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THE INTRICACIES OF RACE, FREEDOM AND ETHICS IN RICHARD WRIGHT'S SAVAGE HOLIDAY

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Abstract

Richard Wright's *Savage Holiday* is a novel which attempts to move beyond the racial configurations and limitations attributed to and imposed on race-neutral literary works penned by the African American authors. Convinced that the racial/ethnic disparities, sociopolitical factors and historical contexts determine the subjective positions of the blacks as well as the whites, in *Savage Holiday* Wright depicts the moral conundrum and the freedom related predicaments of a white character who imagines himself to be the embodiment of white supremacy and patriarchy. The present study offers a psychoanalytic exploration into the disturbed mental life of the protagonist Erskine Fowler who commits two murders and the study also purports to read Fowler's story as an epitome of the social pathologies hinged on deeply ingrained racial classifications and prejudices.

Keywords: *African American Literature, Race, Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism.*

RICHARD WRIGHT'IN VAHŞİ TATİL ROMANINDA IRK, ÖZGÜRLÜK VE ETİK KARIŞIKLIKLARI

Özet

Richard Wright'ın *Vahşi Tatil* isimli eseri, Afrikan Amerikalı yazarların kaleme aldığı ırksız edebi eserlere atfedilen ve onlara dayatılan ırk biçimlerinin ve sınırlamaların ötesine geçmeye çalışan bir romandır. İrksal/etnik farklılıkların, sosyopolitik faktörlerin ve tarihsel bağlamların hem siyah hem de beyazların öznel konumlarını belirlediğine inanan Wright, *Vahşi Tatil* romanında kendisini beyaz üstünlüğün ve ataerkilliğin tecessümü olarak gören beyaz bir karakterin ahlaki çıkmazlarını ve özgürlük ilintili ikilemelerini tasvir etmektedir. Bu çalışma, iki cinayet işleyen romanın başkahramanı Erskine Fowler'ın zihinsel dünyasını psikanalitik açıdan incelemeyi ve aynı zamanda Fowler'ın öyküsünü müzmin irksal sınıflandırmalara ve önyargılara dayanan sosyal patolojilerin bir örneği olarak okumayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Afrikan Amerikan Edebiyatı, Irk, Psikanalitik Edebiyat Eleştirisi*

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1. INTRODUCTION

...in the very nature of a holiday there is excess; the holiday mood is brought about by the release of what is forbidden.

-Freud's Totem and Taboo

The story in *Savage Holiday* revolves around 43-year-old Erskine Fowler, who is forced to retire from his job after working for Longevity Life Insurance Company for 30 years. Erskine is quite successful in the insurance agency profession, in sniffing out the fishy testimonials of the insurance holders. Yet, his position, on which Erskine prides himself, is taken away after the manager decides to make room for his son, keen on taking over Erskine's job. Fowler, however, takes his forced retirement hard as the company means everything to him, standing in for his family, his friends, his past and future, basically, for his very reason to exist. After his discharge, Fowler finds himself in the abyss of freedom, not knowing what to do with himself and with the spare time on his hands. He is economically sound though as he receives a considerable amount of compensation after leaving the job. In one of those moments when he does not know what to do next, Erskine Fowler, torn between the simple yet impossible to make decisions of taking a shower, preparing a Sunday breakfast or picking up the Sunday paper left on his doorstep, makes a terrible mistake. In a scene freighted with naturalistic elements, elements that seal the fate of the character in a predetermined twist, Fowler tries to pick up the paper naked and the door snaps shut in his face. Naked, and anxious that a resident might see him in his shameful condition, Fowler makes a hasty decision. Instead of ringing the door of the porter for the extra keys, he decides to enter his flat through the bathroom window, for which he has to climb through the balcony on which, as the story goes, his neighbor Mabel's son Tony happens to be playing. Tony, a silent and a withdrawn kid, seeing Fowler's naked, hairy body panics and falls to his death from the balcony ten floors down. Before the sense of guilt sinks in and he is consumed by the pangs of remorse, Erskine thinks out a solution to save his skin.

First, Fowler is resolved to make up a credible story that would clear the doubts of the residents and the police. After all, he is a respectable white man, a frequent observer of the Church service, and an esteemed member of the congregation. Second, he decides to court the company of Mabel Blake; suffering mother and a widow, not out of his pity, but out of his curiosity to find out whether she heard or saw him while he was climbing through the balcony. In fact, Tony's mother Mabel was asleep during the whole unintentional murder scene, probably passed out from the late night heavy drinking. Erskine Fowler's plan works out for a while for no one doubts his testimony and Mabel seems to trust him. As the story unfolds, however, the turn of the events proves to be worse for Fowler. He receives mysterious phone calls, the person at the other end of the line telling him that he/she knew his big secret. And his relationship with Mabel gets more complicated for his initial feelings of spying on her give their place to an emotion of love mixed with a raging hate. It may not sound unlikely that Erskine falls in love Mabel in the process as he proposes to marry the woman. Yet, his love is somehow crooked and morbid as he accuses Mabel, not himself, for Tony's death and is infuriated that Mabel readily accepts the attention of other men. Mabel's lax attitude and "immoral" life eventually drives Erskine mad, what ultimately compels him to murder Mabel, however, comes when he learns that Mabel knew all along that it was he who was responsible for Tony's death. Up until this point in the story, nothing seems particularly interesting and profound, but as Erskine stabs Mabel several times in the kitchen and revels in the pool of her blood, we learn that killing Mabel is also an act of killing his Mother, who just like Mabel, lived a promiscuous life and never returned his son's love. After the murder, Erskine turns himself in to the police and confesses the murder. However, despite the police officer's insistent question if there was anything else he wanted to confess, he dissembles the truth about Tony's death and thus the novel ends.

Savage Holiday, just like Richard Wright's latest novels published before his death, came under severe criticism on the grounds that the novel was feeble in handling the issues it claimed to portray. In other words, Wright came short of treating the dilemmas of the Western modernity in its complex, interwoven structures and offered instead a shallow tale of Freudian melodrama. The keynote addressee of the criticism, however, was the presence of a white protagonist. Yoshinobu Hakutani believes that the reason why *Savage Holiday* has not been so popular among the literary critics is Wright's "exclusive treatment of white characters and his concern with

nonracial matters” (Hakutani, 1982: 15). Claudia Tate also observes that the critics regarded “Wright’s switch from black to white characters” as “peculiar, if not problematic” (Tate, 1998). In an interview on *Savage Holiday*, Wright supported Hakutani’s claims to the extent that it was indeed an “exclusive treatment” of whites in the United States, not exclusive enough though to provide a space of concern that would include the colored citizens as well:

Having left America and having been living for some time in France, I have become concerned about the historical roots and the emotional problems of western whites which make them aggressive toward colored peoples.... I was looking for explanations of the psychological reactions of whites.... In this novel, I have attempted to deal with what I consider as the most important problem white people have to face: their moral dilemma (Wright qtd. in Barthes, 1993: 167).

In another interview with Georges Charbonnier, Wright touched on the peculiarity of the problem: “I picked a white American businessman to attempt a demonstration about a universal problem...the problem of freedom” (Wright qtd. in Charbonnier, 1993: 236). By positing the problem of freedom as universal and by associating such problem with a white American businessman, Wright makes his intentions clear in writing his only white novel. That is to say, as he later remarks, he is anxious to publicize *Savage Holiday* as white and at least make sure that “people will read this in a light of saying that this is Negro writing about whites” (Wright qtd. in Fabre, 1993: 376). Wright’s concern to create a race neutral text, and do away with racial complications regarding the “universal problem” of freedom, seems to hold sway during the early years following the publication of the novel as initial criticism does not find fault with his appropriation of a white protagonist, or rather chooses to pay scant attention to Wright’s latest novel. In time, however, the novel has caught the attention of a few and some critics have read Erskine Fowler’s problem of freedom, his moral predicament and the discrepancy between his belief in strict morality and his immoral acts as the conflict and resolution of the Oedipus complex.

J.F. Gounard and Beverley Roberts Gounard, besides stating the obvious fact about the novel that “*Savage Holiday* is Richard Wright’s only nonracial novel” (J.F. and R. Gounard, 1979: 344), analyze the novel from a Freudian perspective in the Oedipal conflict between Fowler and his mother. John Vassilowitch focuses on the “paradoxical connection between male sexual desire...and female degradation... [that] has its counterpart in Erskine’s Oedipal fantasies about Mabel” (Vassilowitch, 1981: 207). John M. Reilly reads the novel as an exciting story and claims that it “omits racial conflict because its narrative scope is...restricted to the singular pattern of one man’s Oedipal complex” (Reilly, 1977: 218). Michel Fabre’s commentary on the novel is somehow different from the other critics and more straightforward as Fabre portrays Fowler as “a psychopathic murderer” (Fabre, 1993: 376).

Whether it is a psychoanalytic exploration of Fowler’s Oedipal predicament with his mother compelling him to murder Mabel, who he thinks is the replica of his deceased mother, or profiling Fowler as a mentally unbalanced character, the novel cannot help but invite a psychoanalytic reading. If it is not a far-fetched claim to make, it can even be asserted that it was part of Wright’s intention to render *Savage Holiday* open to psychoanalytic criticism. Aside from the quotation from *Totem and Taboo* given right at the beginning of the first part titled “Anxiety,” and a storyline that distinctively deals with fissures in the subjective formations of the characters, Wright’s personal interest in psychoanalytic theory should also be mentioned for purposes of legitimation. An avid reader of psychoanalytic theory, especially that of Freud, Wright is known to have incorporated some notions of psychoanalysis in his writings. Wright’s interpretation however, as he makes it clear in “*Psychiatry Comes to Harlem*,” is one that turns “Freud upside down” (Wright, 1946: 49). Contrary to the customized clinical practice Freud held with his patients, Wright believed in extending the realm of psychiatry to the masses, especially to the 400.000 black residents of Harlem which made up the 53 percent of juvenile crimes registered in Manhattan. Such extension however, would not prove useful in resolving the idiosyncratic problems of the residents alone, but help the African-American population of Harlem in dealing with expansive neurosis. The Lafargue Clinic, established in 1945, in Harlem by Wright and Dr. Frederic Wertham, sought to move beyond the class-based aspirations of the Harlem Renaissance, of the “rising Negro bourgeoisie” and combining Marxism with Freudianism, the clinic paved the way to base the individual ailments of “hysteria”, “neurosis”, and “anxiety” on “historical and social” processes (Zaretsky, 2015: 52-59). The present article seeks to analyze *Savage Holiday* from a psychoanalytic

perspective, yet in doing so it draws its cue from Lafargue Clinic's intendment that individual cases of pathology should or could be explained and studied without recourse to troubled family histories. Following Wright's lead that personal psychic disturbances are to be taken into account in accordance with the cultural, political and social specificities of race, the current study offers a psychoanalytic analysis of *Savage Holiday* marked by racial registers and social markers that also precondition the emergence and the deployment of filial relations.

Before proceeding to the in-depth analysis of the novel from the psychoanalytical perspective, a true story of murder (the trajectory of which is somewhat reminiscent of Erskine's fictional one and that kept the United States public quite busy in 1994 and for the next two decades) should also be addressed as the case spiraled into a racial battleground in 1990s. Orenthal James Simpson, or O.J. Simpson as he was came to be known, was a famous NFL (National Football League) player from 1969 to 1985. Simpson was indeed a renowned athlete for his record breaking performances in the league and was eventually named as a Pro-Football Hall of Fame in 1985. Simpson led a luxurious life under the spotlights of the media, and his performances were widely broadcast in the country. In 1994, however, he was the subject of a different publicity as Simpson's ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and Ronald Goldman were stabbed to death whose bodies were found just outside the residence of Nicole Brown. Eventually, O.J. Simpson was identified as the sole suspect of the crimes and was arrested hours later. In a controversial criminal trial, also receiving international attention, O.J. Simpson was eventually acquitted of the crimes yet the controversy carried on for years to come. Currently, Simpson is in jail, serving out his 33 years imprisonment on charges of felony, armed robbery and kidnapping which he was alleged to have committed in 2008. The murders of Nicole Brown and Ronald Goldman, at first glance, can be seen like any other homicide cases, but inductee's being a famous athlete was one of the main causes for the wide publicity of the event at least not its primary motivation. O.J. Simpson is an African American, his ex-wife Nicole Brown and Ronald Goldman, on the other hand, were white. The homicide was thought to have been committed in a fit of jealousy and due to the infidelity of Nicole Brown.

What lined African Americans against the white public regarding O.J. Simpson's case, however, was the media portrayal of the event for the gargantuan aspect of the whole case and its employed language depended on the stereotypical depiction of the African American 'criminal.' For Toni Morrison, what was disturbing about the whole case's publicization was the dichotomous nature of differentiating between "planned" versus "unplanned," "the subtle mind" against "mindlessness" motives of the crimes, the categorizations which pointed in the direction of racial configurations. Morrison wonders if it would be different – interestingly so – if the culprit was identified as raceless: "...given the claims of race as a blinding force for the defendant and the jury, it would be interesting and possibly revealing to try to imagine an un-raced figure executing the murders" (Morrison, 2010: 10). The official story surrounding the halo of O.J. Simpson's case has thrown the famous athlete into the pit of racial representations, and ripped the scabs off The United States' racial wounds. Indeed, once more citing Morrison's words regarding the race laden characteristic of the case, its larger than discretely individual structure should also be addressed. For Morrison, almost overnight, O.J. Simpson became the representative of "the whole race needing correction, incarceration, censoring, silencing; the race that needs its civil rights disassembled; the race that is sign and symbol of domestic violence..." (Morrison, 2010: 27). In a manner to support and exemplify her claim in *Playing in the Dark* that race as metaphor has become a more dangerous point of reference than biological one, Morrison asserts that the attack, guided from the person of Simpson to all African Americans "is the consequence and function of official stories: to impose the will of a dominant culture. It is Birth of a Nation writ large—menacingly and pointedly for the 'hood'" (Morrison, 2010: 27).

Justifying Morrison's assertion that the racial battleground has evolved into literary and metaphoric representations, American newspapers and television channels put on the airs of a literary authority comparing Simpson's case to Shakespeare's Othello and to Wright's Bigger Thomas character in *Native Son* (Reed, 2010). The unrelenting references to Nicole's murder and the comparisons made to Desdemona pointed in the direction of Othello Syndrome, a delusional jealousy that consequently gripped and consumed Simpson in its morbid grasp. However, the references were not only Shakespearean in nature, but that of a wealthy slave owner:

From news reports, the doctor, Dr. Poussaint, determined that Simpson “felt he owned Nicole like a piece of chattel” and, “in a bizarre twist,” may have seen his white wife “as a rebellious slave who needed to be executed” (duCille, 2010: 344 -45).

After Shakespeare and slave owner references, the media turned to Bigger Thomas. On the surface, Simpson and Thomas have nothing in common. Bigger Thomas’s poverty stricken life, spent in the slums of Chicago is somehow similar to Simpson’s humble beginning. Yet Simpson’s college education and later rich life thanks to his bright career in football cannot be held identical to Thomas’s destitute life. In the trial of Thomas as in Simpson’s, media acted as the representative of the police and of the prosecution, agitating the public with sensational and gore filled stories unfavorable to the defendant. Like Bigger Thomas’s, Simpson’s case was also used, once again by the media, to serve as an excuse to terrorize and criminalize entire African American population. The questions of violence, class, race, capitalism, equality under the law, constitutional rights came into the fray during O.J. Simpson’s trial, yet it eventually boiled down to the question (after all the smoke cleared off the case): Did he really do it? The answer did not carry any additional meaning to it, yet in time, as Morrison believed, it became a “ploy, disguised as a disinterested query that really asks, Are “they” guilty or innocent? “They” meaning we blacks, those blacks, we men, those men. Are “they” getting away with murder?” (Morrison, 2010: 23). O.J. Simpson’s case was not treated as a discrete event, one that could befall on anyone, because he was a big football star, more than that, as Morrison also pointed out (and the way he was portrayed in the media) he was an African American capable of brutal and mindless deeds just like Othello with his Moorish (North African) origins and Bigger Thomas with his ghetto background. Interestingly, before the murders, and during the years when the athlete was in his prime, he referred to himself in the third-person manner, and called himself a man, rather than an African American. He was glad to be regarded, he told reporters, to be reckoned as “colorless” by the American public, and gave the Hertz commercials as proofs of his transcending the color line¹.

After the murders though, he was deliberately ‘darkened’ by the U.S. media, as the cover of the Time magazine intentionally portrayed Simpson’s face two shades darker than its original look.² In an attempt to understand the shifts in Simpson saga from racial crossover to overt racism, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw identifies the reason of the changes as follows: “In a society dominated by property, appetites, and family-in-jeopardy stories, race should disappear, but in a racialized society, concepts like property, appetites, and the family in jeopardy have racial implications” (Crenshaw, 2010: 128). Crenshaw’s thoughts on why the public turned to racialize Simpson should also explain the reason why the media made discriminate references to black literary characters, especially to Bigger Thomas and not to Erskine Fowler, in explicating and addressing the case. In other words, the media deliberately manipulated and selectively ignored the contents of Wright’s *Native Son*, of what it had to say about conflating the criminal deeds of the U. S. as a nation and of Bigger Thomas as an individual. In this regard, the conjecture Bigger’s lawyer signals out and projects as the crime of the American society might hold true for Erskine Fowler as well. Namely, for the acts of homicide, not Fowler but the U.S. public should be held accountable. As we read into *Savage Holiday*, however, Erskine Fowler turns out to be sole instigator of the crimes he commits, id est, he occupies the multiple and seemingly incompatible positions of the judge and the condemned, of the prosecutor and the culprit. At this point there are two simple questions which need to be raised whose answers may not prove to be given easily: Could the U.S. society be held accountable for Erskine’s crimes just as Bigger’s? If the answer is affirmative, to what extent and in which circumstances Erskine’s murders might be placed within the societal constellation of the white America?

2.THE CONFLATING BOUNDARIES OF THE SELF AND THE OTHER, OF THE PERIPHERY AND THE CENTER

In one of the most luxurious and largest hotels of New York City, the canopy decorated in gilded yellow, red, and black colors exhibits an eye-catching banner:

1.The Hertz Corporation is an American car rental company with franchises in 145 countries around the world. In 1970s, the company generally hired black athletes for its advertisements, and O.J. Simpson became a household name through Hertz commercials.

2.On the racialized side of the case, the Time magazine’s arts curator Thelma Golden agreed that “if Nicole had been black, this case would have been on a cover of Jet magazine and not much more.” (Golden qtd. in Crenshaw, “Color Blind,” p. 131). (Jet magazine was an American weekly marketed mainly for African American readers).

THE LONGEVITY LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY, INC.
GIRDS THE WORLD AND BRINGS
Security to You and Your Survivors
Tonight We Tender a Fond
HAIL AND FAREWELL
to
ERSKINE FOWLER
FOR THIRTY YEARS OF EXEMPLARY SERVICE AND DEVOTION

(Wright, 1954: 11).

One of the prominent members of the company is cheered on for a preliminary talk and he mentions the family-like structure of the company, and he commends Erskine on his unwavering loyalty to the organization. Then, he asks Erskine to replace him on the pulpit to address the colleagues. A six-footer man with bushy hair and brown eyes raises awkwardly from his seat, touching, seeking the security of the four pencils in his coat's jacket. The voice on the pulpit keeps on its showers of praise and asks for a round of applause for the faithful servant of the trust. Amidst the cheers of the co-workers, and with moist eyes, Erskine eventually ascends the stairs for a farewell speech.

As our great President [Abraham Lincoln] has so often pointed out, and I heartily agree with him, millions of people depend upon us for their welfare, come to us in their bereavement, and seek us out in their hope...That's not business; that's faith! (Wright, 1954: 17).

For Erskine's honorary service, and somehow soulful address, the employees of the company begin to chant in unison the lyrics "For he's a jolly good fellow..." (Wright, 1954: 17), then Mr. Warren, the manager, takes the central stage and at Mr. Warren's signal all festive tables are hastily cleared and Fowler, swallowing his defeat, watches on the sidelines. At the age of 43, Erskine finds himself in the make-believe game of Warren who is keen on crushing Fowler in the machinery of falsehood, and once again Erskine touches the four pencils in his jacket pocket, to reassure him of the emotional stability of his being. Tightly grasping the square box in his palm, a memento of his successful deeds for the company, he knows, he cannot escape the burden of his past life, which he cannot comprehend and master. To be tossed away from the Longevity life in such fashion touches Erskine Fowler deeply for his past, present and future are interwoven with the company. In fact not only the company but the job itself is what Erskine associates with his life.

Insurance was life itself; insurance was human nature in the raw trying to hide itself; insurance was instinctively and intuitively knowing that man was essentially a venal, deluded, and greedy animal... (Wright, 1954: 28).

Besides conferring on him the recognition of his fellow workers, and providing him with his livelihood, the work has one more crucial, or the most crucial, aspect for him. The work at the Longevity Life alienated Erskine from a part of himself he never wanted to know and acknowledge. He willingly locked himself up in the prison cage of labor, and the Longevity Life ensured that his incarcerated dark part would not come free and drag Erskine to the court of his conscience. Now that he tasted freedom for the first time in his life, he had to become his own jailor, to erect walls and to box the threatening feelings and desires in. On the first day of his new life, Erskine wakes up with the bang bang sounds coming from the other side of his bedroom wall. He mutters a sentence of annoyance and then his thoughts cluster on Tony, Mrs. Blake's son who pokes Erskine out of his sleep with the rumble he makes. Just like Tony, he reminisces, he was a lonely child without friends and would play by himself and there was no mother to look after him either. Erskine Fowler had no memory of his father who died when he was three years old, it was his mother he remembered, rather her laughter when she

was surrounded by the men who came and went. Then on one cold winter day, he was eight years old at the time, his mother was arrested and put behind bars for disorderly conduct and Aunt Tillie came down from New York to fetch him. He had a difficult childhood, scorn of other children, and Erskine laying on his bed at 7:30 in the morning, gulped down a dark impulse: whether those men ought to be killed or his mother? Staving off his dark thoughts, he gets up, determined to plan his first day of freedom efficiently. First, he plans to prepare an opulent breakfast, then he changes his mind and decides to take a shower and gets undressed, just as he is about to step into the shower he hears the door bell and surmises that the Sunday paper is left on his doorstep. Finally deciding on picking up the paper, he walks up to the door naked and just then a breeze shuts the door in his face. With a bank account of forty thousand dollars in cash, investments worth more than one hundred thousand dollars in securities, a member of Rotary, a thirty-second degree Mason, yet Erskine Fowler stands shamefully naked in the hallway. In a state of frenzy and anxiety, he attempts to make a logical move, to go get the porter for the extra keys to his apartment, after all it would be better to explain his shameful condition to one person than all the residents of the apartment. As he steps in the elevator and descends towards the porter's flat, he hears the voices of two teenage girls, approaching to the elevator door. Another surge of anxiety floats over him and he stops the elevator just on time to ascend back to the eleventh floor. Brushing the rivulets of perspiration from his forehead, he takes a deep breath of brief relief. Surmising that there is no other option left but to climb through the balcony to his flat's bathroom window, he rushes to the balcony lit by the dazzling rays of the bright morning sun. At this juncture in the plot, Richard Wright distorts Erskine's human features and portrays him like a wild beast.

...he went tumbling forward on his face, his long, hairy arms flaying the air rapaciously, like the paws of a huge beast clutching for something to devour, to rend to pieces...He steadied himself partially by clawing at the brick wall and then he saw, in one swift, sweeping glance, little Tony's tricycle over which he had tripped and fallen... (Wright, 1954: 52).

Tony, seeing Erskine's nonhuman body, recoils with horror and starts to back up towards the rail. Erskine, fearing and sensing Tony's imminent fall, reaches out his hand to save him yet the gesture only makes already frightened child more frantic and pushing his tiny body against the derailed rail, Tony falls to his death ten floors down. Erskine is first seized by pangs of guilt and then immediately his thoughts turn to his own survival. Surely, the police would investigate the case and he just could not tell them that he was trapped naked in the hallway, had to climb through the balcony, and poor Tony taking fright, accidentally fell off the rail. It was an objectively true story, but who would believe him? Besides, his story would appear next day in the Daily News, and the Mirror as a story of perversion for the talk of the day was on "queers" and suppressed sexual desires.

Yes; these days everybody was talking about "complexes" and the "unconscious"; and a man called Freud (which always reminded him of fraud!) was making people believe that the most fantastic things could happen to people's feelings. Why, they'd say that he'd gone deliberately on to that balcony like that, nude... (Wright, 1954: 61).

Eventually, Erskine comes up with a story, the story of ignorance as to what had happened to the poor Tony. He would display feelings of sympathy and empathy for the police, for the residents and the Mrs. Blake to see and believe in him. They all take his words to be true and find no ground to suspect him for he is a respectable, white, middle class citizen seemingly following the rules and norms set by the society and by the law. His job as insurance agent, in revealing the lies of the people, as people talked much more than they could handle, worked to his advantage for the first time. All he had to do was to keep quiet and join in the congregation of bereaving neighbors. Yet, Erskine knew too well that he had added a dark dimension to his already dark part of him he was struggling to lock in. Part two, titled "Ambush" opens with a scene in which Erskine is alone and broods over the events of the previous day. He and Tony had a good relationship, the child admired him even, but why did he go into such panic? Erskine realized that a child's mind was an odd wonderland, exaggerating what could be taken as normal in adult life as full of monsters, and he was naked and perspiring, perhaps that was why Tony was sent reeling. Never before in Erskine's life had he known the power of his emotions, indeed he lived in the illusion that he had no feelings.

Now he felt ambushed, anchored in a sea of anxiety, because he was tremblingly conscious of all of his buried demons stirring and striving for the light of day (Wright, 1954: 80).

To weigh down the burden on his soul, Erskine clutches at the Bible and concentrates on his Mount Ararat Sunday School lesson he is used to teach at his church. Soon as he finds himself in the company of the fellow church-goers, he declares he is contented to find himself at home, at "God's eternal family" (Wright, 1954: 85). He quotes verses from the book of Matthew, 12: 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, and highlights the parts regarding the significance of building up and maintaining a family. Jesus stands on the top of a hill addressing his flock and behold, below him his mother and brethren stand, wishing to speak with him. A voice arises out of the flock and warns God's son that his family is eager to break words with him, and Joshua of Nazareth gives the famous answer: who is my mother and brethren? Mother, reach out your hand, this is your son, brother reach out your hand this is your mother. As Erskine continues to speak, his soul becomes inflamed and the more he preaches on, the more he believes in the strength of the words he utters. He imagines himself to be God's avenging whip, watching Justice sway her scales, and flogs that lost woman (Mabel Blake) to her senses. In other words, he points the way to truth, to "a sign that no man can possibly overlook! What is that sign? THE FAMILY!" (Wright, 1954: 87). The issue of family occupies a significant part of *Savage Holiday* as the opening sequence of the novel offers a disguised Oedipal drama just as the church sequence does. His banishment from the Longevity Life Insurance Company, to which Erskine has paid his tributes from the puberty onwards - is his first taste of being excluded from the family run by a patriarch. Indeed, the ceremony at the Longevity Life in which Erskine is replaced by the manager's younger son is set as an erotic ritual, an old member of the family is expelled, still wanted around the family though, for the up and coming new member so as to ensure the reproductive vitality of the company. Longevity Life is the ground of eros as it "insures" life and functions just as Freud describes the working of Eros, "whose purpose is to combine single human individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples and nations, into one great unity, the unity of mankind" (Freud, 1995: 755).

After his excommunication from the adoptive family of the Longevity Life, Erskine finds an ersatz one in Mount Ararat Baptist Church. The difference between the two is that in the former circle he is in the role of an adopted son, for he devotes his life to the company from his puberty years until the age of 43, and in the latter he is the self-proclaimed patriarch of the aging middle class congregation. Despite his inspiring sermon on the importance of family bonds, his thoughts cannot help but seduced by the persistent image of Mrs. Mabel Blake's voluptuous body. His sexual craving for Mabel was something new and recent, his scorn of her immoral ways of living though, accepting various men into her bedroom and engaging in sexual affairs, went back to the previous year. On some mornings around five o'clock, he would hear some vague and rhythmic noises of carnal activity and on such mornings he would wonder how she could do that to her little child. A week later after his disturbed morning sleeps, he saw Tony on the sidewalk playing by himself. Upon seeing Erskine, Tony smiled and ran up to him grabbing his hand. He and Tony had a mutual understanding and a sort of friendship. During their short walk to the drug store, Tony complained about the indifference of his mother towards him and about the men in Mabel's bed.

"Do you sleep with your mother often?" he'd found himself asking Tony.

"I used to. But there are so many men coming to see her at night now...I go to sleep in her bed when she's away at work at night, but then I wake up in the morning, I find that she's taken me out of her bed and put me in my bed, and there's a man in the bed with her," Tony had said, staring off into space (Wright, 1954: 95).

Tony's game he played with his favorite toys baffled Erskine for the kid associated fighting with "making babies," probably with the strange sounds coming from his mother's bedroom. Tony's words make Erskine remember a painful memory as he recalls watching men stamp in and out of the house in his childhood and an old, frightful chill sends shivers down his spine. Fowler is consciously aware that Tony's childhood is the mirror reflection of his own past and identical in the sense that they both share a fear of strange men getting involved in sexual intercourse with their mothers.

In a term called “the sadistic concept of coitus,” which is also posited as the primal scene, Freud claims that if a child at an early age witnesses a sexual intercourse between adults/parents, she/he becomes prone to “regard the sexual act as a sort of ill-treatment or act of subjugation: they view it, that is, in a sadistic sense” (Freud, 1995: 271). In other words, this first sighting of sexual activity by the child is not understood and remains enigmatic for a long time, and the child’s imagination (if Freud’s analysis is to be believed) associates the act not with benevolent scene of love but with the traumatic act of violent domination. Tony’s witnessing his mother in coitus with men might explain the reason why he playfully holds procreation with fighting, as a matter of fact, as Erskine later realizes, Tony’s seeing him “naked, frantic, wild-eyed....about to fight him...made him lose his balance and topple” (Wright, 1954: 104) could also be related to such traumatic origin. Erskine’s seeing his mother engaged in sexual intercourse with other men, on the other hand, leads to an abstinence (a vow of celibacy even) from sexual life in general and from women in particular. At this juncture, it is proper to return to Freud’s analysis, that is, the traumatic encounter with the primal scene in childhood might return as a predisposition to sadistic displacements in adult life (Freud, 1995). Erskine’s murder of Mabel can be attributed to such object displacement from mother on to Mabel, who, as Erskine believes, substitutes his mother in all respects and by killing her, he kills his mother’s memory whom he simultaneously and awkwardly loves and hates. To introduce complexity into Freud’s analysis of the primal scene, Melanie Klein’s views on witnessing the coitus between parents, should also be dealt with some space. Klein takes Freud’s thoughts on sadistic view of the intercourse to a further dimension in that she does not only see an aggressive attitude on the side of the child but also envy upon seeing the mother/father couple locked in the mutual scene of love making. The “combined-parent figure” Klein claims, presupposes an exclusion for the child, excluded from the seemingly perfect relationship of carnal and mental gratification (Klein qtd. in Segal, 2008: 108). Thus the aggression the child faces and later introjects into its being does not depend on its inability of making sense of the sexual intercourse, on the contrary, the child understands and takes the intercourse as a sign of omission from the ground of love and affection.

In support of Klein’s views, Abdul R. JanMohamed reads *Savage Holiday*, and Erskine Fowler’s accidental, naked trapping in the hallway as the anxiety of banishment and exclusion from the homely space of his flat and from the sanctuary of familial bonds offered by the Longevity. On the manifest register, the accidental shutting of the door, constant ascend and descend of the elevator, the Sunday paper’s replacement of Adam’s fig leaves to cover Erskine’s private parts, the tricycle over which Erskine trips are read as the “cold, mechanical, inorganic elements – doors, elevators, stairs, tricycles, etc.” to be functioning as causes without secondary invocations (JanMohamed, 2005: 220). On the latent register however, the mechanical elements turn out to be sexually charged objects, cathected in Fowler’s memories.

Fowler’s increasingly urgent attempts to regain the safety of his home via the main door prove totally futile, which is to say that he has been totally barred from legitimate reentry into the zone of repression, to the zone of moribund sexuality (JanMohamed, 2005: 218).

Following and maintaining JanMohamed’s insights, the panic in the hallway and the rise and fall of the elevator could be taken to be the signs of tumescence. Namely, objects and locations could represent the psychological states Erskine finds himself in. In this regard, nakedness in the hallway can be read as Erskine’s laying bare of his unconscious desires and anxieties, the constant rise and fall of the elevator as tension filled sexual intercourse and Erskine’s final rush to the balcony as the climax of that intercourse. On his way back to the sanctuary of his home, however, he happens to meet Tony and incidentally kills him. Abdul JanMohamed offers a different reading to Tony’s death and claims that even though the incident is accidental and contingent, it is also a necessity for Erskine thus, seen from this perspective, Tony’s death is intentional and desirable. JanMohamed further explains the facets of this necessity of infanticide in two parts. The first necessity arises due to the subject’s desire for freedom from her/his stagnant, historically determined formation as subject. In this regard, the second necessity of infanticide becomes obvious and inevitable: “the subject can never succeed in fundamentally overcoming his formation unless he can kill the child who houses the deepest and most basic effective bonds of the now adult subject” (JanMohamed, 2005: 221). Serge Leclaire even prioritizes infanticide over the related acts of patricide and matricide for the formation of ‘I’, for Leclaire, the assumption of one’s subjectivity begins at the moment of killing “His Majesty the Baby” (Leclaire, 1998). Leclaire’s words on killing the ‘baby within’ both contradict and uphold Lacan’s views on the first steps of walking into the Symbolic.

In the theories of Lacan, it is posited that the nature in human beings is overwritten by language, and this causes a split in the subject (in fact the split/gap is the ultimate condition of being a subject in the Symbolic) which she/he will vainly try to overcome for “the subject can never be anything other than divided, split, alienated from himself” (Evans, 2006: 195). The gap/split is first introduced by the Oedipal structure of castration, and in this sense, what is symbolically killed is not the infant per se, but the Mother, and according to Luce Irigaray the Western culture depends on matricide, which is more primordial than the patricide of Totem and Taboo, yet while patricide is glorified and universalized, matricide is simply forgotten and even repressed (Irigaray, 1993). Viewed from this angle, it is possible to say that Leclair bypasses the ‘essential’ deaths of father and mother for the attainment of the subjective position of ‘I’, yet by abstracting, distancing the baby from the mother, he similarly overlooks the agency of mother in the formation of subjectivity. Infanticide has been an important theme in African American literature in particular and an important subject of discussion in the history of slavery in general. The records of slave mothers killing their babies so as to save them from the abuse of their masters and from the tyranny of the institution of slavery abound in the history of the United States.³ In the literary representations of infanticide, the same impulse of protection is also highlighted, especially in Morrison’s *Beloved* infanticide occupies the central stage of the novel, yet the literal act of killing the baby is not just carried out in the name of mercy killing alone, but entails a symbolic murder as well “...murdering an infant mentally or psychologically by curbing the desires and rights” (Gupta, 2009). Leclair’s definition of infanticide is not tied to any historical references such as slavery, yet when he mentions it, he seems to be following a similar trajectory of curbing, taming one’s infant desires en route to becoming an adult.

In *Savage Holiday*, Wright too seems to be aware of this imperative as Tony falls off the balcony and Fowler waits for that awful sound Tony’s body would make when it hits the black pavement.

...it seemed that he had been standing here naked on this balcony in the hot morning’s sun waiting for an eternity to hear that awful sound, a sound that would reverberate down all the long corridors of his years in this world, a sound that would follow him, like a taunting echo, even unto his grave... (Wright, 1954: 5).

Tony’s fall retrojects to Fowler’s past and at the same is carried into his future, and by this necessary death, Fowler is reborn and replaces Tony. At this point, it should be appropriate to question whether the death of Tony, accidentally committed by Fowler, can be associated with the act of mercy killing, so as to protect him from being exposed to the primal scenes of sexual intercourse. Or, more speculatively, could it be said that Fowler desires (though unconsciously) to prevent Tony from becoming a man as he is for the two characters’ childhood stories are so much alike in relation to their mothers. JanMohamed’s explanation, on the contrary, points in the direction of a wish of willful replacement than that of wistful protection:

Oedipal sexual desire has to migrate, necessarily but without apparent conscious intention or plan, from its Heimlich sequestering, from its proper repression, to the possibility of unheimlich manifestation, to a properly displaced return of the repressed...in the completion of this circuit, the accidentally necessary killing of “His Majesty the Baby” turns the circle into a spiral: Fowler’s repressed sexual desires for Tony’s mother will now slowly be reborn, fueled this time by the alibis of remorse, guilt, and obligation. Tony’s death is thus necessary for the displaced rebirth of Fowler’s oedipal desires (JanMohamed, 2005: 223).

Via his identification with Tony, or rather by assuming the position of the dead child, Fowler becomes the son and thus is reunited with his deceased mother in the person of Mabel Blake. Fowler also occupies the position of the husband after his marriage proposal and thanks to the proposal he wants to occupy the position of the father who will not kill his son by subjecting him to the primal scene. Before taking a huge leap and go to the marriage proposal and murder scenes in the novel, Fowler’s relationship with Mabel should also be mentioned in detail. After Tony’s death, Fowler’s initial motive for approaching Mabel is to learn whether she saw him climbing through the balcony. For that purpose, he consults Mrs. Westerman the neighbor, who obviously hates that

³ On the historical accounts of slave mothers killing their babies, please see Deborah Gray White’s book *Ar’n’t I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: Norton, 1985).

“immoral” woman and provides Fowler with the information he seeks. The first mention of race is made in the dialogue with the neighbor. Mrs. Westerman questions Mabel first and she tells her that she saw dangling feet in the air. Westerman wonders what color those feet were, and Mabel assures her that they were not the feet of a colored person. Upon learning this irksome detail, Fowler decides to take the matter into his own hands. His first impulse is to safeguard himself against any possible revelation of his crime, yet as he gets to know Mabel, and as his sexual craving for her rises, he eventually makes a proposal. Thanks to the proposal, he thinks he could save this lost woman and bring her back to the path of righteousness and a moral life. In fact, marriage would benefit him more than it would benefit her, as he thinks that this gesture, this leap of faith would make him forget his terrible memories, fill in the void Longevity Life left in his soul, and enable him to answer God’s call and do His will. More crucially, Fowler would find someone to rule over and completely dominate. At first glance, it might seem unrelated to Fowler’s relationship with Mabel. Yet the second mention of race, that is, Fowler’s thoughts on his black maid Minnie, can be related to Fowler’s prevailing view of women. In fact the first notification of race, the dangling feet of a supposed black male, probably given as the usual suspect figure in the novel tells as much about Erskine’s feelings towards women as the second. In the first instance, the allusion to the colored feet, aside from the racist association of holding the color black with malefaction, points out to another type of ‘lawlessness’, to miscegenation taboo. Given Mabel’s ‘promiscuous life’, it would not be hard to imagine on Erskine’s part to surmise that Mabel would have black lovers as well thus violating the taboo. Minnie, on the other hand, is not quite human, for Erskine believes that all servants serve just one purpose: showing simple and submissive reactions to their masters’ wishes. Without any obvious and viscous references made to race or class in the novel, it is still possible to see the construction of an/the Other figure(s) against and on which the protagonist deploys his ontological cause.

It should not be far-fetched to contend that women are the marginalized figures to whom Erskine Fowler responds from the central position of the sexist, mighty patriarch supported by the belief in white supremacy. Taking the advantage for granted that his money and social status would eventually provide him with the mastery over Mabel, he feels free to criminalize Mabel and dehumanize Minnie. No matter how irrelevant might it sound, the name choices for the two women characters, both beginning with the letter M, thus reminiscent of the Mother, could be said to represent the two poles of motherhood. The name Mabel, derived from the Latin *amabilis*, meaning “lovable, dear,” could easily be attributed to the character herself, for she is quite loveable as a lover in Erskine’s eyes but eludes his hold of love every time he makes an attempt. And as a mother, she is loved, dearly so, only to find out that her love is not reserved for the son but for the other males seeking her sexual favors. The choice of surname for Mabel is also interesting for phonetically and etymologically the word Blake evokes the word black, someone with dark skin. The name Minnie, on the other hand, phonetically evokes the word nanny, child minder, care provider, a position that was given to elderly African American women in taking care of the children of the slave owners. The name choice for Erskine Fowler as Wright himself points out is there to bring “to one’s mind the notion of being ‘foul,’ of defiling, of not behaving according to social rules” (Wright qtd. in Barthes 1993: 167). Compared to Mabel, Minnie is more of a mother figure, yet Fowler’s position as the son of Mabel is foregrounded in the novel than his mother-son like relation with the maid Minnie.

To that end, there are some clear cut observations made in the novel, Erskine’s resemblance to Tony is one of them, even Mabel confirms the analogy: “When you were angry with me... You reminded me so much of Tony... You and Tony.... You need a mother” (Wright, 1954: 183). And the other observation is concerned with Fowler’s insatiable desire for Mabel, perhaps due to his impulse of finding a stand in mother, and his likewise rapacious wish to dictate and prohibit everything in her so called amorous escapades. To go back to the issue of race, and its sparse portrayal in the novel, Slavoj Žižek’s words might make sense in explicating Wright’s use of the issue. Offering three different manifestations of evil in the world, Žižek highlights Id-Evil as the cause for racist prejudices and practices. The domain of Id, if Freud is to be believed, could also be taken as the playground of a child, for a child, unbridled by any authority promising reward and punishment, finds itself amidst the atavistic “psychopathologies”, incest being one of them. In Žižek’s reading, however, the Id, however childish it might sound, is the very ground from which racism as we know it today emanates.

The Id-Evil thus stages the most elementary 'short circuit' in the subject's relationship to the primordially missing object-cause of his desire: what 'bothers' us in the 'other' is that he appears to entertain a privileged relationship to the object....That is to say, racism is always grounded in a particular fantasy (of *cosa nostra*, of our ethnic Thing menaced by 'them', of 'them' who, by means of their excessive enjoyment, pose a threat to our 'way of life')... (Zizek, 2005: 71).

Replacing Tony, and occupying Tony's position of childhood, Erskine Fowler seeks the missing object of desire, that is, his mother, and by killing Tony he figuratively gains access to the body of the deceased parent. Still, he cannot totally overcome his id-driven self and takes Mabel's exorbitant sex life threatening to his existence. Minnie is socially dead for Fowler, thus he projects his "racist" beliefs – following Zizek's argument - on Mabel. Here, racism should not solely be thought in terms of ethnic discrimination as Fowler's 'positional superiority' serves as the pretext to justify his desire to control and define the Other. Sander L. Gilman also draws attention to different manifestations of racism in the United States, sexual exploitation as one of the foremost tools of patriarchal, and white supremacist domination.

The 'white man's burden' thus becomes his sexuality and control, and it is this which is transferred into the need to control the sexuality of the Other, the Other as sexualized female" (Gilman, 1986: 256).

Failing to control the sexuality of Mabel, Fowler eventually regards her as a threat against which he feels his manhood should assert itself. The elimination of the threat, however, turns out to be a morbid one as he understands that despite all his efforts, he would not be able to dominate her entirely and she would continue to be the femme fatale figure, existing in her mysterious, impenetrable, and unconquerable entity.⁴ The desire to eliminate or to dominate the 'vamp woman' Mabel Blake should not be merely ascribed to the psychical disturbances of Fowler, as this desire may also harbor a veiled reference to race. The studies exploring the affinities between white women and black men have traced the roots of these affinities to the oppression of both groups at the hands of the white male power. In the worldview of the white men, black male and white female have been put in the same category of 'effeminate characters', that is, they both have been branded as lacking in reason and guided by their 'childish' emotions. According to Lewis Gordon, white women are also "white blackness", in the sense that only she –as regards the racial convictions of the United States- is capable of bearing black babies. Gordon argues that she is posited as a "hole" in a nation in which white, heterosexual patriarchy attempts to "close all...holes" (Gordon, 1995: 124-129). If she resists closure, and rejects the power of the white manliness, then she becomes the person who can be killed with impunity. Identifying the reason why Fowler kills Mabel as racial -as Gordon argues- may have no bearing on the true motive of the crime, yet it could shed light on one of the dark spots of Fowler's yearning in becoming the patriarch. While stabbing Mabel many times and in machinelike motions, Fowler shows unexpected signs of composure and tranquility. After making sure that she is dead, he steps away from the table, tosses the butcher knife carelessly on the hacked torso of his victim and stands before the mirror to observe his face. Right then a childhood memory gets ahold of him. After killing Gladys's, the girl next door, doll with a dirty brick bat, and telling Gladys that it was his mother whom he was killing, his mother told him to go and look in the mirror to see how bad he was. His reflection in the glass however, had nothing bad about it he thinks, so his mother lied to him after all. Leaving the bathroom, he lingers a while in the door, staring down on the bloody murder scene with petulant, impassive pride. With a

4. To press home the point, or to complicate it even further, Lacan's claim that "Woman is one of the Names-of-the-Father" and Zizek's subsequent interpretation should be mentioned. According to Zizek, following Lacan's thesis, femininity should be read as a "masquerade", and when one tears down the mask, it is likely that one will encounter the obscene pre-Oedipal Father enjoyment: "Is not an indirect proof of this provided by the unique figure of the Lady in courtly love, this capricious implacable dominatrix? Does not this Lady, like the 'primordial Father', stand for Enjoyment unbridled by any Law? The phantasmic figure of Woman is thus a kind of 'return of the repressed', of the Father-Enjoyment removed by means of the primordial crime of parricide – that is to say, what returns in her seductive voice is the roar of the dying father..." (Zizek, 2007: 155). In *Savage Holiday*, however, one does not encounter any references made to parricide, to the murders of both the father and the mother. The issues of matricide along with infanticide are clearly given in the narration, yet no allusion to patricide can be found and thus one is tempted to think if it is Fowler who assumes the role of the obscene, "dying Father-Enjoyment" figure and ultimately binds himself to the Law/Symbolic by turning himself in.

determination he has never felt in his life before, he takes the elevator, walks to the police station and confesses his crime. In response to the question put to him by one of the officers if it was a game he was playing, he finds himself caught in the hazy and another dusty memory of his childhood. He never battered that doll, he was drawing an image of a dead doll with his colored pencils and was daydreaming about the death of his mother. To the officer's domineering order to say it all, he finds himself in the conundrum of telling the truth.

How could he ever explain that a daydream buried under the rigorous fiats of duty had been called forth from its thirty-six-year-old grave by a woman called Mabel Blake, and that that taunting dream had so overwhelmed him with a sense of guilt compounded of a reality which was strange and alien and which he loathed, but which, at the same time, was astonishingly familiar to him: a guilty dream which he had wanted to disown and forget, but which he had had to reenact in order to make its memory and reality clear to him! He closed his eyes in despair...still touching the four colored pencils! (Wright, 1954: 220).

3.CONCLUSION

In murdering Mabel whether he loses his white supremacist position of power in a show of his powerlessness (Gaskill, 1973: 47), or redeems it in the murderous manifestation of its power is open to criticism. Throughout the narrative one central issue comes to the fore with a certainty. In designating the title of the novel, Wright does not think that it is holiday as such that is violent, rather the freedom utilized savagely is the essence of the brutality depicted in the novel. Such freedom, following Orlando Patterson's distinction between personal freedom and sovereign freedom, should be categorized under the latter description and Fowler's sense of being free could be said to depend on such sovereignty of absolutist freedom of power in doing what he/it pleases regardless of the wishes and protests of the others (Patterson, 1991). As the 'raceless', 'race neutral' character of the novel is seen its biggest shortcoming in failing to address anything of significance socio-politically, the importance of the novel should be sought in such deliberate omission and silence. Erskine Fowler comes to represent the colonial reality of the United States, that is to say, he embodies three interconnected positions of oppression and exploitation: that of the missionary, businessman, and the patriarch. As the self-proclaimed missionary of the Mount Ararat Baptist Church, and believing in his God given propensities, Erskine sets out on a spiritual journey to bring the 'fallen' back to God's grace, especially that woman Mabel Blake, who is in dire need of his counseling and guidance for the formation of godly family. On that note, it would not be erroneous to liken Fowler to first Puritan (pilgrim) Fathers of the North America in the sense that he too believes in the sanctity of family and purity, in strict moral codes and his "overt goal," following the footsteps of the forefathers, is to "civilize the savage," those who have gone astray⁵ (JanMohamed, 1986: 81). The second role of the businessman is easier to identify, for, as a businessman he can be associated with the myth of American success, with the image of self-made man, celebrated and supported by the illusion of American Dream. And the last figure of the patriarch is the father figure who incorporates in himself the previous two positions and a few others. The ultimate patriarch, as Erskine Fowler points out in his farewell speech to Longevity, is the president of the United States, in this case Abraham Lincoln.

Erskine's invocation of the 16th president of the United States, serving throughout the Civil War years until his assassination in 1865, could be taken as another (not openly given) indicator of racial concerns of the novel. Abraham Lincoln is remembered for his leadership in helping the nation to get rid of one of the great infirmities of humanity. Due to his strong resistance against slavery, and even risking a war for the elimination of such inhumane practice in the land of freedom, and democracy, he is the celebrated and cherished political figure in the country. Yet, the often ignored part about Lincoln's policies is that, just like the founding fathers George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, he too devised a plan of forming African American Freedmen colonies in British Honduras, in Île à Vache off the coast of Haiti, believing that no racial harmony would be possible between whites and freed blacks of the country. (Magness and Page, 2011) *Savage Holiday*, despite the non-complex treatment of its subject matter, could be read as the inventory of white male power and the presence

5. British colonizers in Americas did not follow their Spanish and Portuguese counterparts in using religion to their advantage in conquering native populations. Although the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony had different usages of religion in the 'taming of the savage', the method they followed resembled to that of Columbus, Cortes and Pizarro. That is to say, they imposed their worldviews on the neighboring natives through murder, violence and pillage.

of blackness, though not tangibly felt in the novel, as placed in opposition to such white seats of power. In fact, the novel, without mincing its words, confronts the ages old adage that represented the ontological basis of the Western mind: "To be is to be white" (Johnson, 1988: 14). The phrase presupposes an impeccable sense of self, a perfect entity of power unblemished by any impurity or weakened by a sign of frailty. By engaging the question of freedom, and analyzing the positions freedom brings with it, built on identifications between the acts committed in the name of civilization and oppression, Richard Wright posits the ultimate dilemma of the Western modernity as the phenomenon of freedom. In this sense, Wright demands a shift of focus from the radical Other, from the periphery (African American) to the so called Self and the central figure (Euro American male), so as to display the mindset behind the white lenses. By creating a deliberate confusion between the realms of civilization and savagery, between independence and slavery, he points out to the fact that a 'civilized' man such as Erskine Fowler could inhabit both realms without trouble, and thus Wright, in a move of shuffling the odds, offers a relocation of the Other/Self binary, asking the reader of the novel one final and troubling question: where do you stand, or where does your racial footing begin and end?

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