aim in *Native Son* was to show that the sociological disharmony that he dramatises reflects the psychological one.

Moreover, he views that the psychological damage inflicted on African Americans is similar to a psychological fracturing of identity which echoes the fractured society.

The novel portrays Bigger Thomas, whose frustration in the Jim Crowed America led him to his brutal end: accidentally killing Mary Dalton, then intentionally killing his girlfriend Bessie and, eventually, his own death on an electric Chair. Through the character of Bigger Thomas, Wright exemplifies the broken psyche of the blacks that is controlled by fear, shame and hatred. Wright follows the lead of Frederick Douglass, whose writing is known for its ardent insight into the psychology of both the slave and the slave owner, in representing the cruel “psychological manipulation” of the African Americans by the whites. Besides, he shows his characters as psychologically damaged by the “master/slave relationship”, in which the white master “in such relationships frequently turns bestial or cruel - even while maintaining a veneer of civility - while the slave obviously suffers a depleted sense of worth and identity; dehumanization is the consequence common to both” (Elder, 2010, p. 31).

The psychological perplexity caused by the environmental racism has led to the instability of Bigger's identity. His identity is a mixture of formulations: his pretence to be the toughest among the gang, his subjugation in the presence of whites, the stereotype imposed on blacks of being rapists, and his real internal self which is a combination of fear, anxiety, anger and hatred. Some critics, such as Jake Alspaugh, Sheldon Brivic and Mathew Elder, went so far as to suggest that Bigger Thomas suffers from some kind of schizophrenia or existential identity crisis. All these formulations contribute to Bigger's unstable identity.

In a sequence of early scenes, Wright parallels the tension and fracture of both psychology and society. To that end, the reader can deduce that the psychological fracture is the effect of the societal one and comprehend the existential and psychological crisis of Bigger and the African Americans on the whole. Therefore, this part of the study will focus on the psychological turmoil of Bigger Thomas and the likes of him. Bigger is one of the subjects who undergo a psychological damage in a racist society.

Bigger's psychological discomfort occurs early in the novel. By way of illustration, the scene when Bigger was looking for a way to avoid thinking about racial discrimination and pleads with his friend Gus to "play white" -to act as if they were white folks- shows Bigger's "troubled sense of identity" (Elder, 2010, p. 34). Some critics see that the playacting scene of Bigger and his friend Gus is typical amid African- Americans who are fighting to face a racially oppressive society.

Frantz Fanon asserts that "there is no native who does not dream at least once a day of setting himself up in the settler's place" (Fanon, 1961, p. 39). Anyway, Bigger's psychological instability manifests itself in the roles he played along with Gus. They took roles of authority figures giving orders. First, Bigger took the role of a government official ordering his general (Gus) to "attack the enemy's left flank... with tanks, gas, planes and infantry" (Wright, 1940, p. 18). In the second scenario, Gus takes the role of J. P. Morgan and orders the selling of "twenty thousand shares of U.S. Steel" (Ibid). In the third scenario, Bigger plays the President of the United States and orders the Secretary of State (Gus) to do something with the blacks who are making

trouble. Their choices of the personas they assumed reflect the psychological oppression of the authority over the blacks, in the Manichean Chicago of the 1930's. Eventually, however, this scene ends with a wave of frustration about this Manichean world that is oppressing them economically and psychologically.

S. Bluefarb argues that Bigger Thomas' fantasies are "fantasies of escapism" (Bluefarb, 1972, p. 139) that Bigger Thomas uses to escape his oppression. However, Warnes suggests another interpretation of Bigger's and Gus's fantasies. He claims that Bigger's and Gus's "game of mimicry suggest, to be a political leader is to play white." He also asserts that Fanon's "dual narcissism" - that white is right and black is beautiful- is present here. When Bigger and Gus indulge their fantasies, they reveal "their ego-ideal of the white man who *looks* black or the black man who *acts* white" (Warnes, 2007, p. 110).

In his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), Fanon states that Bigger Thomas does not suffer an "inferiority complex" but "a feeling of non-existence". Because

Sin is Negro as virtue is white, [a]ll ... white men in a group, guns in their hands, cannot be wrong. I [black man] am guilty. I do not know of what, but I know that I am no good... It is Bigger Thomas – he is afraid, he is terribly afraid. He is afraid, but of what is he afraid? Of himself. No one knows yet who he is, but he knows that fear will fill the world when the world finds out. And when the world knows, the world always expects something of the Negro. He is afraid lest the world know, he is afraid of the fear that the world would feel if the world knew... In the end, Bigger Thomas acts. To put an end to his tension, he acts, he responds to the world's anticipation.

(Fanon, 1952, p. 139)

Andrew Warnes argues that Bigger Thomas's fear is his "default emotion" (Warnes, 2007, p. 72). Nevertheless, according to Fanon, Bigger Thomas's actions are

the outcome of an oppressive world where the black man is considered as sinful. More than that, his actions are, simply, what his society has expected he will do.

Sheldon Brivic suggests that Bigger's personality is divided, that "a conflict exists in his mind between the rational and the emotional". He finds himself torn between adjusting himself to a racist world that seduces him with "images of happiness and power" but denies him the opportunity of fulfillment, and the desire of happiness and power that his reason must repress (Brivic, 1974, p. 233). Brivic illustrates this point clearly, he quotes: "Bigger felt a curious sensation-half sensual, half thoughtful. He was divided and pulled against himself". (Wright, 1940, p. 25).

Moreover, some critics suggest that the rat symbolizes Bigger Thomas himself, noticing that the connection between the rat and the Thomas family parallels the relationship between Bigger and society in general. Nevertheless, from a psycho-analytical point of view, Jake Alspaugh notes that the rat is "the manifestation of Bigger's own fear and shame, aspects of his personality that he battles to keep hidden throughout the novel". Immediately after overcoming the rat, he swings it about the room to scare his sister. This aggressive behavior is considered as "coping mechanism to hide his own feelings of inferiority" (Alspaugh, 2013, p. 6). His endeavor to hide this feeling manifests itself on many other occasions. For instance, Bigger wants to use a gun to rob the white man's shop "to replace his inner fear and submissiveness around whites with self-assertion in a quest for humanization" (Elder, 2010, p. 37). Moreover, he acts with a hyper-masculine and aggressive behavior against Gus whom he accuses of being "Scared to rob a white man" (Wright, 1940, p. 26) and assaults him with a

knife. Committing the crime and the fear of its execution cause a big psychological pressure on Bigger Thomas; and this psychological pressure gets complicated further by his aggressive behavior towards Gus.

Wright describes clearly Bigger's anxiety:

[Bigger] knew that the fear of robbing a white man had had hold of him when he started that fight with Gus; but he knew it in a way that kept it from coming to his mind in the form of a hard and sharp idea. His confused emotions had made him feel instinctively that it would be better to fight Gus and spoil the plan of the robbery than to confront a white man with a gun. But he kept this knowledge of his fear thrust firmly down in him; his courage to live depended upon how successfully his fear was hidden from his consciousness.

(Wright, 1940, p. 42)

Obvious as it is in this passage, Wright explains clearly Bigger's confused emotions and his awareness of his "coping mechanism". However, Bigger seems to be perplexed by the disconnection between his apparent violence and his inner fear and anxiety. By way of illustration, it was Bigger who suggested to use a gun to rob Blum's store, but at the same time he is terrified at the idea of doing it.

According to Aimé J. Ellis, for Bigger and his friends, stealing from whites is a "symbolic challenge to the white world's rule over them". From a psychological perspective, the challenge of robbing a white man formed for Bigger and his friends the site of a "phantasmal liberation" from white oppression. The fact of robbing Blum's store and thus opposing the Jim Crow law is a course through which Bigger and his friends endeavor to claim their humanity. This exemplifies their aim to overcome their fear, to affirm a feeling of fearlessness and rebellion. Accordingly, fearlessness functions as a "psychic ideal" that Bigger uses to hide his fear and "play

tough". This ideal entails an affirmation of Bigger's ego and, consequently, constitutes fearlessness as a platform of recognition, status, and self-respect. Therefore, fearlessness relieves Bigger from his inferiority complex. (Ellis, 2007, p. 64)

Another fact to consider is that, in the presence of the whites, Bigger's aggressiveness vanishes and transforms into submissiveness. In this regard, Matthew Elder thinks that Bigger's fear and mechanical submissiveness towards whites is "a psychological barrier against which are arrayed both his social bravado and his very real need to express some inexplicable aggression." (Elder, 2010, p. 37)

After the psychological pressure he experienced earlier in the morning, bigger prepares himself to cross the separating line between the blacks and the whites. Aware of the racial inequity he will be obliged to cope with, he decides to take his knife and gun which are the source of his strength against Gus. Confusingly, he is taking the gun which he was terrified to use against Blum, the white man. However, Wright gives us an immediate explanation to this act; bigger would feel safer carrying a gun among the whites, yet he was not planning to use it. In addition to that, the gun "would make him feel that he was the equal of them, give him a sense of completeness" (Wright, 1940, p. 43). Once again, according to Elder's assessment, Bigger's "secret possession of the knife and the gun would, in the face of the degrading submissive behavior he was forced into, symbolize his groping for manhood and narrow the gulf between his proud, boastful identity in his neighborhood and his demure, prideless identity in white society". (Elder, 2010, p. 40)

However, when Bigger Thomas meets the Daltons, we see a new Bigger, not the neighborhood “tough boy”. He switches to the slave mode with “yessums”, “yessuhs” and “nawsuhs” expressions, showing his obedience and submissiveness to the white men. This is what Fanon affirms to be a “massive psychoexistential complex” derived from the “juxtaposition of the black and white races” (Fanon, 1952, p. 14). Bigger takes the role expected of him by the Manichean society of the white establishment. He has just taken the role in which “white folks wanted him to be when in their presence; none had ever told him that in so many words, but their manner had made him feel that they did”. However, Bigger Thomas hated himself and the feeling this new Bigger created: “He hated himself at that moment. Why was he acting and feeling this way?”. (Wright, 1940, p. 47/48). Consequently, Bigger finds himself in a perplexing existential dilemma and suffers from “psychological damage from having to create a false identity and suppress those character traits proscribed by the white[s]”. (Elder, 2010, p. 40).

Oppression makes Bigger Thomas act with violence; Bigger who “plays tough” to hide his fear becomes a murderer. The act of killing Mary Dalton was indeed an accident, but one cannot endorse his act of beheading her and burning her body in the furnace. Bigger did this out of fear of being electrocuted, because he knows that nobody would believe that the murder was an accident. Moreover, Bigger knows that the white society has concluded that a black man found in a white girl's room has necessarily raped her. Moreover, in the 1930s, “a black man who is accused of killing

a white woman is already guilty, no matter what the circumstances are” (Twagilimana & Sublette, 2011, p. 327).

With this in mind, the instant Bigger Thomas puts the pillow on Mary Dalton's face, his psyche takes another path. The accidental crime “becomes an act of creation, as he will ascertain at the end of the story: “I didn't know I was really alive in this world until I felt things hard enough to kill for 'em” (Wright, 1940, p. 429). The crime makes Bigger move from the status of the oppressed, watching the racist society confine him within the status of the inferior Other, to that of the oppressor, the doer, manipulating them by his knowledge of having secretly killed Mary Dalton, at least for a short while. In fact, this knowledge provides him with strength that his gun and knife once had offered him. Accordingly, the submissive obedient Bigger in the presence of the whites is gone and a new Bigger is born; a Bigger that could look his oppressor “in the eyes and not feel angry. The feeling of being always enclosed in the stifling embrace of an invisible force had gone from him.” (Wright, 1940, p. 150). What is more, Bigger's girlfriend becomes a threat to his survival when she knows about the crime and becomes a fugitive too. Therefore, he kills her and moves on in his existential journey.

Unlike Michael Adonis who escaped the crime scene after accidentally killing Uncle Doughty, relying on the fact that nobody had seen him there, Bigger Thomas has made up scenarios to dissociate himself from it, burned the white girl's body to eliminate any evidence; moreover, he wrote a ransom note and signed it 'Red' to

frame Jan Erlone, Mary's boyfriend, because Jan is a communist and is hated by Mr. Dalton, who holds a capitalist culture.

Bigger gains his utmost sense of self by the end of the novel; "In prison, he attained a level of self-awareness that permitted him to come to grips with the meaning of his existence..." (Cobb, 1979, p. 373); he utters an existentialist declaration: "What I killed for, *I am!*" (Wright, 1940, p. 429), affirming his existence; that is, existence determines the essence of the self. This statement echoes the philosophical theory of existentialism.

This philosophical declaration settles existence as the valid measurement of one's essence. Bigger makes of the crime the creator of his essence: "I killed, therefore I am" (Twagilimana & Sublette, 2011, p. 336), affirming his individual responsibility and thus assuming his acts. N. K. Cobb asserts that bigger Thomas had found "meaning in his murders and through them his life had gained significance." (Cobb, 1979, p. 374)

During his stay in Paris and his association with Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and Albert Camus, Richard Wright absorbed existentialism. However, he was already acquainted with Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* (1864) and its "emphasis on the meaninglessness, absurdity, and alienation of urban life". That is why Wright was called the "Black Dostoevsky" (Twagilimana & Sublette, 2011, p. 337). However, Sartre's account of Existentialism claims that "existence precedes essence": that is a person becomes his/her actions. According to Jean-Paul

Sartre, existence is simply realizing one's own presence in the world. In his philosophical novel *Nausea* (1938), Sartre asserts through the character of Antoine Roquentin, the protagonist, that existence is merely being there amid other existences. In fact, the absurdity, alienation and meaninglessness of life are forces that outline Bigger Thomas's life in *Native Son*, that were developed by Sartre in his work. Bigger Thomas's unintentional killing of Mary Dalton is a turning point in his life; it leads him to his death, and ironically to his self-discovery and existence by fully assuming his humanity and responsibility for his crimes.

Thus, one could deduce that Bigger is a rebel, a "grown-up Tom", who repudiates oppression. Bigger Thomas's crimes resulted in his "development toward agency and subjectivity, self-consciousness and a sort of articulateness at the end of the novel." (Fraile, 2007, p. 135). As horrible as his crimes are, he uses them "to create himself and force acknowledgment by a society that has denied him true existence" (Twagilimana & Sublette, 2011, p. 324).

In *Native Son*, racism is portrayed as destructive not only to the African Americans, but to the whites as well. The private detective Britten and the Dalton's house-keeper Peggy, for example, are victims of racism among whites. The careless feeling of superiority of the whites misleads them to see blacks as less than human. This feeling of superiority can be seen as a weakness, in the fact that Bigger Thomas uses it as cover-up to avoid being suspected of killing Mary Dalton. Bigger is aware that the whites would not consider him as a possible murderer because they don't think a black man is capable of killing a white person: "His being black and at the bottom of

the world was something which [Bigger] could take with a new-born strength” (Wright, 1940, p. 150). Certainly, Bigger is safe from being a suspect, for a while. Anyway, racism is shown here to be internalized in the psyche of the whites and blacks alike; for even the well-intentioned whites show discrimination confirming their alleged superiority. (Shegufta, 2012)

2. The Confined Attitudes in Black/White Relations in *A Walk in the Night*:

La Guma's method of characterization in *A Walk in the Night*, merging characters with the environment, reinforces the quality of his social comment. *A Walk in the Night* is one of La Guma's portrayals of the effects of the Manichean division forced by apartheid. He relies on realistic stories highlighting a concrete behavior. He uses the technique of concentration of details that JanMohamed calls 'calm descriptions' that he, JanMohamed, considers deceptive because “the concrete objectivity masks a powerful and explosive hostility of the characters as well as the narrators” (JanMohamed, 1983, p. 129). However, as in his portrayal of the physical environment of the narrative, there is much significance in minute details, “which help to enhance the overall portrait and the correlation between the characters and their environment”. Therefore, the experiences of some characters are “seen as the direct results of apartheid” (Asein, 1987, p. 54/55)

In *A Walk in the Night*, all the non-white characters, except Michael Adonis, are passive; they accept their deprivation and degradation. B. Chandramohan asserts that most characters in *A Walk in the Night* “are passive victims of social environment” (Chandramohan, 1992, p. 35). Thus, they are ignorant of the possibility of self-

fulfillment: they are street rascals, alcoholics and gangsters. Michael Adonis is the only character who had a job at the sheet-metal factory. Yet, his dreams are limited to economic and civil freedom. However, La Guma's aim is to show how the Apartheid system negates desire for self-fulfillment of its subjects through Michael's transformation during the narrative, from a productive law abiding citizen to a gangster. Therefore, Michael Adonis is a product of his environment.

In the novella, "the characters are what they are, think what they think, and do what they do because the environment is what it is, and it is toward the confining, limiting, debilitating social and political structures that La Guma's writings, and the actions of his chosen heroes are aimed" (Pointer, 2001, p. 18). La Guma's aim is to show some of the possible consequences in the ordinary relationship of man and environment; that is, a non-white man, in the specific milieu of powerful white supremacy.

Michael Adonis, the protagonist, for instance, appears limited to the innate "emotions of frustration, anger, violence and an intuitive, obstinate pride". He behaves spontaneously and impulsively to internal and external forces, rather than deliberate and intentional behavior. (Pointer, 2001, p. 10). In Fact, throughout the novella, Michael Adonis experiences different complex feelings caused by the oppressive environment that affected his psyche. Every incident in the novel reveals a new dimension of Michael's character and his inner psychic turmoil.

The feeling of anger accompanies Michael Adonis all along the narrative. When Michael is walking on the street after he got fired from the sheet-metal factory, he is “deaf to the shouts and curses of the drivers....He looked right through [the stream of workers going home], refusing to see them”. He is absent minded, thinking about the “pustule of rage and humiliation that was continuing to ripen deep down within him”. (La Guma, 1962, p. 1).

He loses his job because he tells his white boss “to go to hell” when the latter scolded him for taking a minute to go to the bathroom. The man can’t even go to the bathroom at freewill. As Fanon states, the black man is considered a “*machine-animal-man*” (Fanon, 1952, p. 220). Michael Adonis is one of the oppressed individuals by the system of Apartheid. Adonis’s foreman’s attitude mirrors the general injustices that characterize intra-racial relations, placing the whites as masters and the non-whites virtually as slaves who are there only for work.

The repressive police system is also foregrounded when we see Michael Adonis checked systematically by two white policemen for no specific reason. He is exposed to the “routine harassment which non-whites suffer in the streets” (Asein, 1987, p. 61). Only because he is not white, he must have “dagga” or has stolen the money he has. Consequently, the feeling of rage grows inside him because he was searched needlessly and accusingly for no particular reason: “deep down inside [Michael Adonis] the feeling of rage, frustration and violence swelled like a boil, knotted with pain.” (La Guma, 1962, p. 11).

Adding to the rage that was growing little by little inside Michael Adonis that first started with the work's foreman, then the incident with the two policemen, Michael Adonis goes to the pub and has a couple of drinks which give him a sudden giddiness; and "the courage of liquor made his thoughts brave...: to hell with them. I'm not scared of them. Ou Scofield and the law the whole effing lot of them. Bastards. To hell with them". More than that, he thinks of revenge: "I'll get even with them, sonsabitches. They'll see...that sonavabitch, that bloody white sonavabitch, I'll get him" (La Guma, 1962, p. 19/21). The feeling of anger mixed with alcohol transforms Michael Adonis into a potential outlaw.

Nursing the foetus of hatred inside his belly, Michael Adonis goes home, determined to make the whites pay back for the harm, oppression and the humiliation he has had to endure in the racist society under Apartheid. Pointer claims that Michael Adonis knows he will not do it and he is angry and irritated with his powerlessness (Pointer, 2001, p. 11). Consequently, his growing anger breeds hatred deep inside him towards all the whites, who miss no opportunity to exert their domination.

As a consequence, the vulnerable old Irishman Doughty who is dying of alcoholism, diabetes and old age and happens to live in the colored zone, in the same tenement where Michael Adonis lives, "pays" individually for the collective crimes of the whites. As a matter of fact, Doughty's vulnerability makes of him a perfect recipient of Michael's hatred and anger towards the whites and the racist system.

The combination of rage, frustration and headiness of the liquor that Michael Adonis consumed earlier that night, which turned into “smoldering violence inside him” (La Guma, 1962), makes him act violently with the white man and accidentally kills him. According to Pointer, this violent act had to come out, and that the liquor was just a means for dealing with the foetus of hatred inside Michael Adonis. (Pointer, 2001, p. 7)

Another feeling pervades Michael Adonis when he meets the two white policemen; it is fear. The police in South Africa, in general and in the novella at hand in particular, represent the “dehumanizing instrument” of white hegemony and terror to which Michael Adonis reacts accordingly. The incident with the two policemen becomes the “major factor motivating his subsequent behavior”. When he meets the two white policemen, Michael Adonis is “gripped with fear” (Pointer, 2001, p. 11). Although he is boiling with rage deep inside, he acts calmly with the two policemen, controlling and hiding his rage and frustration. However, he controls his fear and anger through an interior monologue where he relieves his feelings by cursing at the two policemen: “you mucking boers.” (La Guma, 1962, p. 11).

By way of prudence, instead of looking in the two white policemen's eyes, Adonis focuses his “gaze at some spot on [the policemen's] uniforms” (La Guma, 1962) to avoid looking at their eyes, for that would be taken as a challenge or a question to their authority. Regardless of Michael Adonis's anger and humiliation, he controls his behavior, using a technique that he learnt from experience. This technique is to contain his emotions involved in his interaction with the white men by focusing

his attention on the minute details of the policemen's uniform. The scene of the encounter of the two policemen is "of psychological importance in that it is a measure of the feeling which has temporarily transformed Michael Adonis' personality". (Pointer, 2001, p. 10)

Interestingly, however, Michael Adonis shows a remarkable attitude when a policeman asks him to go off the street:

"Well, muck off from the street. Don't let us find you standing around, you hear?"
"Yes,(*you mucking boer*)"
"Yes what? Who are you talking to, man?"
"Yes baas (*you mucking bastard boer with your mucking gun and your mucking bloody red head*)."

(La Guma, 1962, p. 11)

Michael Adonis refuses to say "baas" to the policeman, because he's rebelling against the oppressive system and does not take the whites to be the masters. One could argue that the policeman and Michael Adonis are locked in what Hegel calls "a Life-and-death struggle", in the master slave dialectic (Hegel, 1977, p. xvii) ; both focus on being superior, and it's Michael Adonis who has to "give in" to resolve this antipathy. This struggle's resolution will decide on their position in the world. Because Michael Adonis values life, he submits to the master to survive by obeying and confining his anger and frustration. (Frame, 2014)

Compared to Bigger Thomas, Michael's feeling is different in the presence of whites; Michael does not feel submissive. He says "baas" to the white policeman only because the latter asked him to do so; he says it against his will. Conversely, Bigger

Thomas, once at the Dalton's, automatically switches to the slave's submissiveness, and uses the "simpleton dialect expected of him and appropriate to the role that white society has circumscribed for him" (Elder, 2010, p. 40).

There is another position that one observes on Michael Adonis when telling his friend Willieboy about the incident that caused him to lose his job; he said that the white foreman "called me a cheeky black bastard. *Me, I'm not black.*"³ (La Guma, 1962, p. 4). It's obvious that he, as a colored man, feels superior to those with a darker complexion. As a matter of fact, one can say that Adonis suffers from an inferiority complex; namely, he is concerned with "self-evaluation and with the ego-ideal" by comparison (Fanon, 1952, p. 211). When Michael Adonis is in contact with somebody else, his feeling of inferiority preoccupies him of comparing "whether he is less intelligent than I, blacker than I, less respectable than I." (Ibid). Indeed, he compares himself to the blacks and believes he is better than the blacks. Furthermore, Abdul JanMohamed suggests that according to the South African caste system it is "quite probable that Michael was dismissed because he was not adequately humble before his white master" (JanMohamed, 1983, p. 232). In Fanon's view, this obsession with self-evaluation by comparison is a struggle for superiority and more precisely an inferiority complex. Therefore, Michael Adonis' inferiority complex makes him "react with a superiority complex" (Fanon, 1952, p. 213).

On the other hand, constable Raalt conforms to Hegel's theory of recognition, that the master identifies himself only in opposition to the slave. Indeed, constable

³ My emphasis

Raalt needs Chips' recognition as *THE* "baas", the master. Therefore, he needed to hear him, the non-white individual, say "baas" to confirm his superiority. In the same vein, Chandramohan asserts that "Raalt suffers from an acute sense of inferiority because of his inability to control his wife, whom he suspects of carrying on an extra-marital affair." (Chandramohan, 1992, p. 84). Accordingly, one could argue that Raalt is in search of self-evaluation, a struggle for superiority. Thus, this partly accounts for his inferiority complex.

Another key element to consider is that, after accidentally killing Uncle Doughty, Michael feels fear and confusion. The incident creates a chain of psycho-physical reactions. When he saw "the bluish, waxy face of the old man", he said "Jesus, and turned quickly and vomited...holding himself upright with the palms of his hands...He stood like that, shaking, until his stomach was empty" (La Guma, 1962, p. 27). Immediately, after this psycho-physical turmoil, a feeling of regret pervades him and says that he did not mean to kill him. In fact, Michael Adonis is afraid for he knows that the "law don't like white people finished off" (La Guma, 1962, p. 28).

However, when he talks to Joe, the beach-comber, Michael reveals a new feeling about the incident:

"He was suddenly proud of his own predicament. He felt as if he was the only man who had ever killed another and thought himself a curiosity at which people should wonder. He longed to be questioned about it, about the way he had felt when he had done it, about the impulse that had caused him to take the life of another...It was just something that...placed him above others, like a poor beggar who suddenly found himself the heir to vast riches."

(La Guma, 1962, p. 62/63)

In this regard, Pointer argues that this “individual act of violence [accidental killing of the white old man] is therapeutic” (Pointer, 2001, p. 19); it is the “cleansing force” that “frees [Michael Adonis] from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction, [making] him fearless and restores his self-respect” (Fanon, 1961, p. 94). Likewise, Asein, compellingly in favour of this point of view, argues that “The murder becomes for [Michael Adonis] a form of affirmation of his individual will” (Asein, 1987, p. 62). This affirmation is, in a way, reminiscent of Bigger Thomas; after killing Mary Dalton, burning her body in a furnace, and implicating her boyfriend Jan in the murder, Bigger Thomas “feels elated that he is superior to the white people around him ” for he knows who killed her and *they* don’t. Hence, both Michael Adonis’ and Bigger Thomas’ criminal actions are “their only opportunities for self-fulfillment” (Chandramohan, 1992, p. 35).

In fact, *A Walk in the Night* does not portray only the non-white oppressed individual by the system of apartheid. Indeed, the Irishman known as Uncle Doughty who had once been an actor, is now a “deserted, abandoned ruin, destroyed by alcohol” and destroyed by the segregative system of Apartheid. Uncle Doughty, the white Irishman, is too a victim of the same racist system that oppresses the non-whites. The white Irishman did not abide by the law and violated the Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act and the Immorality Act⁴ by getting married to a colored lady. It seems

⁴ The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act and the Immorality Act (1949) worked to prevent mixed marriages: between whites and no-whites, including those formed outside South Africa, and to criminalize interracial sexual intercourse. The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act was repealed by the Immorality and Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Amendment Act, in 1985.

possible that he was deserted and alienated with the non-whites in District Six, suffering from the same poverty and marginalization that the non-whites were suffering from, because of the violation of this Act. As a consequence, Mr. Doughty has “fallen down the scale of racial superiority in the society” (Asein, 1987, p. 55).

However, Abrahams affirms that many whites, especially those who did not make it economically in the white community or refused the racist view of their community, lived inside the racial boundaries set aside for the non-whites. “Those whites are ... often treated with great contempt by the colored community”. As said by La Guma, Uncle Doughty is embodied after his Uncle who lived in District Six; “he was an old man who had been an actor and found himself living in a room in district six. He was found dead one morning by his landlady.... He was a relation of ours” (Abrahams, 1985, p. 54).

Uncle Doughty's presence in the novella gives significance to the ... “man's struggle against a system that denies him his human essence”. Thus, Uncle Doughty can be considered as a one of La Guma's characters who are fighting against the degradation of the system Apartheid. (Asein, 1987, p. 55).

Nevertheless, the desertion, marginalization and the “negatively charged images which suggest [Uncle Doughty's] imminent death” (Asein, 1987, p. 56), do not exclude him from the white race. When the *white* old man dies accidentally in the colored area, Constable Raalt becomes “an automaton who hunts down and brutalizes his human prey with the cold and callous indifference one associates with the jungle.”

(Barratt, 1998, p. 269). All in all, the South African police, “as the white instrument of the law, would demonstrate no sympathy or justice”. (Abrahams, 1985, p. 55)

All things considered, La Guma's aim is to show some of the possible outcomes of the relationship: non-white man and the specific milieu of powerful white supremacy. The aim is to show how the Apartheid system negates desire for self-fulfillment of its subjects. Michael Adonis is a product of his environment; the Apartheid system transforms him from a law-abiding citizen to the hopeless position of being a “skollie”. Cecil Abrahams affirms that Michael Adonis' “entire existence was at the mercy of the white society's whims”, and after the crime, he becomes an “aimless and haunted walker of the night whose fear finally leads him to join the true underground world of the “skollies” and the night”. (Abrahams, 1985, p. 56) In the oppressive environment of District Six, “Adonis' ending up as a member of Foxy's criminal gang was only a matter of time”. (Chandramohan, 1992, p. 82).

All in all, the psychological confusion caused by the environmental racism led to the instability of Bigger Thomas' and Michael Adonis' psyches. Wright's and La Guma's aims are to show that a sociological dissociation reflects a psychological one. Both Jim Crow and Apartheid negate self-fulfillment for their subjects; the non-whites are the product of their oppressive environment, Bigger Thomas ends up on an electric chair and Michael Adonis joins a criminal gang.

Chapter Four

Violence

Fanon advocates an act of violence to end the colonialist sphere of domination. In this concern, Fanon theorizes that violence has three phases. In the first phase, it is the violence of the white colonizer against the non-white colonized, where the latter are passive and undergo oppression. In the second phase, the colonized react with violence but against each other because of the lack of consciousness of the real source of their oppression, the colonizer. However, in the third phase, the colonized gain a certain degree of awareness, which enable them to see clearly who they should fight to get rid of their oppression.

Regarding the two novels under study, Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night*, one could presume that the two works portray the two phases of Fanon's theory of violence. As a matter of fact, the violence of the systems, Jim Crow Laws in America and Apartheid in South Africa, represent the first phase- the violence of the colonizer against the colonized. The second phase, the violence of the oppressed against each other could be seen in the two novels. For instance, Bigger Thomas and his friends "had always robbed Negroes. They felt that it was much easier and safer to rob their own people" (Wright, 1940, p. 14). In Addition to that, Bigger Thomas kills his girlfriend Bessie, who is an African American girl. Another example from *A Walk in the Night* is when Willieboy attacks Mister Greene to rob him: "Willieboy kicked him viciously in the ribs and [Mister Greene] squealed more from fear than pain...He kicked Greene again and again, then stood back while the groaning man climbed to his feet" (La Guma, 1962, pp. 69-70).

However, none of the works represent Fanon's Third phase of violence. Although the two murdered persons, Mary Dalton and Uncle Doughty, are white and the two murderers, Bigger Thomas and Michael Adonis, are non-whites, those two acts of violence against the white oppressor can't be considered as Fanon's Third phase of violence, because the two murders were accidental; the murders were not organized actions of violence against the oppressor to end the oppressed repression.

Chapter Four of my dissertation seeks to study the theme of violence in the two novels, *Native Son* and *A Walk in the Night*. It will examine some aspects of the main characters' personalities, focusing on their violent actions. I will focus on some of the factors that led to the characters' violent behavior, or more precisely violent reactions.

1. Violence in *Native Son*:

1.1. "How Bigger Was Born"

Wright's autobiography, *Black Boy* (1945), portrays Wright's attempt to contain his extreme behavior before the whites of the South, who expected him to be submissive. By way of escaping this frustration, Wright found refuge in reading contemporary American literature. He read the works of Dos Passos, Farrell, Steinbeck, and Dreiser, which mirrored his own frustration in the violence of the fictional characters;

[he] hungered for the sharp, frightening, breathtaking, almost painful excitement that the story had given [him], and [he vowed to] ... buy all the novels there were and read them to feed that thirst for violence that was in [him], for intrigue, for plotting, for secrecy, for bloody murders.

(Wright, 1945, p. 45)

According to Ellison's explanation for Wright's hunger for violence, "[the] violence was inflicted upon him by both family and community, and his response was also violent and it was that violence that gave significance to his writings" (Noronha, 1980, p. 57).

As mentioned earlier, Richard Wright notes, in "How Bigger Was Born", that Bigger Thomas is the fusion of not just one Bigger, but many. He said that "If [he] had known only one Bigger [he] would not have written *Native Son*." (Wright, 1940, p. 435) The first Bigger whom Wright talked about was from his childhood; he was a violent boy who terrorized young Wright and all of the boys he played with. This "Bigger was bad" (Ibid, p. 434). The second Bigger was tougher than the first one; his hardness was directed toward the whites who ruled the South. He would not pay for the food and clothes he bought on credit and refused to pay rent to the white landlords. He took whatever he wanted. However, he ended up in prison. The third Bigger who was named a "bad nigger" (Ibid, p. 435) by the whites did not fear the whites and did whatever he wanted by force. This Bigger was killed during the days of the Prohibition; he was shot through the back by a white policeman.

The fourth Bigger had a "rebellious spirit [which] made him violate all the taboos and consequently he always oscillated between moods of intense elation and depression" (Ibid, p. 436). This Bigger often broke Jim Crow laws of the South and refused to work, for he considered digging ditches for fifty cents a day as slavery. He always brooded over his freedom and would say: "The white folks won't let us do

nothing." (Ibid, p. 436). This Bigger ended in an asylum. Then there was the fifth Bigger who dared and violated the Jim Crow laws without fear. He always rode the Jim Crowed streetcars without paying and sat in the section for whites. When asked to move to the section for the blacks, he would use physical violence.

The Bigger Thomases were the only Negroes Wright knew of who constantly violated the Jim Crow laws of the South. However, they paid a terrible price for their acts of rebellion: "They were shot, hanged, maimed, lynched, and generally hounded until they were either dead or their spirits broken" (Ibid, p. 437).

"In How Bigger Was Born", Richard Wright explains why Bigger revolts. He notifies that there is no explanation based upon a "hard and fast rule of conduct" (Ibid, p. 439). However, he states that there was a psychologically dominant factor in Bigger Thomas' personality: "he was trying to react to and answer the call of the dominant civilization whose glitter came to him through the newspapers, magazines, radios, movies, and the mere imposing sight and sound of daily American life" (Ibid).

1.2.Bigger Thomas as a Rebel

In the afterword to the novel, *Native Son*, John Reilly stated that "Violence is a personal necessity for the oppressed" (qtd. In Kremslehner-Haas, 2011, p. 223). When individuals live in an oppressive environment that denies them their humanity, their only option is rebellion. It is not a conscious approach, but an innate behavior of a human being denied his individuality. Therefore, having been denied his humanity, Bigger Thomas finds his lost sense of humanity through violence. As mentioned

earlier, after the murder of Mary Dalton, Bigger Thomas felt alive; “he had felt things hard enough to fight for them” (Wright, 1940, p. 419).

Othered and marginalized in a racist society because of his black skin, Bigger Thomas seeks an effective way to overcome his personal sense of worthlessness. Bigger Thomas is “Wright's archetypal rebel, desperately seeking recognition and meaning within a world that has offered him none” (Rubin, 1981, p. 12). Ironically, Bigger's revolt leads him to his self discovery and at the same time leads him to his self-destruction.

Albert Camus defines rebellion as “the movement by which man protests against his condition and against the whole of creation” (Camus, 1956, p. 23). The rebel affirms that he is frustrated by the universe and protests against being a part of this universe. Thus, the rebel tries to reorder the world to his own way of justice. Continuing in Camus' theory of rebellion, the act of rebellion leads to “apocalyptic moments of freedom and power”, which results in a new respect of one's self and “a new sense of order and unity within the universe” (Rubin, 1981, p. 13).

In *Native Son*, physical rebellion is a dominant theme and the means by which Bigger Thomas achieves freedom and “sense of power” (Wright, 1940, p. 164). Bessie's murder was neither unintentional nor really necessary for bigger Thomas' safety. It is merely confirmation of his new self that *acts*. Despite the fear he felt, the killing of Bessie, like the killing of Mary Dalton, provides him with a sense of freedom and gives meaning to his existence:

In all of his life these two murders were the most meaningful things that had ever happened to him. He was living, truly and deeply, no matter what others might think, looking at him with their blind eyes. Never had he had the chance to live out the consequences of his actions; never had his will been so free as in this night and day of fear and murder and flight.

(Wright, 1940, p. 239)

Indeed, after the accidental killing of Mary Dalton, Bigger Thomas' "fingers trembled so that he had difficulty in unlocking the door; but they were not trembling from fear. It was a kind of eagerness he felt, a confidence, a fullness, a freedom; his whole life was caught up in a supreme and meaningful act" (Ibid, p. 116).

Provoked by an instant sense of fear and rage, Bigger Thomas escapes his condition through violent and dramatic actions. In fact, Bessie's murder "contributes to Wright's portrayal of his central character as a victim, a man whose pathologically violent behavior has been imposed upon him by an environment of brutal oppression" (Brivic, 1974, p. 237).

1.3. Family as an Agent of Oppression

Some critics interpreted Bigger Thomas' violence as an existential act, as discussed in the previous chapter, through which Bigger reaches self-recognition and asserts his human identity; and others who attack it for emphasizing stereotypes of African-American men. Masaya Takeuchi suggests that Bigger's accidental murder of Mary Dalton is a necessary means for creating a new self. Raping and murdering Bessie Mears, however, suggests a "male-centric narrative which represses and silences the black female voice". (Takeuchi, 2011, p. 93) Nevertheless, in view of the

social, economic, and psychological forces that Bigger Thomas is subjected to which divide his sense of selfhood, his violence is an expected outcome.

Another factor could be the reason of Bigger's Violence; his mother's nagging to find a job is one of them; she tells him: "We wouldn't have to live in this garbage dump if you had any manhood in you" (Wright, 1940, p. 8). His mother is blaming him for the poverty and misery they are suffering fromBigger "hated his family because he knew they were suffering and he was powerless to help them" (Ibid, p. 10). Consequently, his family accelerates his twisting into violence as he seeks to affirm his masculinity.

However, attempting to hide his own fear, Bigger Thomas shows his feeling towards his family as hatred. In other words, Bigger Thomas' powerlessness and fear for not being able to help his family from suffering was veiled by hatred: "He hated his family because he knew that they were suffering and that he was powerless to help them. He knew that the moment he allowed himself to feel to its fullness how they lived, the shame and misery of their lives, he would be swept out of himself with fear" (Wright, 1940, p. 10).

Consequently, Bigger Thomas turns to violence to escape the oppression that obstinately threatens his aspiration for self-fulfillment and manhood. Christine MacLeod suggests that Bigger suffers from the "resentment, fear, self-hatred, desire, rage, and aggression which for Fanon typified the psychopathology of the colonized" (MacLeod, 1997, p. 55). Indeed, Racism turned Bigger Thomas into a "fearful and

frustrated individual whose only option is to respond with violence” (Twagilimana & Sublette, 2011, p. 327)

1.4. Bigger Thomas' Fractured Psyche

Not only through studying his personality or the way it is shaped by a racist society one could explain Bigger Thomas' violence, but by the ways in which his “fractured psyche interacts with the attentions of Mary and Jan ...that contribute to the circumstances of Mary's murder” (Alspaugh, 2013, p. 15). Bigger Thomas' fractured identity has been the focal element of many studies. Many scholars suggest that he suffers from some type of “schizophrenia or existential identity crisis” (Ibid, P. 5). However, Robert J. Butler claims that, in *Native Son*, violence is a necessary and powerful reflector of the deepest recesses of Bigger Thomas' radically divided nature. Bigger's personality is divided into two, “one trapped by environmental determinants and the other aspiring to a better life and a more fully realized self.” (Butler, 1986, p. 10)

Although well intentioned, Mary and Jan considerably oversimplify the relationship with Bigger Thomas and fail to understand his character; they set the ground for perplexity and doubt, which lead to catastrophic outcome for the three of them. One could argue that it is possible that Mary and Jan's mistake was their failure to see Bigger Thomas as an individual. Instead, they considered him as a sociological case and supposed they could understand African Americans as a whole by socializing with Bigger Thomas.

When Jan took control of the car and drove through Chicago's impoverished south side heading to "Ernie's Kitchen Shack"- a restaurant, where colored people eat, Mary explains: "I've long wanted to go into these houses... and just see how your people live" (Wright, 1940, p. 69). Here, Mary reveals that she views Bigger Thomas as "generic being" (JanMohamed, 1983, p. 228) and the African Americans not as separate individuals with their own lives and experiences, but as a homogeneous group, "exotic and alien to her own life" (Alspaugh, 2013, p. 16).

On the other hand, there is Jan who asks Bigger Thomas about "a *real* place" to go to eat "one of those places where colored people eat, not one of those show places" (Wright, 1940, p. 69). By doing so, like Mary, Jan views the African Americans as a homogeneous group, denying Bigger Thomas' individual existence. Thus, he reinforces the dichotomy "Us" versus "Them", Whites versus Blacks.

Consequently, Bigger Thomas fails to understand their good intentions. While they drove through the Black Belt, Bigger "wanted to seize some heavy object in his hand and grip it with all the strength of his body and in some strange way rise up and stand in naked space above the speeding car and with one final blow blot it out—with himself and them in it" (Wright, 1940, p. 70). Though well intentioned, their act made Bigger Thomas react, inwardly, with violence and added to his bewilderment: "Why didn't they leave him alone? What had he done to them? What good could they get out of sitting here making him feel so miserable?" (Ibid). Accordingly, they unconsciously lead him into a "state of catastrophic psychological tension in which the forced communication among his multiple, ultimately irreconcilable identities causes Bigger

extreme disorientation and produces calamitous results” (Elder, 2010, p. 42). Jan and Mary represent a perception that fails to recognize Bigger’s individuality, and more significantly, his humanity.

They marginalized him by their acts; they “otherised” him, made him an object that they could use to hypothesize an understanding of the African Americans as a whole, reinforcing his feeling of inferiority. In return, Bigger Thomas categorizes them along with the other whites who caused his suffering as a black man in a racist society and reacts with hatred: “He flushed warm with anger. Goddamn her soul to hell! Was she laughing at him? Were they making fun of him? What was it that they wanted? Why didn’t they leave him alone? He was not bothering them” (Wright, 1940, pp. 66-67).

As discussed in Chapter three, Bigger Thomas’ feeling of marginality and otherness is intensified by direct contact with whites. When he was in the car with Mary Dalton and Jan Erlone: “they made him feel his black skin by just standing there looking at him, one holding his hand and the other smiling. He felt he had no physical existence at all right then; he was something he hated, the badge of shame which he knew was attached to a black skin” (Ibid). Here one could recognize the “internalization -or, better, epidermalization” (Fanon, 1952, p. 13) of inferiority that Frantz Fanon analyzed.

In Wright’s examination, as well as in Fanon’s, the consequential accumulation of stress and the need for “psychic wholeness” (MacLeod, 1997, p. 56) find their ways in violence. Fanon’s theory of the cleansing violence “frees the native

from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect" (Fanon, 1961, p. 94). Similarly, in *Native Son*, Bigger Thomas, who commits two murders—one accidentally, the second time intentionally—stands out from violence "like a man reborn" (Wright, 1940, p. 111); he felt "queer sense of power. He had done this. He had brought all this about. In all his life, these two murders were the most meaningful things that had ever happened to him. He was living, truly and deeply... never had his will been so free" (Ibid, p. 239).

Ironically, the murder of Mary Dalton was an accident and was not an accident. Although Mary's death was an accident,

not once did [Bigger Thomas] feel the need to tell himself that it had been an accident ... And in a certain sense he knew that the girl's death had not been accidental. He had killed many times before, only on those other times there had been no handy victim ... No; it was no accident, and he would never say that it was

(Wright, 1940, p. 106).

This contradiction echoes Bigger Thomas' split mind. Brivic suggest that, after the murder, the two sides of Bigger's mind "are developed as independent thematic streams in the novel" (Brivic, 1974, p. 234). On the rational side, the murder is a logical outcome of the oppressive society and circumstances in which Bigger Thomas is a victim. On the emotional side of Bigger Thomas' mind, Bigger affirms his manhood and, more importantly, his selfhood by the crime. It was through violence that Bigger Thomas found his Self.

However, the murder's effects on Bigger Thomas have not all been affirmative. They have increased Bigger's internal conflict. More than that, the scene

of Mary Dalton's head haunted his thoughts: "There was only one thing that worried him; he had to get that lingering image of Mary's bloody head lying on those newspapers from before his eyes" (Wright, 1940, p. 113). In fact, he often tries to comfort himself with the idea that the crime was forced upon him:

Hell, she *made* me do it! I couldn't help it! She should've known better! She should've left me alone, Goddammit! He did not feel sorry for Mary; she was not real to him, not a human being ... He felt that his murder of her was more than amply justified by the fear and shame she had made him feel.

(Ibid, pp. 113-114).

Reacting to the racial oppression bigger Thomas has experienced, he objectifies the whites he interacts with by reducing them to symbols of their oppression. "Jan and Mary were not human beings to Bigger Thomas. Social custom had shoved him so far away from them that they were not real to him" (Ibid, p. 395). Due to his hatred and fear, the process of dehumanizing extends to blacks too. By way of illustration, Bigger murders Bessie his black girlfriend deliberately. The frustration inflicted upon Bigger Thomas burst into violence as his only way for expression and control. "Through violence, then, they attempt to transgress the boundaries the white world has set for them, thereby reinforcing the stereotyped and categorized image they are trying to escape". (Kremslehner-Haas, 2011, p. 222)

Indeed, Richard Wright emphasizes that "Bigger explodes into violence because he sees it as a mode of action enabling him to overcome the impotence imposed upon him by conventional society" (Bloom, 2009, p. 186). Furthermore, the killing of Mary Dalton and effectively extracting money from her wealthy parents

“provides him with deep psychological satisfactions because he experiences criminal action as a mode of “revolt” against a “basic feeling of inferiority.” (ibid)

Nevertheless, in "Everybody's Protest Novel", James Baldwin argues that Bigger Thomas is triggered by “a theological terror, the terror of damnation”. Continuing in Baldwin's assessment, Bigger's calamity is not that he is cold, hungry or, even, black; “but that he has accepted a theology that denies him life, that he admits the possibility of his being subhuman and feels constrained... to battle for his humanity according to those brutal criteria bequeathed him at his birth.” (Baldwin, 1955, p. 155)

Furthermore, Baldwin describes Bigger Thomas' feelings: “the bitterness bubbling up like blood, remembering a million indignities, the terrible, rat-infested house, the humiliation of home-relief, the intense, aimless, ugly bickering, hating it; hatred smolders through these pages like sulphur fire.” (Ibid, p. 154). In fact, Bigger is trapped by his hatred and his fear that lead him to murder, rape and eventually to his demise.

All in all, Richard Wright fights for “a humane, socialist society in which such crimes as the murders that his protagonist, Bigger Thomas, committed could not conceivably take place.” Wright's aim was to show what “oppression had done to Bigger's relationships with his own people, how it had split him off from them, how it had baffled him; how oppression seems to hinder and stifle in the victim those very qualities of character which are so essential for an effective struggle against the oppressor.” (Wright, 1940, pp. 452-453). He attempts to convey to the reader that

“Bigger's violent actions, values, attitudes, and fate are all determined by his place in America”. In fact, observing the differences between his immediate oppressive environment and the elegant comfortable white world, Bigger becomes, in psychological jargon, psychotic. (Mitchell, 1994, p. 6) Through Bigger's violent, fearful, and hateful characterization, *Native Son* strives to wake America from its “self-induced slumber about the reality of race relations in the nation” (Alspaugh, 2013, p. 4).

2. Violence in *A Walk in the Night*:

Violence could be physical or psychological- hatred, anger, revenge or a wish to revenge. The non-whites in South Africa are victims of both. La Guma makes of violence a major theme in *A Walk in the Night*. As discussed in the previous chapters, the physical environment of the novella is one of violence. The non-whites are segregated by the Apartheid laws, and live in poor neglected areas such as District Six, where the novella's events take place. The people living in those marginalized areas end up suffering of the harshness of the system, affecting their physical and psychological health; Most of the characters in the novella are suffering; they suffer from poverty, harshness of the police, hatred, anger, frustration; they are, simply, suffering from Otherness.

An atmosphere of fear, powerlessness, abject poverty, crime and the oppression of man by man characterizes District Six, Cape Town. Life in district Six is one of violence and racism; so, the incidents in the novella and characters are carefully chosen to give readers a lasting impression of this life. This atmosphere is best

described by the incident when Michael Adonis meets the two Policemen, which triggers “deep down inside him the feeling of rage, frustration and violence [that] swelled like a boil, knotted with pain” (La Guma, 1962, p. 11).

In J. M. Coetzee's opinion, the novella represents “a violent disturbance... of precariously stable social system ... a stability only of the ghetto vis-à-vis the rest of the city; and maintained only by shutting the ghetto off from the city. The ghetto itself seethes with internal violence”. The murder happens within the ghetto, which “thus fulfills its stabilizing function of absorbing the consequences of unequal black white contact” (Coetzee, 1992, pp. 349-350).

Since La Guma is concerned with the identity and actions of individuals in a racist society, his characters have to be both psychological and sociological types. Therefore, he has chosen to show selected aspects of the personality and observed behavior of South African police that are consistent with the meaning of his story (Pointer, 2001, p. 12). In fact, La Guma states: “I don't think the presence of the police (in my work) is intentional, I think it is inevitable” (Abrahams, 1985, p. 60). The oppressive presence of the white authority in the novella presents a cause and psychological account for Michael's violence and his later crime and, more particularly Willieboy's escape and the state of mind of constable Raalt who shoots and kills him.

2.1. Violence of Michael Adonis

Michael Adonis is controlled by his emotions of frustration, anger, violence and an innate pride. Every episode in the novella adds to Michael Adonis' psychic turmoil, from losing his job, to the incident with the two policemen, to the accidental killing of Uncle Doughty. His behavior is spontaneous and impulsive. The anger escorted Michael Adonis all along the plot. The rage of losing his job and the humiliation he had to endure from his foreman continued to "ripen deep down within him". (La Guma, 1962, p. 1). In addition to that, the systematic check by the two policemen for no apparent cause made "the feeling of rage, frustration and violence swell ... like a boil, knotted with pain" (Ibid, p.11) inside him, which makes him want to revenge. Nursing the foetus of hatred inside within him, Michael Adonis reacts with violence against the old white man, accidentally, killing him in one strike.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Michael's act of violence- the accidental killing of Uncle Doughty, is "therapeutic"; it is the "cleansing force" that "frees him from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction, making him fearless and restores his self-respect" (Fanon, 1961, p. 94). As F. H. Pointer suggests, Michael Adonis "finds his freedom in and through violence", that places him above others. The violence of the apartheid system and the counter-violence of Michael Adonis respond to each other in a mutual unity. (Pointer, 2001, p. 20)

2.2. Violence of Willieboy:

La Guma's interest in the problem of racial interaction sheds light on Willieboy's fate. He is depicted, like Michael Adonis, as a product of his environment; the material deprivation along with the lack of moral values and depravity led him to criminality. Poverty forced him to work at the age of seven. He suffered his mother's physical violence; if he did not bring money home, "she slapped him again and again so that his head jerked loosely on his shoulders and his face stung from the blows. He wept through the pain". Not to mention his father's violence who used to beat both of Willieboy and his mother with "the heavy leather belt" (La Guma, 1962, p. 80). This domestic violence led him to escape several times. B. Chandramohan argues that those harsh "childhood experiences and the alienating atmosphere of District Six lead to the problem of identity crisis"(Chandramohan, 1992, p. 83).

Willieboy is "aware of his inferiority. All his youthful life he had cherished dreams of becoming a big shot. He had seen others to rise to some sort of power in the confined underworld of this district and found himself left behind" (La Guma, 1962, p. 68). The feeling of inferiority and the lack of self-fulfillment makes him refuse any kind of work, neither for whites nor for non-whites. Willieboy is controlled by social determinism that led him to criminality and eventually to his tragic fate.

Out of need of money, Willieboy goes to Michael Adonis to borrow some. Finding Michael Adonis' door locked, he goes to Uncle Doughty, the old white man, in the hope of borrowing from him. Unfortunately Willieboy finds that the old

Irishman has died. His first reaction was to run away; but while escaping the crime scene, he is seen by two dwellers of the tenement. When the white policeman Raalt questions them, they say that they had seen somebody with kinky hair and a yellow shirt. Kinky hair and a yellow shirt are enough evidence for Raalt to chase Willieboy.

Through interior monologue, Willieboy gives a personal confirmation of the “psychological climate” (Pointer, 2001, p. 20) of life in District Six:

... “I had nothing to do with it. They can’t say it’s me. I found him mos like that”. But years of treacherous experience and victimization through suspicion had rusted the armor of confidence, reduced him to the non-descript entity which made him easy prey to life which specialized in finding scapegoats for anything that street it from its dreary course.

(La Guma, 1962, p. 46)

Although Willieboy has nothing to do with the crime of Uncle Doughty, he runs away. This is proof of the violent system of Apartheid that considers non-whites as potential criminals. By way of illustration, Constable Raalt, the white policeman, is thirsty to “lay [his] hands on one of those bushman bastards and wring his bloody neck.” (La Guma, 1962, p. 36). The runaway, Willieboy, then becomes constable Raalt’s prey: “Raalt passed up the street, his eyes restless, watching. He was a hunter now, stalking” (ibid, p. 78). Raalt does not rest till he, eventually, takes Willieboy’s life down.

Raalt’s violence is shown by his harsh treatment of Willieboy. Even though Willieboy was near him and could be arrested easily, Raalt “shot him down in cold blood” (Ibid, 1962, p. 83). More than that, Raalt refused to call an ambulance. Instead, Raalt and the driver loaded the injured colored man into the back of the patrol van to take him to the police station. Willieboy is dehumanized by the violence exerted upon

him by Constable Raalt. He was hunted, shot and left to die in the back of the van only because he was a suspect of the murder of a neglected old white man. Cecil Abrahams states that Willieboy's story gives two main purposes: it shows the violence and injustice of the South African police system and how innocent people like Willieboy can become victims of racism. Moreover, Willieboy's aimlessness and helplessness is used by La Guma to show "why Michael Adonis rejects this pattern of existence and chooses instead of that the underground "skollies".

As a matter of fact, after reading a short paragraph in the newspaper about "a so called hooligan [that] had died in the police van after having been shot in District Six", La Guma had the idea to write his novella, *A Walk in the Night*. Regarding this, La Guma said: "I just thought to myself how could this fellow have been shot and could have died in the police van? What happened to him? And so I sort of created the picture, fictitiously, but in relation to what I thought of life in district Six was like". (Abrahams, 1985, p. 48)

2.3. Constable Raalt as a Figure of Oppression:

On the other hand, however, Constable Raalt, the apparently the most powerful character in the novella, appears to be suffering from a form of victimization. Nursing a feeling of rage due to his wife's disloyalty, Constable Raalt reacts with violence. The thought of his wife cheating on him haunted his mind. Only half of his mind was focused on his job; "the other half ... was thinking, I am getting fed up with all the nonsense, if she doesn't stop, I'll do something serious. [...] She won't get

away with it...the bitch” (La Guma, 1962, p. 29). He is very frustrated about the affair, and thinks: “It’s enough to make a man commit murder ... I’d wring her bloody neck ... If I ever find out something definite she’ll know about it” (Ibid, p.36). Moreover, “[h]e mended his own clothes and often he had to do the housework, too, and that angered him further” (Ibid, p.75). In another scene Raalt nurses “gloomy thoughts about his wife... [:] ...I wonder what she’s doing now, the verdomte bitch, I’ll break her neck if I catch her at something (Ibid, p.58)”. As a consequence to his private frustration, “He sat in the corner of the van and nursed his anger” (Ibid, p.29)”.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, “Raalt suffers from an acute sense of inferiority because of his inability to control his wife, whom he suspects of carrying on an extra-marital affair.” (Chandramohan, 1992, p. 84). For that reason, one could argue that Raalt is in search of self-evaluation, a struggle for superiority. Thus, he reacts with a superiority complex. In this regard, Raalt’s acts of violence are “therapeutic”; they are the “cleansing force that frees him from his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction, making him fearless and restores his self-respect” (Fanon, 1961, p. 94).

His private frustration makes him, Raalt, long for violence. Raalt’s rage against his wife moves to rage against the non-whites; He tells Andries, the patrol van driver: “I wish something would happen. I’d lay my hands on one of those bushman bastards and wring his bloody neck”. Raalt “found little relief in transferring his rage to some other unknown victim, but he took pleasure in the vindictiveness”. (La Guma,

1962, p. 36). As a consequence, Raalt's anger against his wife smoothly slides to anger against the non-whites.

Raalt is "mentally prepared to be more brutal if the criminals he apprehends are 'effing hotnot bastards' or 'bushman bastards'". (Chandramohan, 1992, p. 85). While taking notes about the old white man's crime, he asserts: "...no hotnot bastard gets away with murder on my patrol; yellow shirt and kinky hair; a real hotnot and I'll get him even if I have to gather in every black bastard wearing a yellow shirt. (La Guma, 1962, p. 60) The racial divisions and the resultant dichotomies: white/black, superior/inferior and self/other made it easier for Raalt to exert his violent behavior against the non-whites.

Raalt's frustration about his wife's behavior, mixed with his contempt towards the non-whites finds an outlet in the chase of Willieboy. La Guma uses the words "hunt/hunter" in several places to describe Raalt or his actions during the chase of Willieboy. "He was a hunter now...preferring to hunt alone, undisturbed" (La Guma, 1962, pp. 78-79). This imagery reinforces the image of brutality of Constable Raalt in particular and the white authority in general.

In addition to that, Raalt exerts his violence on Chips, the non-white owner of Jolly Boys Social Club, extorting a regular amount of money from him so as to allow the club to keep on illicit gambling. While in the club, to impose his authority, thus his superiority, Raalt orders Chips: "take that cigarette out of your jaw when you talk to me"; chips obeys, but to suppress the feeling of humiliation in front of his customers,

his “heavy grey mouth remain[s] curled in the fixed smile” and says: “Die bass Raalt, always making jokes. Always making jokes”. However, Chips’ act made Raalt react with physical violence; “ Raalt held the dusty grey eyes on him and lifting his right hand up near his left shoulder struck the olive-skinned man across the mouth with the back of it, saying, spitting out each word: ‘you don’t have to smile at me, jong. I’m not your playmate.’”. with his lips bleeding under the impact of the blow, Chips said: “Ja bass,”, but with a heavy irony in his tone”, Raalt struck him again” and said bitterly: “you think mos you’re a big shot”. Eventually, Chips gives Constable Raalt five pounds. In return, Raalt threatens Chips: “don’t do anything you don’t want me to know about.” (La Guma, 1962, pp. 39-40). Chips is one of the non-whites who has to endure the violence of the white authority. He gets humiliated, beaten and pays to keep away from harassment.

To Sum it all up, when individuals live in an oppressive environment that denies them their humanity, their only option is to react with violence. Bigger Thomas, Michael Adonis and Willieboy act with violence. Their violence is “therapeutic”; it is the “cleansing force” that frees them from their inferiority complex. On the other hand, the white protagonists and victimizers are the archetypal figures of the oppression dramatized by Richard Wright and Alex La Guma.

Conclusion

The aim of the present research was to highlight and to examine identity issues of African Americans and black South Africans dealt with in Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Alex La Guma's *A Walk in the Night* respectively, focusing on racism against blacks and the consequences it entailed. The main purpose of the current study was to investigate in the aforesaid novels how psychological and physical oppression and segregation of the subaltern are the reasons of their identity crisis. Its purpose was also to show how otherness is performed in the inferiority complex that the whites exert on the non-whites. After that, it also sought to shed light on the consequences of the oppression on the non-whites psyche, and how dialectically Wright and La Guma fought by writing back to the center to break this oppressive circle of dominion.

Set in the time of Jim Crow in America and Apartheid in South Africa, which have been subjected to a troubled relationship between dominant communities and subject races, this study has discussed, in literature, the black/white interaction. The results of this research support the idea that South Africa under apartheid and the United States under Jim Crow Laws correspond to Fanon's account of the colonial world as the "Manichean world". Thus, we sought to highlight how Wright and La Guma demonstrate the Manichean world existing in America and South Africa, focusing on the physical environment. This research has confirmed that both novels echo the Manichean duality of White/Black, master/slave, rich/poor, oppressor/oppressed and self/other, showing the deprivation, frustration and alienation of the non-whites; and it has shown essential characteristics of the lives of the non-whites focusing on their struggle with poverty, racism and injustice.

The present study was designed to study the manifestations of the frustration and anger of people marginalized and oppressed by racial discrimination. It has led, hopefully, to an understanding of the protagonists, Bigger Thomas and Michael Adonis, as subjects of psychological perplexity, and to a study of how that behavior manifests itself in their actions. The second aim of this study was to investigate the effects of hostile environment, characterized by prejudice and racism on the attitudes of the oppressed.

Relying on Hegel's master slave dialectic and the theory of recognition, this study has tried to shed light on the notion of the Self and the Other from a philosophical perspective. It also examined this notion from a Postcolonial viewpoint and considered it in La Guma's and Wright's discourses. Moreover, it has analyzed how psychological and physical oppression and segregation of the "Other" are the factors of their identity crisis.

Finally, this research work has studied the theme of violence in the two novels, *Native Son* and *A Walk in the Night*, in relation to Fanon's theory of violence. After that, it has scrutinized some features of the main characters' personalities, focusing on their violent behavior.

Overall, this study affirms that as a consequence of the social, economic, and psychological forces that individuals suffer from, Bigger Thomas' and Michael Adonis' actions are controlled by fear, resentment and hatred. The authors' aims are to depict the mechanism of an oppressive society emphasizing the psychological effect of

racism on the non-whites driving them into complex and dangerous states of mind. In sum, the authors protest and question the morals of apartheid and Jim Crow Laws, the political systems exerted to subdue the non-whites of South Africa and the USA and keep them controlled.

Moreover, both authors have chosen a naturalistic treatment for their novels, showing the reader that the characters are doomed, because of the natural, social, political, and economic forces that shaped them. Bigger Thomas, Michael Adonis and Willieboy are the products of their racist oppressive milieu that denied them all kinds of opportunities because of their black skin. In both novels, the social environment is responsible for the destruction of the individuals.

The most obvious finding to emerge from this study is that frustration of characters in Jim Crowed America and Apartheid in South Africa led the protagonists to become criminals. Bigger Thomas' fear and panic of being found in a white girl's bedroom made him accidentally kill the white girl, Mary Dalton; then, he intentionally killed his African American girlfriend, Bessie. As far as Michael Adonis is concerned, his frustration and anger against his employer who fired him, because he wanted to go to the bathroom, and the incident with the two policemen who searched him without a specific reason, put him in a violent mood that made him accidentally kill Uncle Doughty. Frustration led both protagonists to their downfall; Bigger Thomas ends on an electric chair and Michael Adonis ends up as one of the "skollies".

From a psychological point of view, this study has revealed that the psychological perplexity caused by the environmental racism has led to the instability of Bigger's identity; he pretends to be the toughest among the gang to hide his fear, but in the juxtaposition of whites his aggressiveness vanishes and transforms into obedience and submissiveness. The results of this study indicate that Bigger Thomas does not suffer an inferiority complex but "a feeling of non-existence". However, Bigger Thomas' accidental crime leads his psyche to another path; it becomes an act of creation, affirming Bigger Thomas' self-discovery and existence.

As far as *A Walk in the Night* is concerned, this study has shown that most non-white characters, except Michael Adonis, are passive subjects; they accept their deprivation and degradation; they are unaware of the possibility of self-fulfillment: they are street rascals, alcoholics and gangsters. This study has revealed that Michael Adonis, compared to Bigger Thomas, does not react with submissiveness in the presence of whites; on the contrary, he reacts with rage and anger. Moreover, this study has shown that Michael Adonis suffers from an inferiority complex. Therefore, his act of violence, the accidental killing of Uncle Doughty, is 'therapeutic'; it is the "cleansing force" that frees him from "his inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction, [making] him fearless and restores his self-respect" (Fanon, 1961, p. 94). Consequently, Michael Adonis is a product of his environment; the Apartheid system transforms him from a law-abiding citizen to the hopeless position of being a "skollie".

All in all, the psychological confusion caused by the environmental racism led to the instability of Bigger Thomas' and Michael Adonis' psyches. Both Jim Crow and

Apartheid negate self-fulfillment for their subjects; the non-whites are the product of their oppressive environment, Bigger Thomas ends up on an electric chair and Michael Adonis joins a criminal gang.

In regard to the theme of violence in the two novels of our study, one could deduce that the two works depict the two phases of Fanon's theory of violence. As a matter of fact, the violence of the systems, Jim Crow Laws in America and Apartheid in South Africa, represents the first phase- the violence of the colonizer against the colonized-, and the violence of the oppressed against each other represents the second phase. However, none of the works represent Fanon's Third phase of violence.

This study has confirmed that when individuals live in an oppressive environment that denies them their humanity, they unconsciously behave with violence. Having been denied his humanity, Bigger Thomas finds his lost sense of humanity through the violent act of accidentally killing Mary Dalton. Michael Adonis too, his violent behavior towards Uncle Doughty made him affirm his individual will. Both of them felt elated after the accidental crimes they committed.

This study asserts that the consequential accumulation of stress and the need for individuality lead the subject races to act with violence. Investigating Bigger Thomas' and Michael Adonis' violent behavior has confirmed Fanon's theory of the cleansing violence that frees its subjects from their "inferiority complex", "despair" and "inaction" (Fanon, 1961, p. 94). To Sum it all up, when individuals live in an oppressive environment that denies them their humanity, their only option is to react

with violence: Bigger Thomas, Michael Adonis and Willieboy act with violence. Their violence is “therapeutic”; it is the “cleansing force” that frees them from their inferiority complex and their oppression.

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ملخص :

تركيزا على روايتين أساسيين ، "ابن البلد" 1940 لريتشارد رايت و"نزهة في الليل" 1962 لألكس لا غوما، تهدف هذه الأطروحة إلى مناقشة التفاعل بين البيض و السود و قضايا الهوية لغير البيض، في الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية و جنوب إفريقيا. فهي تدرس كيف يتم تطبيق الغرابة في عقدة النقص التي تمارسه السلطة المهيمنة على الأدنى منزلة، و كيف يكون القهر النفسي والجسدي و الفصل العنصري عامل من عوامل أزمة هويته " الآخر ". بإتباع مفاهيم نظريات ما بعد الاستعمار، هذه الدراسة تبحث في نظرية هيجل "جدلية السيد والعبد" من منظور فلسفي، وتفحص مفهوم الذات والآخر و تداولها في خطابات لا غوما ورايت. و إعتقادا على نظريات فانون، فإن هذه الدراسة تدرس أيضا عقدة النقص والعنف من قبل "الآخر".

توضح أطروحتي في البداية كيف يستخدم ريتشارد رايت وأليكس لا غوما عناصر المذهب الطبيعي لتأسيس عالم المانوية في الروايات المذكورة أعلاه، والتي تبين الخصائص الأساسية للبيئة القمعية، مع التركيز على صراع السود مع الفقر والعنصرية والظلم التي تحدد مصيرهم وسلوكهم. إضافة إلى هذا، فهي تدرس مظاهر الإحباط والغضب من الناس المهمشين والمضطهدين من قبل البيئة العنصرية، مع التركيز على الاضطراب النفسي لبيجر توماس ومايكل أدونيس، مبينة بذلك كيف يتجلى سلوكهم في ردود فعل عنيفة.

وكانت النتيجة الأكثر إثارة للاهتمام أن إحباط الرعايا السود، في أمريكا تحت قوانين جيم كرو والفصل العنصري في جنوب أفريقيا، أدى إلى هلاكهم: بيجر توماس ينتهي به المطاف على كرسي كهربائي ومايكل أدونيس ينتهي به الأمر كرجل عصابة. وقد كشفت هذه الدراسة أن التشوش النفسي الناجم عن العنصرية أدى إلى عدم إستقرار هوية بيجر توماس وأزمته الوجودية، وأدى مايكل أدونيس إلى عقدة نقصه. وعلاوة على ذلك، تؤكد هذه الدراسة أن نتيجة تراكم الضغوط والحاجة إلى الفردية تؤدي المعنيين بالأمر للتفاعل بعنف. في الواقع، فحص سلوك بيجر توماس و مايكل أدونيس العنيف أكد نظرية فانون للعنف العلاجي الذي يحرر رعاياها من عقدة النقص، واليأس والخمود. من خلال العنف، على الرغم من أنه يكلفه حياته، بيجر توماس يجد ذاته المفقود، ومايكل أدونيس يؤكد إرادته الفردية.