



People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Saida, Dr. Moulay Tahar
Faculty of Letters, Languages and Arts
Department of English Language and Literature



**The Struggle for Selfhood in Afro-American Identity: Ta
Nehisi Coates "Between the World and Me"**

A thesis submitted as partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of *Master* in
Literature and Civilization.

Presented by:

Miss. Chaimaa Hadjsayah

Supervised by:

Dr. Latifa Bessadat

Board of Examiners

Dr. K. MAACHOU	(MCB) Chair Person	University of Saida
Dr. L. BESSADET	(MCA) Supervisor	University of Saida
Dr. N. OUHIBA	(MCA) Examiner	University of Saida

Academic Year: 2024/2025

Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this submission is my work and that, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material that has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution.

Date:

Name: HADJSAYAH Chaimaa

Signature:

Dedication

I dedicate this fruit of my hard work to the persons closest to my heart; my mother, my father, my sisters and my brothers who have always been by my side and supported me.

To all the people in my life who touch my heart.

You have successfully made me the person I am becoming now.

To my beloved parents

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking my supervisor, Dr. Bessadet Latifa without whom it would have been impossible for me to complete my dissertation. You are the most helpful, patient, and persuasive guide that I could have possibly asked for. Your inspiration, enthusiasm and enormous knowledge motivate me to work on such a complex matter. I thank you for having confidence in me and direct me on when I felt stuck. It has been an absolute honor and delight to work under your supervision. I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the jury committee Dr. Ouhiba, and Dr. Maachou, who have allocated some of their precious time to read, evaluate, and constructively review my work.

Great thanks also go to all other teachers in the department, who have helped me and motivated me to achieve my academic goals.

Abstract

The study aims to present the experience of the Africans in America a nation that claims equality yet continuously fails to extend it to all. Blacks struggled for ages to be considered as Americans. Therefore, they were discriminated and oppressed for one reason, which is their dark color of skin. By analyzing the autobiographical novel " *Between the World and Me*", Ta-Nehisi Coates deploys the Black identity that has been historically excluded from the dominant American narrative and how this exclusion continues to manifest through racism, and violence. The research also aims to highlight Coates's portrayal of the Black male experience as being the other in a world dominated by whites. This study employs the concept of Self and the Other in postcolonial literary theory to reveal the challenges faced by the Black body in America, illustrating their experiences and social struggles through the focus on the theme of selfhood and otherness. The study reveals that in Coates's narrative, the Black body is constructed in opposition to the white dominance, it underscores the complexities of the African American identity, and the ongoing struggle for freedom and equality in the promised land. Coates portrays the dream as an illusion built on the historical and enduring suffering of Black bodies.

Keywords: African American literature, American Dream, Black body, Postcolonial Theory, Self and Other, Ta-Nehisi Coates.

Table of content

Declaration of Originality.....	II
Dedication	III
Acknowledgements	IV
Abstract.....	V
Table of content	VI
List of Abbreviations	VIII
General Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: Black Exclusion and the Long Fight for Belonging	
1.1 Introduction.....	5
1.2 Black Historical Exclusion in American Narrative.....	5
1.2.1 <i>The Era of Slavery</i>	6
1.2.2 <i>The Legacy of Racism</i>	7
1.3 The American Dream	8
1.4 Fight for Equality	9
1.4.1 <i>The Civil Rights Movement</i>	10
1.4.2 <i>Black Lives Matter</i>	11
1.5 The African American Literature.....	13
1.6 The Search for Identity	14
1.6.1 <i>Black Masculinity and the Symbolic Struggle for Identity</i>	15
1.7 Ta-Nehisi Coates.....	17
1.8 Conclusion	19
Chapter Two: The Exploration of Self and Other in Postcolonial Theory	
2.1 Introduction.....	21
2.2 Postcolonial Literary Theory, Reclaiming African American Identity	21
2.3 Struggle for Selfhood	24
2.4 Frantz Fanon and the Construction of Black Identity	25
2.5 The Notion of Otherness.....	27
2.6 Understanding the Self and the Other	28
2.6.1 <i>The Interplay of Self in Identity Formation</i>	30

2.7	Blackness and the Dream.....	32
2.8	Conclusion	32
Chapter Three: Blackness in the Shadow of Whiteness		
3.1	Introduction.....	34
3.2	The Price of the Dream.....	34
3.2.1	<i>The Meaning of the American Dream Between Blacks and Whites.....</i>	36
3.3	Fear and Violence in Black Masculinity	39
3.3.1	<i>The Burden of Fear as a Response to Systemic Oppression</i>	41
3.3.2	<i>Police Brutality</i>	42
3.4	Black as the Other	44
3.4.1	<i>Coates Self-esteem</i>	45
3.5	Struggle for Meaning of the Life	46
3.6	Conclusion	47
	General Conclusion.....	49
	Appendices	52
	Appendix A: plot summary <i>Between the World and Me</i> (2015)	52
	Appendix B: Author’s Biography.....	54
	References	56

List of Abbreviations

US :	United State
USA :	United State of America
CRM :	Civil Right Movement
BPM :	Black Power Movement
BPP :	Black Panther Party
BLM :	Black Lives Matter

General Introduction

General Introduction

The United States of America is considered the most powerful country and a symbol of freedom, liberty and democracy. However, the lived realities of Black Americans narrate a different story. The challenges faced by African Americans begin with one of the most regrettable endeavors in human history and continue today through systemic racism, violence and oppression, Black Americans attempted and made efforts to achieve a goal that their rights would be recognized as equal to those white citizens, and they would be integrated into the American society. However, they have not been granted their basic rights and live in a racialized situation. They suffered for a long time from various types of violence fear and racial discrimination that dominate their lives.

At the turn of the twentieth century, literature helped Blacks to establish an African American identity in America. As a result, many African American writers employed various themes and techniques in their works to express their cultural identity and resistance. Literature helped them to prove their existence and fight for their freedom, justice, and equality. Blacks desired to prove that skin color should not divide people into superior and inferior categories. They aimed to eliminate oppression and beliefs of white supremacy, seeking to improve themselves in the American society while enjoying all their civil rights. However, this pursuit reflects their struggle for belonging in a society that has historically defined blackness as the Other. This struggle encompassed self definition in the face of systemic oppression not only physical survival but also the establishment of selfhood.

The contexts of inequality and discrimination, along with situations of unequal and discriminatory conditions are reflected in Ta-Nehisi Coates's autobiographical work *Between the World and Me*. This narrative attempts to reflect the struggle of Black race by addressing the quest for selfhood regarding violence ,oppression, and racism under the dominant society.

The main aim of this research work is to explore the construction of Black selfhood in relation to whiteness within the context of violence and oppression .It also examines how the Black body is suffers socially, leading the narrator to negotiate his journey of navigating Black identity in America , focusing on selfhood, and search for meaning in the white world.

In this regard, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- How does the construction of the Black body as explored in *Between the World and Me* shape the Black individual's sense of self and Other?

General Introduction

- How does Ta-Nehisi Coates, as the narrator of *Between the World and Me*, navigate the complexities of Black identity, and how does this shape his understanding of selfhood within the context of American racial history?

In the light of these questions above, the study hypothesizes that:

- Coates as narrator reveals how the construction of the Black body as the “Other” by white society forces Black individuals to negotiate and challenge their identity and their place in the United States of America.
- Through Coates personal narrative he navigates the complexities of Black identity by exploring the historical and contemporary experiences of Black Americans, ultimately reflecting on what it means to live in a Black body.

A qualitative research method has been adopted in order to achieve the objectives of the study. Hence, the sources used to collect data in this research include books, journal, and articles as well as reliable internet materials.

To achieve the main aim and objectives of this research work and in an attempt to answer the aforementioned questions, the researcher uses the theory of Self and Other within the exploration of postcolonial literary theory.

This research is divided into three major chapters that explore the topic from different angles. The first chapter, entitled *The Foundations of Black Identity in America* represents a historical overview of the experiences of Black males in America tracing their journey from the era of slavery to the present day. Black men have made their voices heard and have critiqued the ideal of the American Dream, which has historically excluded Black Americans from its promises of freedom, and equality. They have made their identities known through literature as Coates explores in his works. Literature uncover the development of Black masculinity and make their identities visible through literature. This chapter examines the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement as a modern form of resistance of Black identity, which Coates as narrator engages with in his exploration of race, and identity.

The second chapter, entitled *Postcolonial Explorations of the Self and the Other*, provides an overview of the African American experiences within the postcolonial literary theory. The concept of self and the other as developed by Frantz Fanon. Focuses on its

General Introduction

examination of the social impacts of colonialism, while examining the construction of the Other by defining selfhood, revealing how the concept of blackness is treated in white society.

The final chapter intitled *Blackness in the Shadow of Whiteness* tackles the analytical space by applying Frantz Fanon's theory Self and the Other theory within the postcolonial literary theory to achieve the aim of this research, It focuses on the personal experiences of Coates and his son, Samori within the context of the challenges they face as Black individuals in a white dominated society. This chapter confronts the illusion of the American Dream a promise of freedom and equality that remains out of reach for many Black Americans due to systemic oppression and racialized violence. This chapter draws a line where Black individuals are positioned as the Other through systemic oppression and violence, which are explored throughout the study.

Chapter one
Black Exclusion and the Long
Fight for Belonging

1.1 Introduction

The history of Blacks in America is mixed by the blood of struggles and the spirit of freedom both have been the central points of reference in America's history. For centuries, the life of African Americans in the United States is very challenging from the hard era of slavery to the ongoing fight for Civil Rights. They have struggled with all types of discrimination, racism and violence by the white society, leading to a continuous battle to reclaim their identity as Blacks, and demand equal rights. Yet, beyond the struggle for their rights, the Black male Ta-Nehisi Coates in his works uses his own adolescence as a means to communicate the reality of existing as a Black man in America under the systemic oppression that exposes the flaws of the American Dream. To be Black in America means navigating a society where racism and violence are deeply embedded. The Black body itself has historically been treated as a site of violence, from Civil Rights Movement to Black Lives Matter era.

1.2 Black Historical Exclusion in American Narrative

During the four centuries, people from hundreds of different ethnic groups with vastly diverse languages and cultures were brought to the New World from regions of Africa stretching four thousand miles along the continent's Atlantic Coast. Despite their differences, these Africans partly by design and partly by circumstance, forged an African American experience. This shared experience became the foundation for a cultural identity, that blends elements of African traditions with the realities of life in America (Taylor, 2000).

Historically, African American history is a vital part of American historiography chronicling the resilience, struggles, and lived experiences of people of African origin from the colonial period to the present day. The term African American encompasses the experiences of people of African descent in the United States, tracing their journey from the forced migration of enslaved Africans to their ongoing struggles for equality in a racially stratified society. Since the late 1980s, free people of color have often proudly identified themselves as African, enslaved, and segregated within the systemic oppression engaging in a historical battle for freedom, first for their freedom, and then for integration and equal rights. Ever since the arrival of the first Africans to America in the seventeenth century, massive social inequality existed between the Black minority and the white

majority society which viewed Blacks as inferior and attempted to oppress and exploit them for their own advantage. Their inferior status is also reflected in their exclusion from American historical accounts (Knauer, 2023).

The challenges and the conflicts for Black America became a part of the American narrative when enslaved Africans were captured from forts along the West African coast and brought to the New World. African Americans were excluded from the promise of life and liberty, and their voices, experiences, and contributions were erased from American history.

121 The Era of Slavery

One of the dark chapters in the nation, profoundly impacting its development and leaving a lasting legacy that continues to shape contemporary social, economic, cultural landscapes, and the political image of the Africans and the Americans. The era of slavery took root in the American for over four centuries, from the 15th to the 19th centuries; this horrible commerce in human lives drastically reshaped entire continents, and for better or worse, profoundly shaped the course of global development (Thomas ,1998).

The history of slavery in America was a brutal act that forcibly removed millions of Africans from their homeland and brought them into unacceptable conditions, exploitation, and dehumanization (Walvin ,2005). Slavery became an economic system that allowed social and legal structures to be filled with racism and white supremacy (Williams 1944). Enslaved individuals were considered to be a property, depriving them of their basic human rights, controlling their actions and subjecting them to physical and psychological violence. This resulted in various sectors of the family to be torn apart wherein culture were suppressed and unimaginable suffering. This serves as an evidence that exploitation not only affects certain individuals but also their families as a sector of society. In the midst of slavery and oppression, enslaved African American has showed an unforgettable resilience and resistance wanting to experience freedom and equality.

The thirst for freedom was a constant struggle throughout the history of slavery in America (Rawley et al., 1983). African Americans continued to challenge the institution of slavery despite the difficulties they faced, alongside enslaved individuals and abolitionists. They started rebellions and petitions to fight the adversity. The abolitionist movement gained energy in the 19th century, inspired by the injustice of slavery and the principles of

freedom and equality. Abolitionist leaders such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and William Lloyd Garrison supported for the immediate and total abolition of slavery through public speaking, writing, and activism. They exemplified heroism in exerting their efforts to end the long-time slavery. They showed the spirit of humanity by freeing enslaved individuals on the British colony. They were able to uncover both the trade's magnitude as a movement of people to modern transoceanic migrations as well as heartrending stories of traders' brutality and the resistance and resilience. This gives an enduring legacy in shaping the world through justice, human rights, and social change.

There were people and events in the history of African Americans that showed resilience, struggle, and triumph against slavery. For instance, Frederick Douglass in his book *"Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass"* (1845), Douglass use oppression and challenges as a central themes, Many other writers addresses these issues such as Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Mark Twain, these last paved the way for the following generation of novelist to creat a space for these relevant themes in literature.

From the arrival of the first enslaved Africans to the notable battles for freedom and equality, African Americans have overcome challenges with their courage and resilience. This Atlantic slave system has self-destructed over four centuries but still deforms race relations around the Atlantic (Northrup ,2007). The Arrival of the first Africans in 1619 in Jamestown, Virginia has become the beginning of transatlantic slave trade in America. People were brought to the colony forcing them to a life of bondage and challenges. Despite the situation, some enslaved Africans continued to do their cultural traditions and did some acts of rebellion and survival strategies. Even while enduring physical and psychological abuse.

1.2.2 *The Legacy of Racism*

Following the era of slavery, Black Americans confronted yet another major issue, racism. Before defining racism, we must first define the concept of race. Race is a socially constructed, unscientific taxonomy based on an ideology that considers some human population groupings to be innately superior to others based on external physical traits or geographic origin. Race has societal relevance, but it has little biological significance (Williams et al., 1994).

The term "racism" is frequently used vaguely and analytically to describe one ethnic group's or individuals. Its encompasses hostile or negative feelings toward another ethnic group or people, as well as the actions that emerge from them. However, sometimes a group's animosity toward another is justified with a single mindedness proclaimed and acted upon the savagery that goes well beyond discrimination based on race or ethnicity and snobbery, which appears to be almost ubiquitous a flaw in humans (Fredrickson, 2002).

There is no standard yet perfect definition of racism. however, many scholars tend to agree on Mark Chesler's interpretation of racism, which encompasses two factors, personal prejudice and social power. In his words, he defines racism as an ideology of explicit or implicit superiority or advantage of one racial group over another, plus the institutional power to implement that ideology in social operation (Chesler,as cited in Bonilla-Silva &,20014,p.26). This entails that racialism is acting according to the belief in perceived dominance, which is reinforced by well-established social bodies.

Historically, in America racism had its origins in the slave system, was a direct consequence of slavery against anti-Black racism is the most well-known and visible manifestation of racism in the United States (US). African Americans faced several challenges in every aspect of life, including political, economic, and social exclusion .This racism manifests in various ways, such as bias between different ethnic groups or the belief that individuals with lighter skin are more attractive or valuable than those with darker skin, with some holding the belief that they were superior to Blacks, and vice versa.

To conclude, racism is an issue that impacts the lives of many Americans, individually, institutionally, and socially. Despite the American propaganda that has spread profusely since the beginning of the last century, depicting that the United States as a "land of dreams and freedoms", that is a haven for all ethnic and races.

1.3 The American Dream

For many years, the American Dream has been greatly admired and pursued. Waves of immigrants have arrived to America's shores in the hope of meeting their dreams. It has a huge impact on the American beliefs and notions. The United States of America (USA) is known worldwide of this dream which is undoubtedly considered as a heavy

motivational factor that encourages people to work hard to achieve the comfortable life they want. The USA is well-known as the land of freedom and opportunities attracting tens of thousands of people to migrate every year to its lands.

The combination of words “The American Dream” was first used in the twentieth century. It was the American writer, journalist and political thinker Walter Lippmann who employed it for the first time in "*Drift and Mastery*" (1914). The term was later popularized by another American writer and historian, James Truslow Adams. In "*Epic of America*" (1931), Adams (2004) described “the American Dream” as “that dream of a land in which life should be fuller for every man, with opportunity for each according to his ability or achievement”, his vision of America as a land of equal opportunity, and personal fulfillment.

The idea of the dream was put into words in the *Declaration of Independence* in (1776) which promised that citizens of the new nation were already endowed by their Creator with certain undisputable rights, including life and liberty, and that these same people were entitled to engage in various pursuits of happiness. These pursuits of happiness often led many to find some degree of fulfillment.

The American Dream can be described as the freedom of everyone to achieve prosperity and success through hard work, courage and good opportunities. While it serves a symbol of hope and success, it has historically excluded many African Americans due to systemic oppression and inequality. However, Black Americans have continuously fought to reclaim their rightful place in America, transforming the American Dream from a myth to reality that is truly accessible to all. The first person to articulate this vision was Martin Luther King Jr in his 1963 “I Have a Dream” speech, where he called for a future in which Black Americans could experience true freedom and equal opportunities.

1.4 Fight for Equality

Being African American has never been easy in a country that upholds white supremacy. For several years, African Americans have faced numerous obstacles and challenges imposed by white Americans to keep them at the bottom of society. In response to this oppression and discrimination, African Americans have succeeded in improving

their lives and reclaiming their stolen rights. However, they have been cruelly tortured, imprisoned, and killed at the hands of white supremacists over the course for the years.

Booker T. Washington was among the first to struggle for and advocate Black equality. He acknowledged the harsh realities African Americans faced, recognizing the deep-seated prejudice that required them to work even harder to be seen as equals to whites. Washington (1901) stated that African Americans could gain opportunities by excelling in their work, asserting that individuals who could produce something valuable would ultimately find success, regardless of race. He argued that Americans prioritized quality over racial background and African Americans could earn respect and equality by demonstrating their efforts and capabilities.

Africans in the land of freedom of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness struggled for ages to be considered as Americans. Therefore, they were cruelly discriminated and segregated for one reason that is their dark color of skin. Thus, the white supremacy over the Black African Americans lead them to create various movements including Civil Rights Movements in the 19th century and the Black Lives Matter in the beginning of the 20th to gain the equal rights of freedom as the whites.

1.4.1 *The Civil Rights Movement*

The long struggle for racial equality developed into an extraordinary mass movement that started in the 1950s. The Civil Rights Movement (CRM) intended to improve African Americans economic situation, provide them civil rights, and eliminate segregation. In each of these areas, civil rights leaders including Martin Luther King Jr., Whitney Young, and John Lewis, sought to enhance African Americans conditions in absolute terms while also closing the racial gap with whites in order to attain racial equality.

The migration of Black people to the North increased over the years and peaked during the Second World War. During this period Black people left the racism and lack of opportunities in the South and settled in the northern cities like Chicago, where jobs in industries and factories were available. This mass migration gave a sense of independence to the Black communities which in its turn empowered the rise of the movement.

The Civil Rights Movements in the history of the United States were created in America through steady and nonstop efforts. Although, the country claims to be established by some similar rights of justice and equity, plenty of citizens enjoyed privileges while others were deprived of essential freedoms. Many enslaved Blacks' individuals had no relation to the rights for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,. Some civil rights groups came up and fought for equality in employment opportunities, voting rights, education, and housing (Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d).

The American Civil Rights Movement nevertheless left a permanent mark on American society. While the most overt forms of racial violence did not end, the fight for equality is far from over .The challenges cannot not be considered finished.

In the mid-1960s the Black Power Movement (BPM) emerged, challenging postwar racial liberalism and fundamentally transforming the fight for racial justice through an uncompromising quest for social, political, cultural, its encompassed virtually every facet of African American political life in the United States and beyond, Groups like the Black Panther Party took action against police brutality and provided vital community services. Despite ongoing challenges, the Black freedom struggle achieved something enduring, profoundly changed people attitudes and made the promise of America if not a reality, at least a possibility. In the 21st century, new movements have emerged, demanding an immediate end to racist violence and continuing the fight for equality.

1.4.2 *Black Lives Matter*

Every century brings a new racial justice battle for African Americans in the United States. Despite twenty-first century common narratives of the US being a post-racial and colorblind society, racism and its structural manifestations are far from a thing of the past. Throughout the American history Black people have been murdered, mistreated, and subjected to systemic institutional and economic oppression and racism. The Black resistance that started in the nineteenth century continues today in the twenty-first century with Black Lives Matter movement.

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, comparable to Civil Rights Movement of the twentieth century, has emerged in the twenty first century, demanding an immediate

end of racist violence that Black bodies continue to endure in every aspect of life, and not only through forms of state-sanctioned violence and the criminal justice system.

The story of the movement that seeks to redeem a nation began in the wake of the death of George Floyd young individuals of the community expressed their frustrations and anger toward the police, sometimes violently. Most of the responses to this young man's tragic death at the hands of the police. However, the focus of most of the media coverage was on the negativity, with terms like thugs in any type of violent disruption that results in damage to businesses or confrontations with police officers. Their actions were presented in a negative light filled with condemnation. In contrast, when similar incidents breaks out in which the same type of destruction and confrontations occur but the individuals are predominantly white.

Asbury (2017) points out that despite the way police violence is often portrayed as operating independently of the state, its material and ideological expressions are part of a broader state-based power system. For that matter, Women of Color against Violence provides a critical study of the relationships among the police, prisons, and systemic forms of oppression:

Law enforcements represent the front lines of the criminal injustice system, and are often primarily responsible for determining who will be targeted for heightened surveillance and policing, enforcing systemic oppressions based on race, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, immigration status, class and ability, and feeding people into the prison-industrial complex. (p.03)

In this way, WOCav definition reveals how these overlapping materials shape the everyday makings of police violence brutality and other forms of state-based violence by situating law enforcement as a primary facet of the criminal justice system to maintain racial, gendered, and class-based inequalities and ideological conditions shape, and thus as a part of a larger structure of state-based operations of power "Stop Law Enforcement Violence".

Since the emergence of the movement, the issue of police violence and its relation to racism has prompted many investigations. As stated by Chaney and Robertson (2013), the number of Black people killed by police officers in "post-racial America" continues to rise. Police in America kill citizens at a higher rate than any other developed nation. (p. 498)

BLM movement is also a call for racial justice for all Black lives, even those who have historically been marginalized including women, transgender, queer, and disabled bodies. The movement has the power to bring justice, healing, and freedom to Black people across the globe. In this respect, Macaré (2016) states that the movement works to create a level of recognition that violence against Black bodies cannot be separated from the ways in which these forms of oppression are constituted both, by and through structural articulations of power.

Over the last several years, BLM movement has sought to increase public awareness of the issue of American law enforcement's perceived discrimination towards African Americans. The movement has become widely associated with the current Black challenges for equality and the reclamation of their black identity in a white world providing a strong and unified voice. These efforts are built in response to systemic racial discrimination.

1.5 The African American Literature

A literature written by Americans of African descent is referred to as African American literature. Its emergence was driven by the need to challenge and correct the inaccurate representation of African society and their culture at the global level. It reveals the truth about the struggles of Africans as lower-class members of society. It all started with the pre-Revolutionary War period and eventually there is whole other world of creative styles and ideas within African American literature. Due to the immense popularity of this unique perspective, this particular variation of literature started flourishing at the international level in 18th to the 19th century.

While the themes in this body of literature are diverse, a constant thread of struggle and sacrifice runs throughout. The themes are distinct but the recurring face of struggle and sacrifice is evident throughout. African American literature has become well-known worldwide due to its success and historical significance. It helped bring attention to the struggles of African Americans.

Before understanding the origin of African American literature, it is important to know the main issues of that period. The issue of race and tensions of color pushed African Americans to use writing to establish a place for themselves in that community. Black

people were perceived and often perceived themselves as ugly and inferior to the white race. They frequently suffered from different forms of racial discrimination even within their communities.

In response to these challenges, African American writers began to express the bad conditions to express the harsh realities of their lives as a means of resistance, and identity formation, in their literary styles such as, W. E. B. Du Bois "*The Souls of Black Folk*" (1903), Booker T. Washington "*Up from Slavery*" (1901), Ralph Ellison "*Invisible Man*" (1952), and Richard Wright "*Native Son*" (1940).

Contemporary African American literature changed the world. Toni Morrison won the Pulitzer Prize in 1988 for her masterpiece regarding the slave era. A new generation of writers appeared, becoming the first African American writers to produce works in the post- Civil Rights era. In the twentieth century African American literature was prominent. Contemporary writers asked new questions and represented new ways of discovering their society.

Every piece of literature has a purpose of depicting a picture of any particular society. Here, African American literature is the voice of entire African community that has been suffering from every possible heart wrenching hurdle. Based on this idea. The search for equality became an essential reason that led to the development of African-American literature. Additionally, due to the issue of race, blacks were forced to use writing to prove themselves in American society.

1.6 The Search for Identity

Identity is not a fixed feature, rather it is subjectively developed .Arguably, the process of identity development may be described by interactions, where identity emerges within social environments. Two aspects that are particularly important in the structure of symbolic interaction are society and the self, the society seen as reflexive mirror through actions (Hayward, 2010).

Identity also originates from the process of identification with groups based on the surrounding conditions, it is an essential property of a given subject. The creation of identity is always pragmatically constructed upon the paradoxical combination of sameness

and difference. Hence, we shape our individual identity by collecting characteristics that define both our inner and outer side such as skin color, gender, profession, language, and region.

To link the previous arguments with the historical search for identity among African Americans, a key strength in identifying people of African descent in the United States is the navigation through the notions of oppression, racism, and segregation. To support the positive side of the Afro-American identity formation, Joireman (2003) asserted that “the identity of African Americans is an “awareness “and “acceptance” of specific realization upon “who am I”, “who I wish to be”. Collectively, identity serves as a means of self-protection for African Americans against the boundaries imposed by other races. Black identity development involves going through stages simultaneously. Black people begin with less awareness of their Black identity then progress to internalize positive thoughts, not only about themselves as a Black person, but about other racial groups. In addition, people become aware of the historical ramifications of what it means to be Black, and put thoughts and ideas into action to help educate and uplift the Black community.

African-American identity is rooted in the history of slavery and their position as slaves in America. This history creates a complex identity for African-American men that needs to be examined. On one hand, African-American men are portrayed as violent and sexually promiscuous, and on the other hand, they are considered irresponsible and incapable to be bread earner.

1.6.1 *Black Masculinity and the Symbolic Struggle for Identity*

Masculinity usually denotes the collection of attributes, behaviors, and traits that are conventionally linked to and designed for males and boys. These can comprise of physical features like dominance and strength, along with psychological and emotional characteristics such as self-confidence, independence, and assertiveness. Masculinity is also evident through cultural and social standards that are related to gender roles, expectations, and attitudes toward both men and women. Moreover, the concept of masculinity is not fixed, and can differ across cultures and historical periods. It might also be influenced by individual experiences, identities, and expressions of gender, as Connell (2005) states in her book *"Masculinities"* that “masculinity is not a fixed biological or natural category, but a set of constantly changing social practices and ideas”(p.67). She

emphasizes that masculinity, shaped by social forces rather than biology, and constantly changing in response to historical and cultural shifts.

Historically, Black masculinity has been a central theme in American society for decades and has evolved over time and across different contexts .It is commonly understood to entail masculine qualities. Within the African American experience Black masculinity has never been a static from slavery to post-slavery era, various forms of masculinity have emerged.

Black masculinity is under researched and under theorized. Studies of race and ethnicity have dominantly explored theories of colonialism, imperialism and racial discrimination in societies. Such studies emphasize issues such as social construction, deviance, identity and otherness (Edward, 2006).

Black masculinity is constructed as being deviant, aggressive, violent and criminal through a symbolic sign system that ascribes these characteristics to Black bodies. The use of violence to maintain male power, the refusal to express feelings, and an inclination toward rage are certain features that African American males must possess to fit in the structure of Black masculinity.

Black masculinity is constructed as deviant, aggressive, violent, and criminal through a symbolic system of signs that ascribes these characteristics to Black bodies. The use of violence to maintain male power, the suppression of emotional expression, and a tendency toward rage are traits that African American males are often expected to embody in order to conform to socially constructed notions of Black masculinity.

The history of the Black body in America is marked by racial oppression and conflicts for freedom, linked to the history of whiteness, primarily as whiteness is expressed through fear, hatred, brutality, terror, avoidance, and denial. From the perspective of whiteness.

The Black body has been cruelly tortured, imprisoned, or killed at the hands of white haters over the years. This racial tension continues to the present day. It has long lived in a paradox not only marks a legacy of pain and resistance but also calls for a deeper recognition of identity and dignity. In this context, language becomes a powerful tool of resistance. One particular debate is the capitalization of the word Black.

The decision to capitalize the "B" carries profound cultural and political weight. The discussion its origins can be traced back in a footnote in W.E.B. Du Bois work "*The Philadelphia Negro*" (2007), where he declared that "I believe that eight million Americans are 35 entitled to a capital letter" (Sinitiere, 2024). A few years later, The Times announced that they endorsed the use of the word in the uppercase, and by 1960, with the Black Power Movement, capitalizing it was regarded as a sign of resistance and empowerment.

With the arrival of the twenty-first century, the discussion was back on the table. In The New York Times, on June 30, 2020, updated their style guides and argued in favor of using the words "Black" and "white," just as The Seattle Times had already done back in December 2019. In her blog entry "*I Refuse to Remain in the Lower Case*" (2014), as Tharps (2014) notes:

Black with a capital "B" refers to a group of people whose ancestors were born in Africa, were brought to the United States against their will, spilled their blood, sweat and tears to build this nation into a world power and along the way managed to create glorious works of art, passionate music, scientific discoveries, a marvelous cuisine, and untold literary masterpieces. When a copyeditor deletes the capital "B," they are in effect deleting the history and contributions of my people. (n.p.)

After much careful deliberation few voices of the African American thought have articulated the assertion of identity, language, and resistance as Ta-Nehisi Coates illustrates the fight for recognition, and self-definition that the capital "B" represents. His life journey is shaped by the weight of Black history and the urgency of the present

1.7 Ta-Nehisi Coates

Ta-Nehisi Paul Coates is an American writer and journalist born September 30, 1975, in Maryland. As Sparks (2022) notes. "Coates' mother was a teacher, and his father was a librarian, entrepreneur, and publisher who founded Black Classic Press, which republished the works of forgotten African Americans." From this, Coates is part of the African-American race. This environment rooted Coates in Black history, resistance, and the power of the written word from an early age.

Coates has lived in the midst of the conflict for most of his life. He experienced the realities of structural racism, systemic violence, and police brutality firsthand that he

experienced through his life. These experiences shaped his consciousness and later became central themes in his work. He attended Howard University, often called “The Mecca” by Coates, where he immersed himself in Black intellectual thought and explored the works of Malcolm X, Toni Morrison, and James Baldwin.

This is one example of how Coates explores the themes of racism, colonialism, violence, and the body in *Between the World and Me*, winner of the National Book Award in the non-fiction category in 2015. He is also the author of *The Beautiful Struggle: A Father, Two Sons*, and an Unlikely Road to Manhood, a memoir about his father, a former “Black Panther”, and *We Were Eight Years in Power An American Tragedy*, a compilation of pieces previously published in The Atlantic, concerning the Obama era with the addition of new commentary. Coates has long written for The Atlantic, contributing with social and political criticism, presenting direct and at times harsh commentary about the African American experience, reflecting upon what it means to be Black and American, two identities that often seem to be at odds. Like Toni Morrison, Coates deals with language in a manner that evades the need to explain the Black universe to a white audience, being brutal at times. He commented on this impression stating that most of what he read in the 1990s was affected by such plague of explanation, which inherently diluted the experience of centuries of violence, exploitation, and oppression. He made his writing to be the opposite: blunt, authoritative, and unapologetic (León, 2015).

His writing is a continuation of the African American literary mission to resist, reclaim, and redefine what it means to be Black in America builds on the themes of earlier Black writers such as James Baldwin, Richard Wright, and Toni Morrison. while contributing a contemporary voice shaped by post-Civil Rights realities, police violence, and the failures of the American Dream.

Coates describes how he grew up in the United States amid a history of exploitation and mistreatment of the Black race, deprived of rights and the positive aspects of Black history. He reflects these experiences in the evolution of African American literature as both a cultural expression and a form of political resistance. His voice is not only personal but collective, channeling the trauma, resilience, and aspirations of generations of Black Americans.

1.8 Conclusion

Blacks have experienced all forms of injustice every day of their lives in the United States. Entrenched opinions on Blacks inferiority from the times of slavery have blinded whites consideration for equality that should have been based on the same freedoms for all and not being judged by the mere color of skin. African American literature is a remarkable event in the historical timeline of America in which Africans struggled to raise the awareness of people through refining literature and edifying their people. This literature has documented the ongoing struggle of Black people for their right and identity. Among these voices, Ta-Nehisi Coates a prominent modern writer who exposes the enduring consequences of racism and articulates the physical toll of Blacks who have been oppressed, marginalized and even possessed by the whites.

Chapter two

**Postcolonial Explorations of the Self
and the Other**

2.1 Introduction

Postcolonial literary theory refers to the suffering of the indigenous peoples in various countries of the world in the early twenty-first century, especially, among those African descent who suffered in the United States to reclaim their Black identity in the face of dominant white hegemony. In particular, as theorized by Frantz Fanon, whose seminal work on the physical effects of colonization illuminates the fractured relationship between the Black body and the white Self.

This kind of literature has given rise to the theory of “The Self and the Other” where the notion of “Self” has become associated with concepts like self-image, otherness, and identity within Fanonian and postcolonial theory. This creates an interests to explore the theme of selfhood within postcolonial literary theory.

2.2 Postcolonial Literary Theory, Reclaiming African American Identity

The idea of postcolonial literary theory emerged in the early nineteenth century as a response to the inability of European theories such as Structuralism, Marxism, and Humanism. To adequately address the complexities and provenance of postcolonial writing. This theory examines the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, questioning the ways of life imposed by colonial powers. Instead of reinforcing dominant literary traditions, postcolonial criticism focuses on reading and writing literature produced by formerly or currently colonized nations and peoples. The tension between the colonizer and the colonized is often illustrated in literary works and reflected in a character's personal struggles across Africa, South America, Asia, and other regions that were once under colonial rule.

This kind of literary theory take a place mainly after World War II, influenced by the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. (1950s–1970s), which inspired African American authors to explore themes of identity, race, social justice, and the African American experience. Studying the evolution of Afro-American English literature provides valuable insights into the historical, social, and cultural contexts of African American life. It offers a window into the struggles, triumphs, and cultural nuances of a marginalized community. By examining its development, scholars and readers can understand the evolving identity

and experiences of African Americans throughout history. The evolution of Afro American English literature is a testament to the resilience, creativity, and cultural significance of African American writers.

Writers such as Toni Morrison and W.E.B Du Bois often incorporate elements of African challenges into their works, reflecting themes of freedom, identity, and social justice. W.E.B Du Bois is notable example he provides a description of the Black people who struggle to be both American and Negro. Du Bois (1995) became interested in Africa. When he says:

This Africa is not a country. It is a world, a universe of itself and for itself, a thing different .Immense ... It is a great black bossom where the spirit longs to die. It is life, so burning so fire encircled that one bursts with terrible soul inflaming life. (p.211)

Du Bois notes that the reclamation of Africa's complexity, power, and spiritual significance. pushing back against reductive colonial views, and that the history of strife for the American Black or Negro represents an attempt to attain a true self. The Negro aspect of Black people's identity can also serve as a bitter reminder of a world they never had the chance to know.

Ralph Ellison's *"Invisible Man"* (1952) is another landmark work that grapples with the complexities of African American identity and the struggle for visibility in a society plagued by racism as he states:

America is woven of many strands; I would recognize them and let it so remain. It's 'winner take nothing' that is the great truth of our country or of any country. Life is to be lived, not controlled; and humanity is won by continuing to play in face of certain defeat. Our fate is to become one, and yet many This in not prophecy, but description. (p.446)

He reflects deep existential themes about identity, resistance, and human connection, especially in the context of African American life in a racially oppressive society. He confronts issues of race, power, and individuality, offering a powerful critique of American society.

Works by African American authors emerged, reflecting themes of freedom, identity, and social justice. dating back to early times of colonialism. Postcolonial literary theory is defined as a power relationship between the Western colonizer and the Eastern

colonized, characterized by claims of superiority and dominance. Many theorists define this theory in different ways. To understand Post-colonial literary theory, it is essential to identify its origins first.

Postcolonial literary theory can be said to have originated in the mid-twentieth. For instance, in the work of Chinua Achebe's *"Heart of Darkness"*, Achebe was concerned with writing to criticize the colonizer's reflection towards the colonized minorities. Alongside Achebe, *"The Wretched of the Earth"* (1966) by Franz Fanon is also one of the important and seminal works on the area of postcolonial criticism. Theorists such as Fanon, Achebe are key figures in postcolonial theory and criticism. As Nayar (2008) argues:

In the mid-twentieth century texts of Franz Fanon, Aimé Césaire and Albert Memmi. Anticolonial writing, nationalism, resistance, anti – Westernization, and cultural identity in colonized nations have been integral to the writings (and speeches) of Kwame Nkrumah, Gandhi...and others from the colonized nations. (p. 22)

A Postcolonial reading of any text examines how marginalized and disadvantaged characters are treated, how stereotypes and expletives are hurled against less powerful races. And how the colonized are essentialized and othered by the colonizers, as postcolonial literature resists colonial narratives and reclaims their identity, despite their diverse backgrounds and nationalities.

From this perspective, Postcolonial literary theory has analyzed literature from Third World countries in Africa, South America, Asia, and the Caribbean. As Gugelberger (1994) claims that postcolonial studies:

that it ...is not a discipline but a distinctive problematic that can be described as an abstract combination of all the problems inherent in such newly emergent fields as minority discourse, Latin American Studies, African Studies, Caribbean Studies, Third World Studies... and so on, all of which participated in the significant and overdue recognition that "minority" cultures are actually "majority" cultures and that hegemonized Western (Euro-American) studies have been unduly privileged for political reasons. (p. 582)

Gugelberger explains that postcolonial studies is not a single academic discipline but a critical framework that brings together issues from multiple emergent fields (like African, Latin American, and Caribbean studies) to challenge the Eurocentric dominance in cultural aspects.

One of the first critics of Postcolonial literary theory, Loomba (1998) argues " this theory depends heavily on post-structuralist perspectives. She criticizes it for being reliant on literary and cultural criticism that makes its focus on individuals rather than the whole society" (p. 28). This includes all the works written from colonialism.

Despite such critiques, Postcolonial theory is concerned with collective identity and cultural recovery in the aftermath of colonization .In a post-colonial society, this often involves a struggle to reclaim a sense of self that has been distorted or suppressed by colonial domination. The rediscovery of this identity is often the object of what Frantz Fanon (1963) defines:

In "On National Culture," named as "Passionate research... directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others.(p. 170)

This pursuit of selfhood, becomes a form of resistance a reclaiming of subjectivity against the psychological and cultural erasure imposed by colonial rule.

2.3 Struggle for Selfhood

Since the most important motivation for human existence is the struggle for meaning and purpose in life, the existential challenges of individuals in attaining meaning and value in their lives are much debated and are a relevant issue in Postcolonial literature as it stems from the outcome of the process of colonialism.

The struggle for identity refers to person's existential efforts to find purpose and worth in their existence, it's entails reshaping and reclaiming "the Self ". It is like an interior voyage that simultaneously serves as a trail for survival, human being goes through this adventure to discover who they truly are, their purposes, goals, and roles in life while searching for their origins and the place to which they belong .

The quest for selfhood is the relationship that a person establishes with his or her world and the way in which the self strives to gain a genuine understanding of itself . This concept has been discussed in various frameworks because there is no concept is more important in the modern world than "identity," whether it's for individuals or for groups. "Who am I?" and "Who we are?" are the fundamental and existential questions of our lives

that any individual or group constituting a community seeks to find an answer. For instance, theorists such as Frantz Fanon, and Gayatri Spivak, and many other influential names have embraced the theme of struggle for identity as a crucial step toward reclaiming national and personal identity, as a reaction to the painful and tragic experiences of colonized people and nations. Among these thinkers, Frantz Fanon's name appears again and again as thinkers who have shaped identity of the oppressed and the complex, often painful journey toward self-recognition and liberation.

2.4 Frantz Fanon and the Construction of Black Identity

Fanon is an important figure in the field of postcolonialism. He was a psychiatrist, philosopher, revolutionary, and author from the Caribbean island of Martinique a former French colony. He was born in 1925 to a middle class family. Fanon received a French education where he taught the philosophy by the contemporary philosophers and poets such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Aimé Césaire, Fanon wrote widely and passionately about the damage French colonialism inflicted upon millions of people who suffered under its power.

Fanon was one of a few extraordinary thinkers supporting the decolonization struggles. His brief life was notable both for his wholehearted engagement in the independence struggle of the Algerian people against France and for his astute, passionate analyses of the human impulse toward freedom in the colonial context. Fanon's works have inspired for anti-colonial liberation movements for a long time. His writings explore the colonial violence and oppression, which were very polemical and aggressive where he discussed the psychological aspects of oppression through concepts such as racism, segregation, dehumanization, and psychopathology (Tracey, 2005).

Fanon was one of the earliest writers associated with post colonialism. In his book *"Black Skin, White Masks"* (1952), he describes colonialism and its harsh effects on the colonies by drawing on his experiences as a psychologist. The harm of these individuals who are oppressed because of their skin color, as the title reveals that Black people are forced to wear white masks to navigate a white dominated world. Fanon as a Black man descended from African origins depicts the circumstances under which Black people live, he shows the notable racism between the colonizer and the colonized. In his depiction of the impact of racism, he employs a cultural dialectic, which is based on the "Self" in

relation to the “Other” rather than the “Self” versus the “Other”. He calls it a “Dual Narcissism”, which enslaves the Negro through his inferiority and the White superiority while both behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation (Fanon, 2008).

Fanon has dealt with the investigation of how the ‘Self’ encounters the trauma of being categorized by the ‘Other’ as inferior due to an imposed racial identity oppression and segregation deeply rooted in the colonized identity. He examines how racism shapes the individuals lives in colonial and colonized countries at the same level.

Ashcroft, et al (2007) write that racism is not only an extreme practice but a deep psychological behavior in the colonizer’s attitude

The most important fact about race was, as Fanon was the first to notice, that however lacking in objective reality racist ideas such as ‘blackness’ were the psychological force of their construction of self-meant that they acquired an objective existence in and through the behavior of people.(p.186)

According to this quote, Fanon goes further to explicate racism in the language used by the racist colonizer with the colonized, He applies symbolism in words like "whiteness" and "blackness", carrying their cultural meanings of clean and pure versus dirty and impure. The fact of blackness came to have an objective determination not only in racist behavior and institutional practices, as well as provides insight to the psychology of colonialism as a whole (Blake, 2011).

Closely aligned with the process of resistance to domination, which is highlighted in Fanon’s (1952) analysis, is the idea that the Black man is viewed as a "symbol of hypermasculinity," an archetype constructed by white fictitious notions, such as "they are sexual beasts" and God only knows how they must make love, it must be terrifying. The Black man is no longer viewed as a man, but solely as a penis. He explains that this form of racism is derived from the fear of the Black sexual potency and an unreal, perceived biological danger to the white man (Blake, 2011).

The use of violence in Fanon's works becomes a means of resisting and eliminating oppression. Fanon (1963) argues:

The relation between the colonizer and the colonized is based on violence. The colonizer exploits people by imposing violent designs of suppression. To counter and deconstruct colonial designs, the natives must respond a more violent way...No gentleness can efface the marks of violence, only violence itself can destroy them.(p.10)

By doing so, the native discovers reality and struggles to transform it into the practice of violence and his ultimate struggle for freedom and identity.

Fanon dissects in all of his major works the racist and colonizing project of white culture, that is, the totalizing, hierarchical worldview that needs to set up the black human being as “negro” so it has an “other” against which to define itself. This idea explores how identities are shaped in opposition to those deemed different or inferior.

2.5 The Notion of Otherness

The concept of “Othering” can be interpreted as the outcome of how people develop their identities through their relationships with one another. As Staszak (2008) states:

It consists of applying a principle that allows individuals to be classified into two hierarchical groups: “us” and “them.” Stigmatizing and oversimplified stereotypes that distinguish the out-group apart from the in-group are frequently what define it. By defining the Other, the in-group constructs one or more others setting itself apart and giving itself an identity.(p.37)

Otherness and identity are two inseparable sides of the same coin. The Other only exists relative to the Self, and vice versa. The idea of Othering exists because of the presence of others in the society, where people coexist together. In a more comprehensive definition of Otherness describes the other as a state of being unrelated to one's identity. Someone who is not the Self or who differs from the self need not be an antagonistic or strange figure. The trait of being different and unique, particularly in terms of culture, and social grouping (gender, ethnicity, and socioeconomic classes), is known as “Otherness”. As a person identifies themselves as a male, they other themselves from being a female, as a person identifies themselves as white, they deny the fact of being a person of color. The idea of Otherness is not always targeted towards a group, it can also be targeted towards oneself for themselves. The identification given or including the self in a specific group (Staszak, 2008).

Within the discourse of philosophy, the term "Otherness" is generally defined as Ashroft et al state (1998):

The Other“ is anyone who is separate from one“s self. The existence of others is crucial in defining what is „normal“ and in locating one“s own place in the world. The colonized subject is characterized as other“ through discourses such as primitivism and cannibalism, as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view. (p.169)

Otherness is used in existential philosophy in the context of analyzing the relationship between Self and Other in creating self-awareness and ideas of identity.

The term Othering describes the reductive act of labeling and defining a person as a subaltern native, as someone who belongs to the socially subordinate category of the Other. The practice of othering excludes individuals who do not fit the norm of the social group, which represents a version of the Self. Likewise, in human geography, the practice of othering persons means to exclude and displace individuals from the social group to the margins of society, where mainstream social norms do not apply to them, for being the Other. The presence of others is essential and where one fits into the world one must have other people.

2.6 Understanding the Self and the Other

Experiencing oneself as an outsider in relation to others and their cultures has become a global concern, as people everywhere struggle with feelings of isolation in diverse social contexts. These disparities can be understood through the contrasting perspectives of oneself and others, arising from differences in cultural backgrounds, ideologies, skin tones, gender, social norms, and values. When confronted with others and their cultures, many individuals feel a sense of alienation. This sense of being different and isolated is a global issue, as people from various backgrounds feel alone in a world with differing rules and values. By considering how we perceive ourselves in relation to others. People have diverse cultural backgrounds, beliefs, appearances, genders, and lifestyles. Exploring our relationships with others helps us to understand the challenges of finding our place in a diverse and interconnected world.

Frantz Fanon's writing defines the concept of "the Other," a central issue in postcolonial studies that he developed in his work . Per Frantz, "he" is "the Other", hence to him, the Other is the "not me." From this interesting point of view, an effort has been

made to highlight the purpose of the study, which is to examine how literature portrays “the Other”. He highlighted these ideas from this perspective, examining how literature depicted the Other as the goal of his study. As an imperialist must perceive the Other as distinct from the Self, he must defend a sufficient sense of identity in order to maintain authority over the Other in a colonial setting controlling it to be more valuable in their eyes. According to Fanon (1963):

The Self might resist the Other’s aspirations to emerge and claim their own identity, leading to violence against the Other. On the other hand, the Other may resist the attempt of the Self to hold onto power, which could result in violence toward the Self and the Other. (p. 94)

The cycle of violence reinforces the asymmetry between the two groups and becomes a part of the power dynamic. Thus, it is crucial to comprehend power dynamics and how they contribute to prejudice and violence to overcome these relationships that affect bodies, language, and everyday practices, creating an inescapable tension between the Self and the Other.

The concept of Self and the Other have been drawn from other theorists discussions. Although they are not the founders of this idea, Said (1994) provides the groundwork by claiming that:

Where we come from, and what we are is difficult to sustain in exile...we are the other, an opposite, a flaw in the geometry or resettlement, an exodus. Silence and discretion veil the hurt slow the body searches, sooth the sting of loss. (p. 16-17)

The colonizer is represented as the Self and the colonized is the Other, as implied by the western narrative. According to Harle (2000), there is a connection between the two. The existence of the Other serves to define the Self, while the Self constructs the Other. He adds that the Other is perceived in two ways: positively and negatively. When there is no antagonism or violence in the relationship, the Other is seen favorably as illustrating what is special in each individual .Said (1994) states that, "everything outside of oneself is considered the Other. The Other is unfamiliar (the Orient, the East, "them"), while the Self is familiar (the West, "us") "(p. 43).

According to Fanon's theory of Self and the Other significantly influences the understanding of identity and social relations, particularly in the context of colonialism and its psychological impacts. His work elucidates how colonial structures distort individual

identities and foster alienation, leading to a fragmented sense of Self. This fragmentation is not only a personal struggle but also a reflection of broader social dynamics, where the colonized internalize racial stereotypes and navigate a world dominated by a white normative standard.

2.6.1 *The Interplay of Self in Identity Formation*

Individuals have various images of themselves and these perceptions impact their behaviors, attitudes, and reactions. One of the main factors that develop these images is self-concept (Weiten, Dunn, & Hammer, 2014). Self can broadly addressed from the perspective of several disciplines, such as psychology, philosophy, and sociology. In psychology, it is generally defined as the totality of the individual, consisting of all characteristic attributes, conscious and unconscious, mental and physical.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term self means “a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others, especially considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action.” The term self is how the individual usually answers to the question of who am I?. This question includes extensive details related to the individual's status, social position, role in the group in which they live, impressions of their public appearance, actions, and interaction with others.

There inevitably seems to be a link between identity and the self-building process, one must draw a comparison, so to speak, between their current “self” and the person they desire to become, this comparison is viewed as a metaphorical gap. According to Burns (1993), the self is a mixed picture of how others think about them and can be influenced by feedback and information received from others.

Whenever the term “Self” is brought up in literature, it is often associated with identity and self-evaluation. In order to define, as Higgins state (1987):

individual must compare their current "self" to the person they want to become. A smaller gap leads to greater balance, while a larger gap causes friction and dissonance. In other words, one's self-evaluation depends on self-perceptions and how others distinguish and see them. (p .47)

The self comprises cognitive structures within human thought processes that can include content, attitudes, or evaluative judgments about one's basic self-worth, ultimately used to make sense of the world in relation to others and the social systems in which one lives. Oyserman and Markus (1998) suggest:

if the self is an "I" that thinks and a "me" that is the content of those thoughts, one important part of this "me" content involves mental concepts or ideas of who one is, was, and will become. This means that for a person to form a concept of self they have to establish a sense of selfhood, which they can then reflect on that sense by evaluating its worth and nature. (p.43)

people can decide to change their set of values in order to justify their actions, which creates a mechanism that reduces dissonance and helps people reach the necessary consonance.

We all have an innate sense of who we are, our self. Not only do we possess a highly elaborate cognitive self, but we also hold a highly accessible affective sense of how skilled, lovable, and worthy we are as individuals. This global evaluation of one's worth is known as self-esteem.

Self-esteem is typically defined as the individual's perception of his worth. In evaluating the self, however, few physical cues are available which provide a reliable basis for an estimate. Still, the individual has recourse to paired comparisons of the self and significant others; that is, self-evaluation evolves in terms of social reality. According to this definition of self-esteem, if the social environment changes, a corresponding change in self-esteem may be anticipated. It is now proposed that the person's response to the social environment is a function of self-esteem. Self-esteem mediates social stimuli and response (Ziller et al., 1969).

This concept is viewed as a continuous dimension ranging from high to low individuals with high self-esteem feel very positive about themselves, whereas those with low self-esteem feel ambivalent or uncertain about themselves. Truly negative self-evaluations or self-hatred are unusual. From Fanon's perspective the colonized subject cannot achieve true self-esteem without rejecting the "white gaze" and embracing their Black identity.

Self esteem for Black individuals is shaped by a long history of enslavement, systemic oppression, cultural resistance, and the ongoing struggle for identity and liberation. In the American context, blackness has been socially constructed not merely as a racial category, but as a symbolic opposite of whiteness, and as such, it carries political, historical, and emotional weight.

2.7 Blackness and the Dream

To be Black in America is an important topic that has been discussed since 1619. The topic has been reviewed, debated, and performed by various Black people, from numerous perspectives, in multiple genres. Blackness in America means being born into a body that is inherently at risk.

Blackness in America has historically been constructed as the Other, to the dominant to the dominant white Self. This binary positions whiteness as the standard of humanity, rationality, and citizenship, while blackness is rendered deviant, inferior and dangerous.

Whether you are white, Black, or brown, the Dream in the United States is often portrayed as a promise of success, safety, and belonging, but it becomes a form of violence not only because it systematically denies Black people economic and social mobility; it is sustained by their historical and ongoing suffering.

The story of African Americans in the United States is a story of fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, sisters and brothers, friends and neighbors. It is a story of struggles, discrimination, injustice and broken promises. More than that, it is a story of hope, inspiration, courage and determination to fulfill America's promise of equality and opportunity.

2.8 Conclusion

To sum up, post-colonial literary theory contributes to understanding the opposition between the Self and the Other within Africans in American society that has experienced the enduring impact of the dominant colonizing country. This theory, pioneered by influential theorists such as, Frantz Fanon, examines the issues of Otherness, self-image and selfhood as central themes.

Postcolonial literary theory demonstrates the struggle for Black selfhood in the America context by highlighting the ongoing struggle between the two opposing binaries the self and the other. The next chapter provides an analysis of this theory as applied in Ta-Nehisi Coates's *Between the World and Me*.

Chapter Three:
Blackness in the Shadow of
Whiteness

3.1 Introduction

For African-descended men, the promise of the American Dream often disappears in the light of violence, fear, and of brutal realities of blackness. In a American society where the Black self is frequently cast as the Other. Ta-Nehisi Coates emerges as one of the Black American writers grappling to find their place within a dominant culture that denies their humanity and strip their rights. Through the lens of Frantz Fanon's postcolonial theory, particularly the dynamic of the Self and the Other. Coates narrative becomes both a testimony and a warning, that to be Black in America is to exist in constant negotiation with a society that sees blackness as a threat and a deviation from the so-called American ideal.

3.2 The Price of the Dream

The circumstances of the Black people immensely assert the struggle and injustice they face, illustrated by the experiences that Coates himself endured throughout his life, where he survived within the realm of the "American Dream" that people sought. Ultimately, the assault that sparked this implication of unjust treatment against him was also reflected towards the end.

Everyone dreams, but one individual's dream may be another's nightmare. Ta-Nehisi Coates references a dream with this duality in his book *Between the World and Me* (2015). This novel represents a raw and real expression of Coates experience growing up in America as a Black man, as well as his wishes for his son. Coates's examines the dream and how it operates within the context of race relations in the United States. Unlike the traditional idea of the dream, often associated with success, achievement and prosperity, Coates perceives it as an illusion built on racial injustice.

The dream is imperative for Samori to understand the reasons for his inherent struggle as a Black boy in America during his time. Compared to Coates's own experiences, his son is facing a different reality. Yet, Coates does not protect him from this struggle because he believes it will bring Samori closer to the meaning of life.

Coates dream became a facade concealing the realities of the racial dynamics in America just as the American Dream was revealed to be founded in white privilege. In *Between the World and Me*, the dream proved to be a dynamic notion of race in

contemporary American society that evolves as Coates grows up. He came to realize the racial divisions are unlikely to change and that his son must be aware of the inherent struggle he will face as a Black man if he hopes to live a meaningful life. Coates says:

The Dream seemed to be the pinnacle, then to grow rich and live in one of those disconnected houses out in the country, in one of those small "communities, one of those cul-de-sacs with its gently curving ways, where they staged teen movies and children built treehouses. (p. 82)

Coates realization marked a turning point in his thinking, as he came to understand that the dream was never meant for Black people in the same way it was for whites. He realized that the Dream is racialized illusion.

American suburbia epitomized Coates's early dream, as it seemed infinitely superior to the Baltimore ghetto. At this young age, Coates was innocent, believing he had complete control his future. He was not yet aware that race would be a limiting factor to his achievements and successes. However, his perception of racial relations changed as he matured and encountered the ramifications of being Black in a racially driven America.

Ta-Nehisi Coates's journey exposed him to the widespread racial inequality in American society that he had been ignorant of during his childhood. As he grew up, Coates became disillusioned with his dream because fear took the place of hope. Although he felt inklings of this fear as a child in Baltimore, he didn't yet understand it.

I felt, but did not yet understand, the relation between that _ other world and me. And I felt in this a cosmic injustice, a profound cruelty, which infused an abiding, irrepressible desire to unshackle my body and achieve the velocity of escape (p.17).

His Dream still remains alive, but it has started to change. When Coates was in sixth grade, a young boy pulled a gun on him, shattering his innocence and forcing him to confront the brutal reality of his world. He could no longer ignore the violence and fear that encompassed his life and decisions. In that moment, hope was stripped away from Coates's Dream. Coates realized:

Fear ruled everything around me, and I knew, as all Black people do, that this fear was connected to the Dream out there, to the unworried boys, to pie and pot roast, to the white fences and green lawns nightly beamed into our television sets. I knew that the Dream was built on the backs of my ancestors, but I did not know the cost. (p. 23)

Violence and fear are connected to Coates's Dream because slavery, the basis of racial dynamics in America, was characterized by white violence and Black fear. Drawing on Fanon's idea of Black bodies as targets of systemic fear, Coates's acknowledges that Black individuals continue to endure physical and mental pain from white oppression, even though it is less obvious than before. Coates condemns white America for impeding the success of Black people by asserting equality and opportunity for everyone by law. Instead of being a term to describe hope for the future of race relations, the dream describes white America's propensity for oppression through ignorance.

As he grew older, Coates vision of the dream, once representative of what every American, regardless of race, aspired to, now denotes the power of inequality in contemporary American society. One facet of race relations Coates is discontent with is the intrinsic right to success awarded only to white people, an idea commonly referred to as white privilege. The foundation of his dream, in America, is directly related to the idea of white privilege. As Coates says "This is the foundation of the Dream its adherents must not just believe in it but believe that it is just, believe that their possession of the Dream is the result of grit, honor, and good works" (p.69). This belief obscures the systemic inequalities and racial privileges that actually underpin their position.

This foundation of the Dream is important because it reveals that there is nothing malicious in the white perception of American society. However, American society must recognize Coates's dream as important because, unless people acknowledge that racism is not merely a relic of the past and that Black people are not afforded the same opportunities to succeed in relation to white people, systemic inequality will continue to persist due to widespread ignorance.

3.2.1 The Meaning of the American Dream Between Blacks and Whites

The association between the Dream and the American Dream clarifies what young Coates believed the Dream to be. Furthermore, it elucidates the reason for his disillusionment with society. A child is the epitome of innocence and impressionability, so as a boy, Coates naturally believed in the existence of the American Dream and the idea of genuine equal opportunity. However, he was too young to grasp the complexity and unfairness of the American Dream and society in general.

The American Dream appears golden, but upon further investigation, it reveals itself to be merely gilded. As Coates grew up in the ghetto of Baltimore and then left home to attend Howard University, his vision of a peaceful and equal racial dynamic became an embodiment of the white privilege that Black people must struggle against.

Ta-Nehisi Coates spent his early years believing that America was a haven for Blacks and whites had equal chances and opportunities to become successful. When Coates was a boy, the Dream represented security and hope to him, reflecting the conventional promise of America. At that time, his understanding of race was undeveloped and he attributed the instability of his childhood to where he lived, rather than to racial factors.

The notion of the Dream passed down in writing from Ta-Nehisi Coates to his son Samori provides him with a particular lens through which he can observe racial relations in America. Coates wants his son to be conscious of the inherent struggle that comes with being Black and to challenge against the Dream in a white dominant society. As Coates explains to Samori:

I am sorry that I cannot make it okay. I am sorry that I cannot save you- but not that sorry. Part of me thinks that your very vulnerability brings you closer to the meaning of life, just as for others, the quest to believe oneself white divides them from it .(p.75)

Samori will be more vulnerable to disappointment and unhappiness due to his awareness of the racial dynamics in America. Therefore, the concept of the Dream is important because it justifies the Black obstacles against an American society that prides itself on Whiteness. Coates's portrayal of the Dream throughout *Between the World and Me* evokes the concept of the American Dream. These echoes are particularly evident in the way Coates describes his Dream from boyhood. "It is perfect houses with nice lawns. It is Memorial Day cookouts, block associations, and driveways. The Dream is tree houses and Cub Scouts "(p.11).All what Coates viewed as innocent traditions tree houses, Cub Scouts, became symbols of a segregated dream within the American Dream American Dream that appears perfect on the outside but conceals the darker truths upon which it was built.

This evolving perception of the Dream highlights the stark contrast between Coates's reality and the idealism of past civil rights leaders. In this context, Coates invokes

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Dream, "The dreamers are quoting Martin Luther King and exulting nonviolence for the weak and the biggest guns for the strong"(p .92). Coates critiques the way Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of the Dream that has been interpreted and used.

Associating Coates's Dream with King's dream complicates the idea because the two approach American society in different ways. The Dream as described by Coates, differs for white people and Black bodies. Coates describes the Dream of the white people immediately before the Dream of the Black people.

I have seen that dream all my life. It is perfect houses with nice lawns. It is Memorial Day cookouts, block associations, and driveways. The Dream is treehouses and the Cub Scouts. The Dream smells like peppermint but tastes like strawberry shortcake. And for so long I have to escape into the dream, to fold my country over my head like a blanket. But this has never been an option because the Dream rests on our backs, the bedding made | from our bodies. And knowing this, knowing that the Dream persists by warring with the known world. (p.11)

Throughout the book, Coates uses juxtaposition of the Dream of whites versus the Dream of Blacks to develop the theme of white control and Black lack of control over their bodies and their lives. Coates argues that:

the process of washing the disparate tribes white...was not achieved through wine tastings and ice cream socials, but rather through the pillaging of life, liberty, labor, and land; through the flaying of backs, the chaining of limbs... the rape of mothers, the sale of children. (p.08)

Coates discusses the deception of the Dream in a way that the white dream and the Black experience underscore the illusion of equality in America. For white people the dream tends to be more about getting a job and living peacefully, without the consequence of certain actions. This is reflected in the novel when Coates discusses the police and how they are unchanged when something they do, whether it is killing or injuring another, does not have consequences. In contrast, the dream for Black bodies is marked by oppression and the constant struggle. Their dream in the end is to make it out alive. This contrast reveals the harsh reality of the dream for the Black Americans as an ongoing struggle where survival becomes the ultimate goal.

3.3 Fear and Violence in Black Masculinity

Black Americans continue to be the victims of American white supremacy and the illusion of American liberty achieved through violence and exploitation. Coates work illustrates what it means to be a Black man in America, in the corrosive context of the country's prevailing belief in the supremacy of whiteness.

Coates uses his life story to reflect the broader experiences of Black men across America. He tackles the major problems faced by Black men in today's America, especially fear, oppression, and racism. He contends that the present predicament of Black people and Black men in particular, can only be understood in the light of the continuous dehumanization, marginalization, and destruction of Black bodies. As Coates states" It must be said that the process of washing the disparate tribes white, the elevation of the belief in being white, was not achieved through wine tastings and ice cream socials"(p.08). In addition to this he writes:

But rather through the pillaging of life, liberty, labor, and land; through the flaying of backs, the chaining of limbs, the strangling of dissidents; the destruction of families; the rape of mothers; the sale of children; and various other acts meant, first and foremost, to deny you and me the right to secure and govern our own bodies. (ibid .09)

Coates argues that the physical and psychological destruction of the Black body is white America's primary policy, both past and present, for asserting its power and dominance. However, through resistance and self-education, Coates promotes an alternative and progressive model of both blackness and masculinity by challenging hegemonic notions of Black masculinity and subverting stereotypes about African American men by becoming a caring father and a conscious intellectual.

Coates structures his entire novel *Between the World and Me* around the image of the Black body, which he describes as "so common" and "so old" to Black people. Coates (2015) begins his novel by stressing the loss and destruction of his own body:

Last Sunday the host of a popular news show asked me what it meant to lose my body. The host was broadcasting from Washington, D.C., and I was seated in a remote studio on the far west side of Manhattan. A satellite closed the miles between us, but no machinery could close the gap between her world and the world for which I had been summoned to speak. (p .07)

This moment underscores Coates's feeling of being psychologically and socially emasculated and wounded, which reverberates throughout his letter to his son, as he claims: "I am wounded. I am marked by old codes, which shielded me in one world and then chained me in the next" (p.46). Although Coates has never been enslaved or imprisoned, he still feels crippled and shackled by their enduring legacy this created a sense of incapacity, powerlessness, and fragility among African Americans.

For Coates, the Black body has always been the target of American white society. Coates claims "in America, it is a tradition to destroy the black body it is a heritage." (p.73). The words "tradition" and "heritage" emphasize both the historicity in the sense of actuality and factuality of the Black body destruction and the ritualized repetitive nature of the practice. Thus, the destroyed Black body could be interpreted in this sense as a site of "national historical memory", which symbolically links the past to the present. The destroyed body thus becomes a carrier of American history and memory and a testimony to its violence, starting from slavery, through Civil Right Movement, up to the Black Lives Matter movement.

This enduring impact trauma is transmitted from one generation to another, so is the sense of being destroyed, emasculated and afraid, as Coates explains addressing to his son:

And I am afraid. I feel the fear most acutely whenever you leave me. But I was afraid long before you, and in this I was unoriginal. When I was your age, the only people I knew were black, and all of them were powerfully, adamantly, dangerously afraid. I had seen this fear all my young life. (ibid.12)

Coates suggests here that the destiny of Black people is to live under a constant feeling of fear for their own safety. Coates's struggle as a Black man consists of building his own personality and asserting his own identity against and within this overwhelming sense of fear. His struggle is triggered by a troubling question he poses to himself, which is: "How do I live free in this Black body?". Coates was born and raised in West Baltimore, in a poor Black neighborhood during a time when fear systemic violence and oppression were rampant. He explains the relationship between masculinity, race, fear, and violence.

3.3.1 *The Burden of Fear as a Response to Systemic Oppression*

The sense of fear and powerlessness is come to terms with an inner felling of fragility and weakness. In addition, a certain longing for power, security, and control over their own bodies pushes Black males to adopt the language of violence. Coates provides a justification and explanation for Black male's endorsement of violence.

The crews, the young men who'd transmuted their fear into rage, were the greatest danger. The crews walked the blocks of their neighborhood, loud and rude, because it was only through their loud rudeness that they might feel any sense of security and power. They would break your jaw, stomp your face, and shoot you down to feel that power, to revel in the might of their own bodies. (p.18)

By internalizing the language of their oppressors and transforming their fear into another form of violence, Black men are reshaped by systemic oppression. Despite trying to interpret and elucidate the causes behind the criminal and violent Black male image, Coates asserts his resentment of violence and defines himself and his understanding of Black masculinity against it when he claims:

I have never been a violent person. Even when I was young and adopted the rules of the street, anyone who knew me knew it was a bad fit. I've never felt the pride that is supposed to come with righteous self-defense and justified violence. Whenever it was me on top of someone, whatever my rage in the moment, afterwards I always felt sick at having been lowered to the crudest form of communication. (p.67)

This confession challenges common stereotypes of Black masculinity, promoting a progressive model of Black masculinity, thereby countering stereotypes associated with the Black male subject. By negating the use of violence in his portrayal of Black masculinity.

Coates moves toward a deeper and more intellectual understanding of the experience of being Black in the white world. His last journey takes him to the Mecca Howard University, which symbolizes both knowledge and the intellectual struggle for Coates. As a student, Coates spent most of his time at Howard's library delving the great works of African American history, literature, art, and culture. Moreover, through his road to another journey, he discovers the complexity of being African American man as

demonstrated respectively in his work which show that the Black subject often experiences a sense of oppression and fear.

As Coates undergoes this intellectual awakening at Howard, he gains a deeper understanding of the complexities of Black identity and the ways Black individuals addressed and treated in all aspects. However, this exploration does not shield him from the harsh realities that persist in the lives of Black Americans, particularly the ongoing realities of racialized criminalization and police brutality.

3.3.2 *Police Brutality*

The United States police brutality is the unjustified or unreasonable and sometimes unconstitutional use of force by police officers against civilians; particularly African Americans police violence includes physical abuse such as beatings, torture, and killings. Although many groups are subjected to police violence, African Americans experience it disproportionately.

In the aftermath of countless police shootings, acts of police brutality, and the general feeling that a Black body is never safe in the United States regardless of economic status, educational background, or adherence to the politics of respectability professed by the conservative establishment, Coates reflects the threat of violence at the hands of the police “The destroyers will rarely be held accountable .Mostly they will receive pensions”(p.11). Coates refers to police officers the “destroyers” who are allowed to kill without consequence, often retiring with pensions rather than facing justice.

This harsh reality is evidenced in the story of Prince Jones, who was killed by a policeman and whose killer was not punished.” Prince was someone Coates met at Howard University, and his tragic death exemplifies the systemic failures that perpetuate such injustices.

Coates’s portrayal of police violence echoes Fanon’s assertion that colonized bodies are reduced to objects bodies to be policed, and discarded. The Black body is not viewed as a full human subject, but as the perpetual Other, a threat to be neutralized.

This episode centers on an example of police brutality in which the officer who committed the unacceptable act was appallingly not charged. This is why, Coates began to write about Jones’ murder,

Prince Jones was a one of one, and they had destroyed his body, scorched his shoulders and arms, ripped open his back, mangled lung, kidney, and liver. I sat there feeling myself a heretic, believing only in this one-shot life and the body. For the crime of destroying the body of Prince Jones, I did not believe in forgiveness. When the assembled mourners bowed their heads in prayer. (p.65)

The quote shows Coates's revulsion toward the police and America country where no Black body is safe, and where justice is undermined by a system built to protect itself.

The killer of Michael Brown would go free. The men who had left his body in the street like some awesome declaration of their inviolable power would never be punished. It was not my expectation that anyone would ever be punished. But you were young and still believed .(p.11)

From the statements above, Coates expresses his disappointment with the law in America, where Michael Brown was killed and left on the road, which led to the killer not being prosecuted on the grounds that Brown's was the perpetrator of the theft of cigars from a store. Brown's killing sparked months of protests in Ferguson and prompted a national movement for police accountability.

The Justice Department later released the results of a Ferguson Police Department investigation, which found the systemic exploitation and racial profiling of Black citizens by officers which revealing the harsh reality that Black citizens were disproportionately targeted by law enforcement. This echoed loudly, especially for Samori who had witnessed an announcement about the case of Michael Brown who is killed by police officers and his body is left on the street. Samori hoped that Michael Brown would get justice but the killer is acquitted. "That is the week you learned that the killers of Michael Brown would go free" (ibid.11). Institutional discrimination is the deliberate differentiation of each institutional system. Differences in criminal punishments, employment, environment, and education, highlight the deep divisions between, the majority and the minority.

Between the World and Me (2015) was written a time marked by the murders of Mike Brown, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Renisha McBride, and several other significant Black individuals. It emerged against a backdrop of revived focus on the anti- Black cruelty in America. However, on a positive note , in opposition to this violence, the movement for Black lives-eventually known as Black Lives Matter became a significant drive that seeks to end the criminalization of the Black race and inappropriate law enforcement towards them, calling for justice to end the harsh treatment they face.

According to this call for justice, Coates emphasizes the role of the law in perpetuating systemic inequality. He draws a stark distinction between two groups to maintain the difference between the dominant and minority groups. The law directly contradicts the interests of a society's less powerful subordinate minority group. Discrimination is unavoidable under this system to preserve control the more powerful, elite organizations must make a persistent and systematic attempt to deny less powerful group's access minority reinforcing their position as the Other.

3.4 Black as the Other

Coates's journey might be different than other Black males; it certainly reflects some of the most common challenges and social constraints faced by the majority of Black men growing up in a US. He constructs distinct voices for himself as both an adult narrator and his younger self to make sense of the continued treatment of Black people as the Other in American society.

Coates provide a compelling example of the "Other" when mentioning the historical background of the Blacks since slavery. He emphasizes how African Americans suffer from all the aforementioned categories of violence. From the transatlantic slave trade to Civil Right Movement, and police brutality, Coates presents a historical continuum in which Black bodies are systematically dehumanized. This ongoing violence constructs them as the perpetual "Other" in the American imagination. As Coates (2015) writes:

But all our phrasing race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy serves to obscure that racism is a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth. (p.14)

This expert connects between the historical and physical violence endured by Black bodies to the oppressive process of othering. The concept of Othering came through the interactions and conflicts between the society because of the cultural background of Coates and his son, he experiences racism and discrimination, which makes him feel like the "other" in white society. His battles with police brutality and society point out the difficulties of being viewed as the "Other". When he state: "the destroyers will rarely be held accountable. Mostly they will receive pensions. And destruction is merely the superlative form of a dominion whose prerogatives include friskings, detainings, beatings,

and humiliations.”(ibid.14). This statement illustrates the imbalance of power between the dominant white Self and the racialized Black Other.

Black people are confronted with overwhelming forces such as violence, fear, racism, and oppression. Particularly in Baltimore, they are forced to navigate a world that abuses, police, and brutalizes them. In the face of this reality, they must strive to assert their sense of individual freedom and his humanity, within the ongoing struggle that they face and maintain a sense of Self.

3.4.1 *Coates Self-esteem*

Coates awakens to the reality of being Black in white-dominant American society. He exposes how Black bodies are perceived as inferior or dangerous. Coates struggles to understand how discrimination violence and racism against Black people are justified between the Black and white races. He demonstrates that growing up in the United States, in which he expresses his concerns about the experience of carrying a Black body in a society that regards it as unwanted. He explores the fragility and insecurity of being Black and being an American.

The younger Coates reveals the curiosity through fear and control. As he reflects, “I was a curious boy, but the schools were not concerned with curiosity. They were concerned with compliance”(p.21). In this moment Coates points out the tension between his developing self-awareness and the systemic structures designed to suppress it in Baltimore. His curiosity leads him to know an essential part of his self-image as a child. However, the discovery of his self-image comes into conflict with how the society views him especially on the street. Coates states:

But a society that protects some people through a safety net of schools, government-backed home loans, and ancestral wealth but can only protect you, with the club of criminal justice has either failed at enforcing its good intentions or has succeeded at something much darker. (p.15)

Coates begins to realize that society does not see him the same way. His natural sense of self is not protected instead it is suppressed. Coates sees that his Black body is threatened, and always at risk. He begins to feel like an outsider in his own country, Coates assert that “The streets were not my only problem. If the streets shackled my left leg, the

schools shackled my right.” In this statement, his self-image begins to shift, he’s being defined by forces outside of him and being othered.

This tension between self-perception and imposed identity reflect Frantz Fanon’s theory of the colonized subject, where the Black understanding of self is constantly at odds with the image projected by the white Self, Coates also state that:

To be Black in the Baltimore of my youth was to be naked before the elements of the world, before all the guns, fists, knives, crack, rape and disease. The nakedness is not an error, nor pathology. The nakedness is the correct and intended result of policy, the predictable upshot of people forced for centuries to live under fear. (ibid.15)

This excerpt impacted him greatly as he had been observing in his younger days that being dark means you are vulnerable and blatantly seen as an object raw to the eyes of the self. The concept of blackness helps to explain how Black people came to be treated both when slavery existed and then beyond into the present day, as disposable bodies within American society. due to the tradition of treating Black people as objects or animals whose value lay in their ability to make profit for white people.

3.5 Struggle for Meaning of the Life

A Black body in Baltimore is subjected to forces beyond his control violence, fear, racism and oppression ,yet he must preserve a sense of individual freedom and agency to derive meaning from life, asserts his humanity, and maintains his sanity. This tension creates a self-image that is in constant struggle with the Other.

This internal conflict between Coates self and the other is rooted in the lived realities of daily life. Firstly, this act can be observed when Coates writes about the “wisdom of the streets” (p.68), Coates captures vividly in his reflections on the ‘wisdom of the streets. ‘He describes the violence of the streets, of being assaulted by other boys. An explicit code exists, if your friend is attacked, you must go to battle. “Whether you fought or you ran you did it together, because that is the part that was in your control” (p.55) .He ultimately finds purpose and meaning through resisting the forces of white supremacy and oppression. However, there is no significance to his struggle.

Coates the narrative supplies the answer to his son we live free through the act of struggle. As Coates supplies in this statement “the struggle in and of itself has meaning”

(p.50). To answer the question of “how do I live free in this black body?” Which gives meaning to our lives and positions us in solidarity with those who suffer.

Coates goes further when he writes, “you are called to struggle, not because it assures you victory but because it assures you an honorable and sane life” (p.68). Coates wants his son to “attack every day of his bright life in struggle” (p.76). He wants for Samori to live in a state of constant struggle, for his entire life to have true meaning. Coates named him Samori, after Samori Toure, the founder of the Wassoulou Empire in West Africa, who resisted against French colonizers for the right to his own Black body” (p.49). He hopes that his son will embrace a life of struggle, which is the heritage of the black body, just as destroying it is America’s heritage.

Coates tells his son, “The struggle is really all I have for you because it is the only portion of this world under your control” (ibid.76). The only way to preserve a sense of agency, to be the captain of yourself, is to engage in struggle against the other or forces of oppression. For Coates, this struggle is not only a form of survival but the path to the highest achievement of human life, the only true happiness he will ever know.

3.6 Conclusion

The current chapter analyzes the lived realities of Black men in America, often equated with danger and violence in white imagination that is echoed in Ta Nehisi Coates’s autobiographical novel *Between the World and Me*, he reveals how the Black male body is not only feared but also marked as “Other,” subjected to systemic violence, police brutality. Coates seeks to expose and dismantle the myths that underpin the American Dream, revealing how these illusions obscure the harsh realities of Black existence. Yet, he asserts the humanity of Black life in the face of these enduring hardships. By applying Fanon theory the self and the other within postcolonial literary theory context Coates’s novel can be read as an act of resistance a reclaiming of voice and agency in the face of a dominant society that seeks to define and confine Black identity.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

Ta-Nehisi Coates is an African American writer who penned the autobiographical novel *Between the World and Me*, which addresses the challenges impacting on the lives of Black Americans, particularly racism, violence, and oppression. The novel provides an insight into the truth about history of Black selfhood in the United States and addresses the harsh realities of being Black in America, advising individuals to face this reality with awareness and self-reliance. Moreover, the novel provides an in-depth analysis of the Black male body within white society. It clearly illustrates violence against Black people, aimed at keeping them oppressed, as the white supremacy views them as an inferior or an other, rendering them second class citizens in their own country.

Coates also reflects on the relationship between the white and the Black people, leading him to wonder if Black individuals are truly seen as equals and possess the same rights as whites in America. He questions whether African Americans are perceived as human beings or as animals in white perspective.

Accordingly, the first chapter explores the historical and literary backgrounds of the African American experience, beginning with their arrival as slaves. It examines the systemic oppression, violence, and racism they have endured throughout the American history, analyzing the deceptive ideal of the American Dream, and the challenges they face in making their voices heard in the land of the dreams, from the Civil Rights Movement to the emergence of Black Lives Matter.

Moreover, Americans and Africans are like two sides of the same coin. Therefore, the essential component of their shared history is literature, which represents the world of Americans and Africans from entirely different perspectives. However, this perspective depends mostly on the author's observations and points of view. Particularly, in Coates rewriting of the narrative surrounding the Black body in America.

The second chapter provides a theoretical framework based on Frantz Fanon's concept of the Self and the Other within postcolonial theory. This framework is used to critically examine violence and resistance in African American literature. Particularly, how Black identity and selfhood are shaped by the harsh realities of life in the United States. This chapter examines the positioning of the Black body as the Other in contrast to the white Self, highlighting the ongoing fight for Black identity in a racialized America.

General Conclusion

The third chapter focuses on the analysis of the autobiographical novel *Between the World and Me* within character analysis. This novel it present the myth of the dream for Blacks shaped by white dominance, its investigate how fear, police brutality, and violence have constructed their Black bodies and identities. Samori understands from his father on a deep level that police killings are the ultimate manifestation of the “superlative form of dominion” expressed by a system of violence and white supremacy.

Coates experience as Black man with a vulnerable and breakable body gives him a special kind of strength and power. Coates as a narrator reclaims a sense of power through self-esteem and resistance. Samori understands that Black male and identity emerges from oppression, and that it is a “view taken in struggle”(p.89). Through Coates narrative he conveys individual pain that asserts a collective history, reclaims silenced voices, and insists on the dignity of the Black self in the face of dehumanization.

Coates wants to raise people awareness that the dream for Black Americans, the so-called Dream is not a promise of equality but a myth that conceals a history of violence, fear and oppression as Coates describes in his novel. By applying the concepts of the Self and the Other, one can understand how Black identity is constructed in opposition to whiteness, and how this Black identity is seen as inferior.

Coates uses the postcolonial literary theory concept of Self and the Other of Frantz Fanon to examine and construct Black male identity that focuses on selfhood and otherness. He portrays the Black male experience and its struggles as a way to reveal the construction of the Black bodies. By analyzing the African American experience through this lens, Coates reveals to his son Samori how systemic racism, police brutality, and violence contribute to the perception of Black Americans as the other.

Some limitations were faced by the researcher during the course of this work. First, lack of sufficient primary and secondary sources related to the specific problem explored in this study. Given that *"Between the World and Me"* is a relatively recent publication, there is still a limited body of scholarly analysis and critical literature available. This scarcity of sources makes it challenging to situate the work within a broader academic context or to support certain arguments with extensive external references.

Additionally, time constraints presented another challenge, as the researcher was required to conduct an in-depth analysis within a limited academic timeframe.

General Conclusion

The researcher recommends that future researchers examine this novel from other aspects. They can analyze the psychological dimensions to further enrich the understanding of Coates's work and its broader implications. Additionally, comparative analyses with other African American or postcolonial texts could also offer valuable insights into the ongoing discourse on race, identity, and resistance.

Appendix A: plot summary *Between the World and Me* (2015)

The novel “Between the World and Me” is a story told through a letter written by the author himself, directing the whole plot to his son, Samori. The story traces Coates’ thoughts and sentiments about being Black throughout his experiences in life. The sequence of events is not chronological in order for there are interrupted scenarios where anecdotes are integrated to give emphasis on particular situations. Expressively, the plot did not focus more on specific events, but mostly on how Coates’ thoughts and opinions changed over time depending on the situation he was in.

Now, the story opens in the present time when a host for a news show interviews Mr. Coates. She asks Coates about what it means to lose his body, and he answered based on his experiences throughout his life. Then, it was followed by moments in his childhood; describing his life and family as he grew up in the ghettos of the place in West Baltimore. He initially understood that there is a gap between his black world and the bordering white world in his childhood, though the reasons for the separation of these two worlds are not clear to him at first. With this, he sufficed this query of him by reading numerous books about Africana that his father owns, and eventually found himself agreeing to the writer, Malcolm X, whom he had identified himself disagreeing with ideas of non-violent protests as a strong force for Black people.

Then, Coates recalls his experience at Howard University which he calls his Mecca, where he continuously studies, reads, and questions everything about both worlds. He then started to think about Black history more objectively and less romantically than before. At Howard, he then meets his wife now, Kenyatta Matthews, and she becomes pregnant at twenty-four.

Moving forward to the next crucial event in his life, would be the police murder of Prince Jones, whom Coates met at Howard. A scene presenting police brutality in which the officer is unjustly not charged. After the incident, Coates began writing about Jones’ murder and develops a rage at both the police and the Whites of America. And with their migration that happened next, his thoughts revolve around his son Samori and the understanding of the weight and struggle he will have to go through as a Black man.

Then, a significant trip to France opened his eyes to the worlds outside America. He afterward realizes how much fear has damaged his life, and can how would a better

Appendices

place situate him in the larger setting of the world as a whole. For the last parts of the story in his letter, he visited Prince Jones' mother, Dr. Mable Jones where he was amazed by her composure and compares it to the steady determination of his grandmother and the protestors way back 1960's. Here, Dr. Jones spoke about her own history and tells Samori's Father more about Prince. After his visit, he rethinks his views of non-violent protestors where he initially thought was shameful not to fight for themselves (Pugong, 2022)

At the end of the story, he then attends Howard University's homecoming and reflected on the sense of Black power he felt within a group of people. With this finale, his parting message to his son focused on his reminder to Samori. It is to engross himself completely in the struggle of his life as a black person, but to recognize that he is not accountable for converting the white people to the struggle they will face. Thus, Samori's father confidently asserts that the white body of America and their continuous plunder not only in the blacks but also the environment they are in may not die down, but this will serve as a motivation for the dark-skinned race to stood up for themselves despite all the struggles, oppression and deprivation felt through the years (Pugong, 2022).

Appendix B: Author's Biography

Ta-Nehisi Coates, in full Ta-Nehisi Paul Coates, (born September 30, 1975, Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.), is an American essayist, journalist, and writer who often explored contemporary race relations. His most notable book is *Between the World and Me* (2015), which won the National Book Award for nonfiction.

His mother was a teacher, and his father was once a member of the city's Black Panther chapter. His mother was a librarian, entrepreneur, and publisher who founded Black Classic Press, which republished forgotten works by African Americans. His unusual first name was an Egyptian designation for the ancient African province of Nubia. His experience to books as a youth encouraged Coates to settle toward a literary career, and he started writing poetry at the age of 17. In 1993 he enrolled at Howard University, but he left without a degree gained.

He started writing for a variety of periodicals, including *Washington Monthly*, to which he subsidized the attention-grabbing essay "Confessions of a Black Mr. Mom"; *Philadelphia Weekly*; *Mother Jones*; *the Village Voice*; *Entertainment Weekly*; *Time*; and *O, the Oprah Magazine*. His career bloomed when in 2008 he became a blogger for *The Atlantic* magazine's Web site. His 2008 *Time* article "Obama and the Myth of the Black Messiah" prompted readers that the election of Barack Obama as the first Black U.S. president was not the antidote for poverty and ghettos. Coates's *Atlantic* essay "*Fear of a Black President*" earned him a 2013 National Magazine Award. The 2014 *Atlantic* cover story "*The Case for Reparations*" led in another National Magazine Award. In 2015 Coates was named a MacArthur fellow. The following year he was the recipient of the PEN/DiamonsteinSpielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay.

In 2008, Coates published his first book, the memoir *The Beautiful Struggle: A Father, Two Sons, and an Unlikely Road to Manhood*. The critically commended work was followed by *Between the World and Me* (2015), which became a best-seller book. In addition to the National Book Award, "*Between the World and Me*" won the Kirkus Prize for nonfiction. In the essay collection *We Were Eight Years in Power* (2017), that involved work previously published in *The Atlantic*, Coates explored the presidency of Barack Obama as well as the subsequent election of Donald Trump.

Appendices

In 2019, Coates released his first novel, *The Water Dancer*. Coates's other fiction work counted in a comic series based on the Marvel superhero *Black Panther*. The first portion was published in 2016. In addition, Coates served as a faculty at several schools, notably joining Howard University in 2021.

In 2024, his fourth nonfiction title, *The Message*, was published. The book contains Coates' reflections on racism after travels to Africa and the Middle East.

References

- Asbury, F. R. (2017). *Reorientations: An Examination of Black Lives Matter and the Neoliberal Sspectacle* (Master's thesis). San Francisco State University.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2004). *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2007). *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Blake, T. H. (2011). *Frantz Fanon and Colonialism: A Psychology of Oppression*. *Journal of Scientific Psychology*, 45, 45–59.
- Bonilla-Silva, E., & Yamashita, L. (2014). *The Problem of Racism in "Post-racial" America*. In *Systemic Racism in America* (pp. 23–35). Routledge.
- Burns, R. B. (1993). *Self-concept: Theory, Measurement, Development, and Bbehaviour*. Longman.
- Chaney, C., & Robertson, R. V. (2013). *Racism and Police Brutality in America*. *Journal of African American Studies*, 17(4), 480–505. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-013-9246-5>
- Coates, T.-N. (2015). *Between the World and me*. Text Publishing.
- Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities* (2nd ed.). University of California Press.
- Edwards, T. (2006). *Culture of Masculinity*. Routledge.
- Encyclopædia Britannica. (n.d.). *American Civil Rights Movement*. Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com>
- Fanon, F. (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth* (C. Farrington, Trans.). Grove Press.
- Fanon, F. (2008). *Black Skin, White Masks* (C. L. Markmann, Trans.). Pluto Press. (Original work published 1952)
- Fredrickson, G. M. (2002). *Racism: A Short History*. Princeton University Press.
- Fullerton Joireman, S. (2003). *Nationalism and Political Identity*. Princeton University Press.

References

- Gugelberger, G. M. (1994). *Postcolonial Cultural Studies*. In M. Groden & M. Kreiswirth (Eds.), *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and Criticism*. Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Harle, V. (2000). *The Enemy with a Thousand Faces: The Tradition of the Other in Western Political Thought and History*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Harris, R. L., Jr. (1998). *Dilemmas in Teaching African American History*. Perspectives on History.
- Hassan, A. F. (2019). *Race and Ethnicity in White Teeth* by Zadie Smith. *International Journal of Research*, 6(1), 244. Retrieved from <https://pen2print.org/index.php/ijr/>
- Hayward, R. (2010). *Identity and Political Theory*. University of South Carolina Press.
- Higgins, E. T. (1989). *Continuities and Discontinuities in Self-regulatory and Self-evaluative Processes: A Developmental Theory Relating Self and Affect*. *Journal of Personality*, 57(2), 407–444. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1989.tb00488.x>
- Knauer, L. (2023). African American History. *Docupedia*.
- León, F. (2015, October 15). *Ta-Nehisi Coates on why Whites Like his Writing*. *The Daily Beast*. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/10/25/why-do-white-people-love-tanehisi-coates-work.html>
- Loomba, A. (1998). *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*. Routledge.
- Macaré, J. (2016). Introduction. In M. Schenwar, J. Macaré, & A. Price (Eds.), *Who do you Serve, who do you Protect?: Police Violence and Resistance in the United States* (pp. 12–18). Haymarket Books.
- Nayar, P. K. (2008). *Postcolonial Literature: An Introduction*. Dorling Kindersley.
- Northrup, D. (2007). *Africa's Discovery of Europe: 1450–1850* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Oyserman, D., & Markus, H. R. (1998). *Self as Social Representation*. In S. U. Flick (Ed.), *The Psychology of the Social* (pp. 107–123). Cambridge University Press.

References

- Pugong, N. (2022). Racism as a Social Construct in the Story “Between the World and Me” by Ta Nehisi Coates:revealing American History Regarding Education, Government, Society, and the Status of the Blacks in the Life of Samori’s Father Through a Marxist Lens. Literary Criticism. Saint Mary’s University. Bayombong. Nueva Vizcaya. Philippines.
- Rawley, J. A., & Behrendt, S. D. (1983). *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History*. University of Nebraska Press.
- Said, E. W. (1994). *Orientalism*. Vintage Books.
- Sinitiere, P. L. (2024). *W.E.B. Du Bois’s The Philadelphia Negro: A Book History*. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 10(1), 159–167. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23326492231214175>
- Staszak, J. F. (2008). *Other/Otherness*. In R. Kitchin & N. Thrift (Eds.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. Elsevier.
- Taylor, Q. (2000). *The African American Experience: A History of Black Americans from 1619 to 1890* [Lecture notes]. Department of History, University of Washington.
- Taylor, R. E., & Kuo, B. C. H. (2019). *Black American Psychological Help-seeking Intention: An Integrated Literature Review with Recommendations for Clinical Practice*. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 29(4), 325–337. <https://doi.org/10.1037/int0000131>
- Tharps, L. L. (2014, June 2). *I Refuse to Remain in the Lower Case*. My American Meltingpot. <https://myamericanmeltingpot.com/2014/06/02/I-Refuse-to-remain-in-The-Lower-case/>.
- Thomas, H. (1998). *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440–1870*. Simon & Schuster.
- Walvin, J. (2005). *Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Washington, B. T. (1901). *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography*. Dover Publications.
- Weiten, W., Dunn, D. S., & Hammer, E. Y. (2014). *Psychology Applied to Modern Life: Adjustment in the 21st Century* (11th ed.). Wadsworth.

References

- Williams, D., Lavizzo, R., & Warren, R. (1994). *The Concept of Race and Health Status in America* (p. 26). U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Williams, E. (1944). *Capitalism and Slavery*. University of North Carolina Press.
- Yancy, G. (2008). *Black Bodies, White Gazes: The Continuing Significance of Race*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Ziller, R. C., Hagey, J., Smith, M. D. C., & Long, B. H. (1969). *Self-esteem: A self-social Construct*. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 33(1), 84–95.
<https://scispace.com/pdf/self-esteem-a-self-social-construct-1s39qay8p9.pdf>