



LEGACIES OF SLAVERY IN *THE SWEETNESS OF WATER*: A CRITICAL RACE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

*The present research study provides a critical analysis of Harris's *The Sweetness of Water* through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Using Frantz Fanon's theoretical insights on race and colonialism as a guiding framework, the researchers examine how the legacy of slavery is represented and how racial oppression is portrayed in the narrative. A qualitative textual analysis method was employed, involving close reading of the novel's key passages depict the experiences of recently emancipated African American characters in the post-Civil War American South. The analysis reveals that Harris's novel vividly illustrates the enduring social and psychological impacts of slavery: Black characters struggle with dehumanization, marginalization, and racial violence even after legal emancipation. At the same time, moments of empathy and interracial solidarity in the story highlight possibilities for healing and social change. Through Fanon's CRT perspective, the novel's themes of invisibility, trauma, and resistance are interpreted as reflections of systemic racism embedded in society's structures and consciousness. The study concludes that *The Sweetness of Water* offers a nuanced portrayal of slavery's aftermath, reinforcing the CRT premise that racism is deeply ingrained and persistent, while also suggesting pathways toward recognition of shared humanity. This research contributes to literary scholarship by demonstrating how contemporary fiction can be analyzed with CRT to deepen our understanding of historical racial injustices and their lasting effects.*

Keywords: Slavery, Racial Violence, Memory, Resilience, Empowerment

1. Introduction

The end of the American Civil War in 1865 brought about the formal abolition of slavery, but it also ushered in a chaotic and uncertain Reconstruction period. Approximately four million formerly enslaved African Americans sought to establish lives as free citizens in the former Confederate states. Despite new amendments intended to guarantee their rights, the reality on the ground was marked by fierce resistance. Southern legislatures enacted "Black Codes" to suppress Black people's newfound freedom, and vigilante violence spread terror among the emancipated population. This turbulent historical context forms the backdrop for Harris's *The Sweetness of Water* (2021) explores the fragile societal transformations of a small Georgia town in the turbulent early years of reconstruction.

The purpose of the current study is to determine the basic social and psychological effects that slavery's demise—and the ensuing period of tenuous progress—had on individuals in the American South. People in the novel's fictional community of Old Ox are depicted as struggling to find their place in a new and fragmented world, where the rules of the past have been upended but new ones are not yet firmly established. There is hope for change and movement forward, but



the painful parts of one's past are ever-present. CRT scholars argue that interactions between people and within institutions are profoundly shaped by the legacy of slavery and entrenched racial hierarchies. This study relies on assumptions such as the notion that racism is not an aberration but is normal and embedded in societal structures and behavior. By examining Harris's novel through this theoretical lens, the research addresses how a society attempts to rebuild itself after slavery and how the specter of slavery continues to influence relationships and identities.

Through a close reading of Harris's *The Sweetness of Water* (2021) and an application of CRT and Fanon's ideas, this study seeks to illuminate the ways in which the legacy of slavery continues to manifest in the novel's portrayal of post-Civil War life. It examines the extent to which characters are able (or unable) to transcend the roles imposed on them under slavery, and it interrogates the social dynamics of a community in the process of redefining itself. By combining Fanon's insights with CRT principles, the analysis will show how Harris's narrative represents the condition of African Americans in a period of supposed freedom that is still shadowed by slavery's racial realities.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The central problem this research addresses is the persistent influence of slavery's legacy on individuals and communities, even after slavery has been formally abolished. A tension exists between hope for change and the inescapable weight of the past; the painful memories and power imbalances of slavery are not easily discarded. Critical race theorists argue that racism is a normal and embedded part of society, rather than an anomaly that disappears with legal reforms (Bell, 1995). The novel's portrayal of mistrust, violence, and anxiety between former slaves and former masters reflects this reality. The research problem, therefore, is to examine how the novel represents the transition from slavery to freedom as a continuum – where personal and political struggles are deeply intertwined and the past of racial oppression remains ever-present.

1.2 Significance of the study

This study is significant for both literary scholarship and the broader understanding of how historical racial injustices are remembered and represented. By analyzing Harris's *The Sweetness of Water* (2021) through a CRT framework, the research bridges literary analysis with social critique, demonstrating how fiction can illuminate the complex dynamics of race, power, and memory in American history. It contributes to ongoing dialogues in literary studies about the portrayal of slavery and its aftermath, especially by focusing on a recent novel that has not yet been extensively analyzed through this lens. The findings of this research also carry social relevance: understanding the emotional and psychological struggles of Harris's characters – their trauma, resilience, and quests for dignity – can inform contemporary discussions about racial justice and healing. In highlighting moments of interracial empathy and the enduring pain of the past, the study underscores that acknowledging and confronting the "mountain of loss" left by history is necessary for any meaningful progress toward racial equality. It also underscores the role of literature in prompting reflection on social justice, suggesting that narratives of the past can inform conversations about racial healing and equity today.



2. Literature Review

The Pakistani English Literature is a fast-growing field that has now become an essential part to the global literature landscape. In an attempt to understand Pakistan from another perspective, which depict life as it is lived through its myriad social, political and cultural milkshakes. This literary tradition has experienced an unprecedented surge in popularity over the past few decades, a reflection of who we are as people navigating our post-colonial heritage and present-day struggles.

The history of slavery and its aftermath has been a central subject in American literature, particularly in works by African American writers who bear witness to its traumas. Antebellum slave narratives such as Douglass's *Autobiography* (1845) and Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) laid early groundwork by exposing the cruelties of slavery – from family separation to sexual exploitation – and asserting the enslaved person's voice (Jacobs, 2009). In the post-Civil War era and beyond, authors have continued to explore slavery's painful legacy through fiction. Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987) powerfully depicts an escaped enslaved mother haunted (in both literal and figurative ways) by the child she killed rather than see returned to bondage, symbolizing the psychological scars and persistent "re-memory" of slavery that lingers long after its abolition. Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (1979) takes a speculative approach: a modern Black woman who is thrust back in time to a Southern plantation, forcing a confrontation with the brutal realities her ancestors endured. Such works illustrate that the end of legal slavery did not erase the deep-seated injustices and traumas inflicted on Black Americans. Through these narratives, literature has kept alive the memory of slavery's full and ugly truth.

2.1 Frantz Fanon's Insights on Race and Colonialism

Frantz Fanon was not part of the American civil rights movement or the development of CRT per se, his writings offer profound insight into the psychology of racism and colonial oppression that is applicable to any context of racial hierarchy. Fanon's seminal work *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) examines the inner lives of Black individuals under colonial rule, describing how systemic racism causes feelings of inferiority, invisibility, and self-alienation (Fanon, 2008). He argued that in a racist society the Black person is often seen not as an individual but as an embodiment of stereotypes – effectively an "Other" onto whom fear and disdain are projected. As Fanon bluntly put it, "the racist is the one who creates his inferior" – meaning that notions of Black inferiority are not natural facts but inventions of racist ideology (Fanon, 2008, p. 69). This dehumanization, Fanon noted, can lead the oppressed to internalize the derogatory images imposed on them, while the oppressors develop a pathological need to assert dominance. Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), further explored how colonial violence and exploitation warp social relations, suggesting that colonizer and colonized are locked in a cycle of fear, aggression, and mutual incomprehension until the underlying power structure is fundamentally changed (Fanon, 1963). Key Fanonian concepts – such as the idea that enduring racism inflicts psychological trauma and that genuine liberation requires reclaiming one's humanity – inform the analytical approach of this thesis. By applying Fanon's perspective, we can better understand characters in Harris's *The Sweetness of Water* (2021) who grapple with a "colonial mentality" or the lingering effects of having been treated as less than human.



Elizabeth (2020) claims that *Summoning Women* bears a striking resemblance to the current era while testifying to the repressive control that prevailed in the past. We are fighting this injustice right now, and maybe this is a turning point for society. Atacola has made it plain that the crackdown will stay in control moving forward if it isn't lifted right away. Even though the protests that followed the Black Lives Matter movement made police brutality more widely known, violence against Black bodies is still a tactic that must be stopped. It is quite accurate to describe the women's depiction of slavery as brutality. Furthermore, Atacola purposefully draws attention to commonplace violence in order to show the severity of the abuse.

According to Rosslyn Elliott (2020), Atakora discovers that, in this cultural moment, all Americans are confronting ongoing racial injustice and inequality, and her characters in *Conjure Women* share a common urge to interact with the past. *Conjure Women*, Afia Atakora's debut book, is a dense patchwork of tales centered on a big cast of characters who endure slavery's end and the Reconstruction era. Black women in the South after the Civil War had new, albeit constrained, options after experiencing the agony and cruelty of slavery.

3. Research Methodology

The current study uses a descriptive design and a qualitative textual analysis method to examine Harris's *The Sweetness of Water* (2021). Rather than quantitative data or empirical fieldwork, the "data" for this research consist of textual passages from Harris's novel, which are interpreted through the lens of Critical Race Theory and Fanon's ideas. The methodology is inherently interpretive: by performing a close reading of the novel's narrative, dialogue, and character interactions, key themes and motifs related to slavery and race were identified. Specific scenes and character moments that exemplify the novel's portrayal of racial dynamics were selected for detailed scrutiny. These textual examples are then analyzed in light of the CRT framework – for instance, examining how they illustrate systemic racism, the internalization of oppression, or resistance to racial subjugation. Theory is applied to interpret the text as data. By employing this qualitative approach, the study provides an in-depth understanding of how the novel represents complex racial issues, grounding its conclusions in textual evidence.

3.1 Critical Race Theory Framework

Critical Race Theory emerged in the legal academy in the 1970s and 1980s as a framework for understanding how racism persists in seemingly race-neutral institutions. Foundational CRT scholars such as Derrick Bell, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, and Patricia Williams challenged the notion that the end of de jure segregation eliminated racial injustice. Instead, CRT posits that racism is an ordinary, ingrained feature of society – part of the very fabric of laws, policies, and social norms (Bell, 1995). Progress toward racial equality occurs only when it aligns with the interests of those in power – a dynamic often termed interest convergence and even then such progress may be partial or superficial. CRT also asserts that race is a social construct (not a biological reality) that has been created and manipulated by those in power to maintain their advantages. Another key tenet is the importance of listening to the experiences and histories of people of color – often referred to as the "voice of color" thesis – as essential evidence for how racism operates (Delgado, 1983). Through storytelling and counter-narratives, marginalized groups can illuminate injustices that the dominant narrative overlooks. Additionally, CRT is



attentive to intersectionality, recognizing that individuals may experience discrimination in overlapping ways (for example, the novel hints at how a character's identity as both Black and male or as a white woman shapes their experiences differently). Overall, the CRT framework provides tools to analyze literature by highlighting power dynamics, systemic biases, and the lived realities of racial oppression that texts may depict.

4. Textual Analysis

Critical race theory is advanced by theorists such as Frantz Fanon (1952), critical race theory emphasizes the socially constructed nature of race and examines how racial social markers express themselves in terms of against binary relations; he also stressed the crippling burden that racism forces its victims to bear. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) exposes how racial identity is formed and also what has invisible or hyper-visualized the black body as a shadow of white supremacy.

"The log beneath him yawned and George's rear end sank into the waterlogged mess. Only as he moved to stand, to pat himself dry, did he see them sitting before him. Two Negroes, similar in dress: white cotton shirts unbuttoned, britches as ragged as if they'd fitted their legs into intertwined gunnysacks. (Harris 2021, p.8)"

Harris's *The Sweetness of Water* (2021) explores that the two black men went unnoticed by George until there was a motion that caught his eye. This is a metaphor for how black people become invisible in white majority society. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) illustrates blacks are invisible, either in negative stereotypes or negatively viewed rights. They were like statues; if the blanket along their front, already billowing in a breeze stiff and sharp with autumn cold as it was had been still. They would have vanished into the foreground altogether. So, too, with the swaying blanket: one would not know that a black body is contained within it unless someone or something points-or fundamentally jolts-one into noticing-into seeing. In the story these two men are described with ragged clothing ("britches as ragged as if they'd fitted their legs into intertwined gunnysacks"), suggesting poverty and a loss of humanity. In Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) colonial and racist societies strip the black subject of their human rights transforming them as mere economic products or body parts while removing individuality from beyond based on abnormal psychological axes. This plays out in Harris's *The Sweetness of Water* (2021) through the actual experiences of newly freed slaves Prentiss and Landry as they test their freedom within a world still unfairly very cruel to them. They could also represent Prentiss and Landry as the two black men mentioned in this line. The way they look and where they are placed all indicate the very harsh truths of life for "Freedmen" after being given their freedom as not quite yet, still slaves in a free land. The way that George reacted when he saw the two guys also illustrates how racial relations in the South changed after the Civil War. His initial inability to perceive them points to a persistent blind hole in white perspective, wherein black people continue to be neither completely respected nor accepted as equals. A metaphor for the sinking reality of the ongoing conflicts and the weight of history that white people like George must face when they connect with freed Black people is the log that George falls into.



The best lines from Harris's *The Sweetness of Water* (2021) provide a thought-provoking remark on the psychological effects of dehumanizing stereotypes and the persistent legacy of racism. According to Fanon's (1952) critical race theory, the beast represents the ingrained racial anxieties that white people have about themselves even when the overt conditions of oppression have altered. This section emphasizes the novel's examination of the continuous fight in the South after the Civil War to dispel these misconceptions and concerns, highlighting the necessity of a more in-depth, meaningful reckoning with the past.

“He told George of the game August had hatched, Master and the Slave, and that they had only been assuming their proper roles for the afternoon. He had to swear to the boy that he would keep it secret. (Harris, 2021, p.11)”

Frantz Fanon's (1952) critical race theory addresses the deep-seated psychological and social impacts of systemic racism and colonialism. According to Fanon (1952), these institutions reinforce the incorporation of names and responsibilities that those in power charge, leading to a vicious loop of mental anguish and marginalization that affects equally those being oppressed and those under siege. In this regard, August's creation of the game "Master and the Slave" is a potent and unsettling illustration of the absorption of racial power relations. August and Caleb are maintaining the roles of master and slave during all their private encounters by performing this pastime, which reenacts the horrific history of slavery. It is not just a child play but proven how much such positions are entrenched in them and also how racism is still a determinant of identification and behaviors in them. That is unless he was to suffer from anything beyond physical pains and wounds. The manner in which Caleb was determined to keep George a secret is an example of how the position of a victim of racial abuse often result to resignation and withdrawal. This action preserves the current reality, and prevents any person from striving for a change of the existing relations of power. This hiding is also a reflection of what Fanon says regarding oppression where the oppressed will help their oppressors because of fear and a wish to survive.

George also has a great deal to do with this situation. To some, one may consider the decision of this man to remain the confidant as morally and ethically correct especially when Caleb wants him to keep everything a secret. Whether there is an opportunity to confront and overcome these oppressive habits or if the cycle of silence and complicity continues will depend on George's reaction to this knowledge. This specific example emphasizes the main theme of the book, which is about the choices and responsibilities people have in a society currently coping with the unsightly and excruciating wounds that Caleb fails to conceal also stand in for the real and metaphysical harm that institutionalized racism and slavery do to victims. These scars are not just physically; they additionally carry profound mentally and emotionally ramifications that affect how individuals see ourselves and relate to others. The desire to hide these tattoos is a reflection of societal pressure to minimize or ignore the reality of discrimination and its consequences.

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In the story these two men are described with ragged clothing ("britches as ragged as if they'd fitted their legs into intertwined gunnysacks"), suggesting poverty and a loss of humanity. In Fanon (1952) work, he writes a lot about how colonial and racist societies strip the black subject of their human rights transforming them as mere economic products or body parts while removing individuality from beyond based on abnormal psychological axes.

Of all the characters portrayed by Fanon, they all depict the manner in which institutionalized cruelty and injustice cause the fragmentation of social and personal selves as seen in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), one can see that the realization of the character has that everything 'fell apart' when Caleb joined the army is example how trauma may have disturbing consequences. To Fanon, violence deconstructs the individual and puts people in an open and vulnerable position no matter if it is in the form of war or subjects' subjection by colonial domination. The 'nakedness' that the female characterizes before an unfamiliar person signifies the juvenile girl's vulnerability implying that the war has stripped off all the cocoon that protected her from the realities of life. Her sorrow in her own "idiotic expectations" thus underlines this theme of disillusionment even further. This is an endemic feature of oppressed or colonial subjects which Fanon explains how such people endure degrading societal rules and expectations only for the latter to demoralize them when they do not come through. In this case, the character is angrier with herself than she is angry at herself for having thought she could. This supports Fanon's argument that people who experience structural violence often struggle to come to terms with the internalization by the dominant imperial power of culture resulting in a state whereby they feel they are always alone and in doubt.

The character also depicts the theme of alienation which is a key principle in Fanon's fanaticism. Because of the conflict, people who were once together physically such as Caleb and her family are apart and the character emotionally detached from the entire human society. She now has a cynical and disillusioned perspective on everyone in her life, especially the Standing 'naked before this stranger', and disappointed by one's 'silly expectations', the character is quite telling. In this section, I discuss tangible psychological consequences of conflict using Critical Race Theory as viewed by Fanon. It also brings out analysis of broader social relations that define interaction amidst people and human personalities. Of all the characters portrayed by Fanon, they all depict the manner in which institutionalized cruelty and injustice cause the fragmentation of social and personal selves as seen in *The Wretched of the Earth*. In the light of this, one can see that the realization the character has that everything 'fell



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Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) in particular, addresses how racism or colonialism-related structural oppression causes people to become deeply physically and psychologically exhausted. It is possible to interpret Prentiss's observation of the elderly man's lethargic state as a reflection of the cumulative toll that these systemic factors exact. The elderly man's lassitude, which Prentiss describes as being greater than anybody she has ever encountered, whether white or black, implies that this tiredness affects all disadvantaged and downtrodden people regardless of race. Fanon contends that although people of color are disproportionately affected, the experience of dehumanization has an influence on all individuals. Thus, analgesia can therefore interpret the fatigue of this old man as part of the social and economic decline that progressively erodes him, however his skin color may be. However, in comparing the old man's exhaustion to that of any other person, 'whether white or black' Prentiss demonstrates that race is the ongoing social conditioning people's way of perceiving each other. Again, using Fanon's Critical Race Theory, race plays out in most social interactions all the time; even when the issue seems trivial. It marks the ubiquity of the racial taxonomy in the society by suggesting that, even, as Prentiss nods at the wisdom realized by the elderly man that everyone is tired, the man still is able to make race as a marker.

Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) discusses how absorbing societal norms and expectations can cause a person who has experienced colonization or oppression to lose their sense of self and agency. These are societal norms, which give behaviors and tasks that the widow needs to exhibit so as to be regarded a grieving widow, and they are embodied in the widow's blacks. She refuses the role that society tries to confine her to, the role of the grieving widow and regaining her independence by getting rid of them. In she's daily actions of dumping her mourning clothes the authors action might be viewed as a psychological survival strategy. The author draws attention to the fact that the oppressed should struggle to resist the dehumanization processes that are initiated and controlled by the oppressor institutions. The fact that the woman changes into a pretty dress to replace the black clothes she dons after the patriarch's demise tells that she rejects the man and his dominance. Furthermore, the fact that she does it instantly – without a second thought – means that she must be a rebellion to some of



the rules most women in that society would not dare to break. Consequently, the given approach can be explained by Albright and include such significant types of the psychological rebound as spontaneous resistance, defined by Fanon. Using the deed, the woman becomes an anti-type of a submissive widow and demonstrates her personal spirit and strength. The level of complexity is even increased by the fact that she had acted before even having a clue that Caleb survived. It means that if she decided to get rid of her mourning clothes, there was more than outside force, an inside force made her want to shed the image of a bereaved woman as well. This factor speaks too to Fanon's contention that liberation must be inner, that people fight for their souls, and do not wish to play the parts that societies of oppression have scripted for them.

5. Conclusion, Findings and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

In Harris's *The Sweetness of Water* (2021), Fanon's theory of the Black body that is relegated to almost invisibility in the new worlds of White supremacy is depicted as people retreating into hardly noticeable spaces in order to fit into the new arrangements. As for me, there is a similarity to this in the moment when, George first looks at two black guys and only pays attention. By employing Critical Race theory coined by Frantz Fanon the reader may gain comprehensive knowledge on how issues of race and racism as well as institutionalized oppression manifest themselves in the realities of the main characters of Harris's *The Sweetness of Water* (2021). When they get up, Theo follows them getting interested. This absence of visibility is not only a physical flaw but is a manifestation of a cultural problem that not only ignores Black presence but practically erases it. According to the author of the *Black Skin, White Masks*, the problem does not lie in the mere absence of black people's worth in the societies where whites dominate, but more than that. The men's clothing is frayed, and all but two of them blend into the background, which only underlines the extent to which race persecution dehumanizes people. The fact that the young man is nervous is evident from his waving eyes and frightened look on his face and such a reaction is similar to what Fanon wrote concerning the psychological effects of racism. Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) mirrors how the racists' regime makes the other party feel vulnerable and inferior. This feeling of discomfort depicted here in the young man is an example of the anxiety that the development of a racial discriminatory culture had made the young man develop. This I think is a strong representation of how racism affects the psychological well-being of the people subjected to it because people are always in anticipation of violence and inhuman treatment.

Fanon's exploration into the existing prejudice is supported by the literal presentation of the black persons as 'animalistic'. The position of the black figure as an animal that is predetermined by his nature to be different from people but who submits to human traits every now and then shows the work of racism in turning African Americans into grotesque, non-people. This kind of representation is in concordance with the Fanonian notion where the colonial masters deny the black people their humanity by transforming them into abject and other in the minds of the White folks. The presence of freed slaves creates problems and it is an



important question which emphasize the contrast of the idea of freedom and free people. Although the emancipation of slaves was a noble act in as much as it was a call for justice, it disrupted the status quo that was in place which most people, especially the slave masters feared. The slaves being emancipated meant that they were a threat to the structures of the society as they were now calling the shots in their own lives hence the atmosphere of suspicion and persecution.

5.2. Findings

Drawing finer insights, some concepts come into focus regarding the racial representation with Walter's simplistic identification with black superiority over whites, about which Fanon, in his Critical Race Theory has a lot to say. According to Fanon's theory on the social construction of race and systematic dehumanization, the novel provides a clear explanation on the relations/ identities of the black man and the white man. This is a reference to the concept of racial invisibility made about two 'out of sight' black guys until they are discerned by George. This implies that the black body is either an object of the invisible or the one that white supremacy completely over Paths, sees; hence, affirming Fanon's theory. The men's shabby look, as much as Fanon's notion of how racist and colonial systems make black people poor align with how they have been stripped off their humanity. reducing them to the status of stony heartlessness. About the characters of Prentiss and Landry it reveals their new state of freedom but still they are entrapped into societal norms and prejudice.

From George's first failure to recognize the guys, the play depicts how white people continue to fail to see persons of race. It is only when he tumbles on to the log and gets scared realizing that those guys are pointing at him that George comes to appreciate the importance of the string and the reality of deteriorating condition of racial warfare. Reading this passage makes one appreciate the difficult task of coming to terms with the racism and slavery period in the post-Civil war America. Two more aspects of real-life typecasting and the psychological consequences of institutional racism are its representation of the young man as nervous and George's awkward attempt at comforting him by patting him on the shoulder. From this perspective, Fanon is right about the young man not being aggressive in any form, this is due to racism that he brutally reduces the blacks to Equals, they are even filled with fear and other bad traits. That being said, George's care also provides the potential for altering the context—a society which consciously persecutes people of color—and invites their integration into another group.

Indeed, two of Fanon's tenets are the concepts of being racially erased and hyper-sexualized. This is well complemented in the particular scene in which George initially fails to notice the two black men until he watches a certain motion. These people are depicted as if ... becoming a part of the settings and their ragged cloths may be seen as symbolizing the way black people disappear out of mostly white societies. According to Fanon, this sort of erasure is a direct result of the dehumanizing impact that racism has on its targets; because of this racism 'makes' those in a position of power see black people as being of lesser value or non-



existent. In the story the fact that the black men are almost naked, with rips all over as a representation of injustice and poverty that is brought about by the existing prejudices. The True Reaction of George when he saw the men has made realize how much uneducated White People still are when it comes to black people. His first failure to recognize them shows another facet of the problem of Black erasure or White people's inability to see Black people as people. The scene where George slip-ups on the log and managed object standing on three legs and starts seeing the guys is in fact an allegory of the somber side of race relations. It shows George and, generally, white people's obligation to address the times gone by of race relations interacting with freed Black people; it also explores the difficulties of living with the aftermath of racism and slavery.

It is noteworthy that the black person is represented by a shameful symbol of a 'beast,' which shifts the focus to the racial aspects and depersonalization that is described by Fanon. Given the stereotype of the black figure as an animal at some instances being human but only in part affirms how racism erases Blacks and replaces them with repulsive nonhuman abstractions. This is in agreement with Fanon's view of how racism and colonialization dehumanize Black people to the extent of becoming 'horrifying' or 'other' in the eyes of the whites. In Fanon's logic, it is in this position that one gets to experience the adverse implications of colonialism and systematic racism. George's mental and psychological tiredness is an exact reflection of dejection and fatigue that people – black and white – experienced in the years after Civil War. One may regard this tiredness as an allegory of the much larger concerns of the sociopolitical realignment and the renewal of social relations in the framework of the changing economic environment. This is why the contradiction between the concept of freedom and its realization finds expression in concerns raised regarding the existence of freed slaves. When slavery was abolished it was clearly good for the oppressed population, however, it disrupted the society and stirred a rebellion on the side of those who enjoyed the previous state of affairs. The masters were facing problems with the liberated slaves since the latter were now the leaders of their own destiny and they were creating new power structures which meant a climate of persecution. This dynamic shows that the aspiration to equality and the existence of the colors of racism remain relevant even when the official suppression is over.

5.3 Future Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study, several avenues for further exploration arise, all of which could deepen our understanding of how the legacy of slavery continues to shape individual and collective experiences. One key recommendation is to conduct comparative analyses of *The Sweetness of Water* with other contemporary novels set during or after the Reconstruction era. By examining works such as Afia Atakora's *Conjure Women* or Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, scholars can explore shared themes, narrative techniques, and varying portrayals of slavery's impact across different contexts. This comparison would also offer an opportunity to assess how each author navigates the complex histories and the psychological legacies of slavery, providing a more nuanced understanding of the period and its representation in fiction. Another important area for



future research is the application of intersectional approaches to the novel. By using Black feminist theory or feminist CRT, researchers could shed light on how women's roles and experiences were shaped by the racial and gendered hierarchies that were entrenched even in the aftermath of slavery.

Further, a more contextualized understanding of the novel could be achieved by combining literary analysis with historical and sociological research. Researchers could explore how contemporary audiences interpret the novel's depiction of race, memory, and trauma in light of present-day struggles for racial equality. By connecting the novel's themes to current social and political movements, scholars can examine its continued resonance and its potential role in influencing or reflecting ongoing dialogues about race, justice, and healing in the United States. This research would further establish the novel's relevance in a world still grappling with the long-lasting effects of racial injustice.

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