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The dynamism of the struggle for freedom :a study of Richard Wright's uncle Tom's Children

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FACULTE DES LETTRES ET SCIENCES HUMAINES

DEPARTEMENT DE LANGUE ET LITTERATURE ANGLAISES

THE DYNAMISM OF THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM : A STUDY OF RICHARD WRIGHT'S UNCLE TOM'S CHILDREN

A Thesis submitted by
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Partial Fulfilment for
the requirements for the
degree « Licence en Langue et
Litterature Anglaises ».

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DEDICATION

To all people infatuated
with freedom I dedicate
this page

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ABSTRACT

Richard Wright, the author of Uncle Tom's Children is one of the major figures of African-American writings. He is the precursor of the Black Renaissance marked by a good number of other African-American writers. However, Wright made a difference when he wrote Uncle Tom's Children. His purpose was not only to incite African-Americans to fight against white racial discrimination but also to unite with white people in a Communist mass protest movement to overthrow the racial and socioeconomic system in America. Therefore, the character of Uncle Tom who is always ready to turn the other cheek to white oppressors must be replaced by Uncle Tom's Children who would dare to say no to oppression.

The study of Uncle Tom's Children as a literary work examines how African-Americans evolve from unorganised freedom fighters to structured and a powerful mass movement of protesters. It provides answers to the following questions: How far does Wright succeed in portraying the process that leads to the achievement of collective protest actions? Are Americans in the collective struggle having the same view point?

Sociopolitical ideas and artistic qualities found in Uncle Tom's Children constitute the major trend of study in this thesis. Isolated struggle does not bring any solution to the American society's ills. A raceless mass protest movement seems to be able to overcome the maltifaceted conflict in America but it is not a panacea. The Communist Party and its Marxist ideology Wright suggests in Uncle Tom's Children as a solution to the complex problem of America reveal it ineffectual. Only man can dynamically bring changes to it. Nevertheless, this study shows that African-Americans do not share the same point of view of the conflict in America. The nature of it seems to be fourfold : racial, legal, political and socioeconomic.

Actually, there is not a unique solution to the conflicts in a given society. But in order to cope with them, the dynamism, which is the adaptability to the change and evolution of the nature of those conflicts, seems to be the best way to deal with crises among people.

INTRODUCTION

Aims of the Study

The aim of the study will be to show how Richard Wright portrays the dynamic process of freedom by the Black-Americans. This aim shall be guided by the following questions. How has the author depicted the three dimensional characters in Uncle Tom's Children in displaying how far they are at each stage of evolution ? How far does Wright succeed in portraying the process that leads to the achievement of mass protest as depicted in Uncle Tom's Children ? That is, what are the requirement to attain a true and successful protest movement? Are the people [Blacks and Whites] in the collective protest movement having the same point of view on the racial problem? What is the nature of the problem of the Blacks in America?

Statement of the Problem

This study examines the way in which Richard Wright presents the transformation of simple sharecroppers fighting blindly, randomly and unconsciously, as isolated individuals to the mass protest movement, having understood their fate under discrimination. In other words we will analyse the sense in which Blacks evolve from unorganised protest groups to structured and powerful mass movement. We will also examine how they reach the stage of a political conviction in opposing the race-based political system. We will link this to their awareness and consciousness of the failure of their former ways of protesting.

The Scope of the Study

This study will be based on the collection of five short stories under the title. Uncle Tom's Children. The original edition (1938) consists of four short stories. The reedition is made of four short stories on which they add the autobiography "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow " and the fifth short story "Bright and Morning Star".

We will analyse on the one hand the processes and dynamism; strategies and tactics in the struggle for freedom and on the other, the literary aspcts of Uncle Tom's Children. For instance, Richard Wright's characterisation, imagery, symbolism ; the simplicity of the character and his language , their effect upon the reader so that he can feel concerned by the situation.

All along this study, we will deal with three main themes. First of all, we will focus our attention on unconscious struggle, that is reflex-like actions of African-Americans against racial system in the South Next, we will be concerned with the awareness of the failure in the struggle for freedom by African-Americans. And finally, we will examine how African-Americans and some whites are politically convinced to free themselves from socioeconomic injustice in America

Motivation

The inspiration for this study comes from the evolutional aspect of the Revolution in Richard Wright's Uncle Tom's Children. In other words, what touches our mind is the dynamic process to change an established race-based political system in the United States The process is from the reflex fighting to political conviction occasioned by the desire for social justice and freedom. Wright realises that it is not fruitful to grasp one method or strategy and stick to it to solve a problem which is multifaceted and has taken root a long time ago in the mind of the dominant and the dominated. Protest actions have to be adapted to the time and the evolution of the problem. Change in America cannot be achieved by blind and unconscious reactions to the appressors. A Revolution has to be meticulously organised. Besides, what pushes us to undertake this study is Richard Wright's artistic qualities in Uncle Tom's Children. The language, imagery, symbolism fit well in bringing the whole people to adhere to mass revolution He makes everyone feel involved in the struggle and the result of his actions is shown in everyday life in the society.

Background

Richard Wright, the author of the collection of five short stories under the title Uncle Tom's Children, is one of the major figures of African American protest writing. He is virtually the father of the explosion of enraged literary talent'. Josephine Ndikumana argues in her thesis entitled "Protest in Richard Wright's Writings mainely Uncle Tom's Children" that he is the dominant precursor of the Black Renaissance which, as Jean Wagner suggests in Les Poètes Nègres des Etats-Unis, is synonymous to the « New Negro Movement ». It is the after First World War literary and artistic movement; mainly marked by writers such as Claude Mackay, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes and Sterling Brown. Black Renaissance is a sudden awakening, an instantaneous change. During this period African-Americans become

conscious of themselves and their destiny. In other words, it is the profound psychological and social change within black people in America. The greatness of Wright lies in having influenced black literature with what Robert A. Bone calls « Wright School » with the protest novels in The Negro Novel in America. There are also what Bone names as antiprotest novels[2] that challenge Wright and his disciples . Moreover, writers such as Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin question Wright's writings. They wonder in their literary works why Wright seems to preach hatred and violence instead of love among people. His greatness also rests on his having been the first writer to give white people explanations and themes that cut through their prejudices and force them to look at the reality of the Blacks in America.

Besides Uncle Tom's Children , his other famous works are Native Son and Black Boy. His writings are greatly influenced by his childhood which was hard and tormented and also by the fact that he was a member of the Communist Party. He believed that white and black hands will be raised together in the Marxist worker's millennium.

After the Civil War, as the foreword of Uncle Tom's Children puts it, words like « He's an Uncle Tom » which denoted the reluctant toleration for the cringing type of blacks before the white folk, were replaced by new words of another generation like « Uncle Tom is dead » It is in this context that Wright and other protest writers produced many literary works about the problem of race in America. However, Richard Wright made a difference in writing Uncle Tom's Children because his purpose was not only to urge Blacks to fight but also to unite in an organised and powerful protest movement in which whites might be incorporated.

The character of "UncleTom", as we mentioned, is a consistent feature in the history of African-American literature. Uncle Tom is depicted as passive, obedient and always ready to turn the other cheek to his oppressors. African-Americans kept on being docile till, when the Civil War broke out. During the Civil War period, there were promises of emancipation of African-Americans because of their participation in the Civil War. After the Proclamation of the Emancipation, the Blacks in the South of the United States hoped that they were going to be recognised as human beings but this did not happen. In the ensuing Civil War, Blacks fought together with the Northern States hoping that after the war they would be set free and live as full human beings

At the end of the Civil War, Black Americans had succeeded in breaking down the myth of white superiority. They had been transformed from the Uncle Tom self-image which was the mark of their reluntance to say no to their oppressors to Uncle Tom's Children, a new identity. Protest actions against the southern racial system became their central undertaking as portrayed through Big Boy in the short story « Big Boy Leaves Homes ». However, there is

not yet a true protest movement. Uncle Tom's Children is indeed a call to Blacks in America to change their way of protesting. In this text we can trace a dynamic process that African-Americans have to go through in order to reach a true protest movement to counter the established racial system of domination. It is this evolutional process that this study is concerned with and the sense in which the author presents it

Literature Review

The twentieth century African-American literature has been dominated by the protest mood. Many authors have examined this phenomenon in their writings. Besides Richard Wright the other striking protest writers are Claude Mackay, Marcus Garvey, Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown and recently Imam Amiri Baraka.

The protest movement is defined by Aldon Morris in Race in America as " ...the deliberate multifaceted activities of an oppressed group that are directed especially toward altering or destroying the system of domination that produces and manages the system of social inequality imposed on the oppressed" (21). We can say in few words that the protest movement is all the voices and deeds of the oppressed. It is those voices and deeds that we find in Uncle Tom's Children as they are understood by Richard Wright. Also Wright has realised that the protest movement finds its power in its ability to produce significant social disruptions. In this way, it makes oppressed groups to initiate social change and the idea of empowerment. According to him, we can achieve a powerful protest movement through Marxist ideology. Robert A. Bone argues in The Negro Novel in America that for Wright, Marxism was a way of ordering his experience ; that, in literary terms it was his unifying mythos ; that, most important of all it provided him with an intellectual framework for understanding his life as a Black in America. Wright has examined the evolution of actions and experiences throughout the struggle of Uncle Tom's Children and has tried to understand their fate

The problem of African-Americans as portrayed in Uncle Tom's Children is on the one hand racial and on the other economic and social W.E.B DuBois says in his essay Ames Noires that the only activity the Blacks knew was to cultivate the soil. But paradoxically, they lived on arid areas. In the introduction to Ethnic Writers in America, Simon Myron argues that Black Boy reveals that Wright was driven early to feel and to express rage That rage was growing out of fear and hunger and frustration When he watched the white people eating, his stomach churned and he became angry. He asked himself why he could not eat though he was

hungry. In this circumstance, there is a need for social actions to alleviate the grievances of the oppresed blacks and poor white people.

Bone in The Negro Novel in America points out that the content of the protest novels can be plotted along a curve ranging from « pure racial » to « pure social ». On the racial extreme of the curve the antagonist is Jim Crow. On the other extreme the antagonist is the city slum or the social order. Bone goes on to say that Wright has influenced both poles : the racial with his tone of searing anguish and social with his Marxist and environmentalist view point of social conflicts

We notice this way of writing in Uncle Tom's Children. For instance, in the first short story « Big Boy Leaves Home », the problem is purely racial. The conflicts between whites and blacks have nothing to do with materialistic reasons but the colour of skin. The four children are not allowed to swim in the pool because they can not afford it, but simply because they are « Niggers » However, in the fourth short story « Fire and Cloud ». Blacks are demonstrating and poor whites join them. This time the problem is not yet racial but purely social and economic. Blacks and poor Whites are claiming for food.

The theme of the life of Wright was freedom and this was also the theme of Uncle Tom's Children and his other works as Elijah M Nyang'aya points it out in Standpoints on African Literature. A Critical Anthology. He was committed to fight for the Negro cause in his writings. He believed that equality cannot be achieved in the existing race-based political system. He also believed in the alliance between African-Americans and other people of the same consciousness of social justice in the Communist Party

Nyang'aya argues that in Uncle Tom's Children there is no indication of radicalism and hate Wright's protest and that of his disciples is judged to be nothing but a mere lemantation or a bitter jeremiad. He made a naïve presentation of the southern blacks'situation Wright's intention is to make white people be aware of the horrors and atrocities that Blacks are poor victims to.He did not realise that whites had refused to recognise their victims as useful human being. Instead they seemed to enjoy the maltreatment of Blacks. Whites are not willing to free Blacks. On the contrary, they are pleased by scenes of mob lynching and burning as portrayed in Uncle Tom's Children. Wright sought through his writings to awaken blacks to the consciousness of their African-Americanness. In this way they can undertake « new » strategies and tactics to free themselves.

As we have said above, the theme of Wright's writings is freedom. In this theme Raphaël Njwenguye in his thesis entitled « Richard Wright's Native Son and the Causes of Race Hatred in America » traced a thematic progression. This range from spontaneous fear

motivated reactions by a Black against white racial system to a realisation of the necessity for concentrated Marxist organisation of the poor[4].

This thematic progression is also found in Uncle Tom's Children. It is what we call here the « dynamism ». The dynamism in the struggle for freedom evolves from the blind or unconscious fighting because motivated by the fear, hatred and frustration, to the powerful structured mass movement with the political conviction.

A critic Jeffery P Parker says in Reference Guide to Short Fiction that in Uncle Tom's Children violence is frequently the central action. It is considered as deliberate and senseless when perpertuated by whites but as a last resort, a reflex reaction or revenge motivated when perpetuated by Blacks. Scenes of violence are depicted all along the process in the struggle for freedom. That is, all along the thematic progression in Uncle Tom's Children in order to achieve personal dignity and freedom.

Moreover, the critic Parker says that because of racism and lack of education, characters in Uncle Tom's Children are not able to express themselves in a conventionel way[5]. Thus, they resort to violent acts against Whites and other African-Americans. Those characters are inarticulate that is why Wright focuses more on what they do rather than what they think and feel. He focuses on reactions to specific situations.

Whites had long ago monopolised violence that was one of the means to maintain domination. Now Blacks believe that in being violent they are acting like Man. They have till now been denied that quality because they are not considered as human beings. In Standpoints on Africa Literature, Nyang'aya again writes : « In recent interview Chester Himes pointed out that the black man in America was not going to be recognized as a human being untill he started killing white men" (385). Black writers have come to realize that violence appears to be the only solution to the African-American problems. Even James Baldwin, argues Nyang'aya, who accused Wright of preaching « hate » instead of « love » realised later in The Fire Next Time that love is not possible without reciprocity, love must be mutual. To protest writers if love is reciprocal hate or violence must also be reciprocal. They are going to fight fire with fire in their writings. African –American protest writers intend to be as much violent in their writings as European – Americans are.

Nevertheless, violence in Uncle Tom's Children would not be for violence's sake. Thus, in the ensuing of that violence, white people have to realise and understand the harsh sufferings of African-Americans and change their attitude towards the latter. For example, in the fourth short story « Bright and Morning Star » violence would necessarily bring to the change of the situation in the achievement of freedom. Here, violence would be aimed at

showing white people that African-Americans and other comminists are irresistibly determined and convinced politically to protect the Communist Party and the party leadership This means that African-Americans have already attained the stage of political conviction.

Characters and their characterisations change from the beginning of the text to the end. In this context, dynamism, change, process and progression together with strategy and tactic are key words in the analysis of Wright's vision of a successful revolution.

Theoretical Framework

The proletarian is an exploited and oppressed group of peope. Jane H. Bayes argues in Minority Politics and Ideologies in United States of Amarica that Blacks in America are also proletarians if we take into account their social conditions. James Taabu Busimba in his thesis for the degree of Master of Arts, entitled "A Materialistic Appreciation of Meja Mwangi's Fiction", has talked of Marxism and Materialistic theory. He quotes from Karl Marx[6] :

> The mode of production in material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. (9)

Material situation is the cornerstone in the life of individuals. It determines the relationship between people in any society. This is the reason why African-Americans are later on going to get together with the white proletariat, that is, the poor, and claim through a mass protest movement for better living conditions.

The conflicts between Whites and Blacks in Uncle Tom's Children find their roots not only in the racial basis but especially in material possessions. When Wright wrote it, he had in his mind the Communist ideology.

Moreover, Frederick J Hoffman in The Modern Novel in America 1900-1950 presents a formula of a proletarian fiction. He says that first it ought to be a novel of action to stimulate the reader , second, thought was subordinated to the action as it was seen preparing and occuring ; third, it was a measure of documentation, a novel of facts. Uncle Tom's Children is a novel of Realism. It is a record of social facts. It focuses on actions of its characters rather than their thoughts and their feelings.

All the above leads us to use a Marxist theory in this study. The most suitable is the Granville Hicks'model published in an article called "The Crisis in the Criticism" in New Masses. Hicks drew up a list of requirements which the ideal Marxist work of literature must

meet. He said that the primary function of such a work is to lead the proletarian reader to recognize his role in the class struggle. It must directly or indirectly show the effects of the class struggle The author must be able to make the reader feel that he is participating in the lives described. The author's point of view must be that of the vanguard of the proletariat, he should be or should try to make himself a member of the proletariat. All these requirements make a work of art an effective instrument of struggle because « art is a weapon ». Wright and other protest writers were convinced of that.

Structure of work

The organisation of the study will be as follows: The study has an introduction pointing out what the study will be all about. The first chapter will be concerned with the background of the African-American racial problem. We will show what Uncle Tom and Jim Crow were and How Uncle Tom's Children were born. The second chapter will deal with the stage of the blind struggle which will cover part one of the book « Big Boy Leaves Home », part two « Down by the Riverside » and part three « Long Black Song ». It will show how their isolated, unorganised protest actions are not successful. Chapter three will tackle the awareness of the Blacks of their fate in spite of their fighting. This will overlap with part three and four, « Long Black Song » and « Fire and Cloud », of the book that chapter two and four are concerned with Chapter four will cover part four »Fire and Cloud » and part five » Bright and Morning Star » showing Richard Wright's Vision . an organised mass protest movement gathering Blacks and Whites together against the oppressors.

At the end of the study we will have a conclusion which will be an overview of what has been dealt with and also the recommendation for further study.

Notes

1 Enraged literature is characterised by anger, hatred and violence It emerged in the 1930's but it is not a literary movement but rage is its striking feature. Richard Wright had the talent of enraged literature and was among the first Blacks to use that style in African-American literature.

2 Robert A.Bone shows Richard Wright's influence upon black literature by providing in his book writers who challenge protest in their literary works. But Bone in The Negro Novel in America also shows us how much Richard Wright influenced Black literature in an article entitled "Wright School" The disciples of Wright wrote protest novels.

3 In Richard Wright's writings we have a main, central theme that is the quest for freedom. But within that overall theme we also have what we can call "sub-themes" which occur progressively It means that a theme leads to another in a progressive way. What Njwenguye names as a "thematic progression" is in fact what we call dynamism in this study.

4 The progression in themes range from the theme of spontaneous, reflex-like reactions motivated by fear against white racial system of domination to the theme of awareness of the need of a well structured mass movement of the poor people.

5 African-Americans are unable to use their body or verbal expression or languages in decently or accepted way to express what they feel or think. They are short of arguments, they think that violence will make Whites and Blacks understand what they have whithstood for a long time

6 Economic conditions make people feel that they belong to a particular group. Here, African-Americans qualify themselves as belonging to the proletariat and they are convinced of that because of their economic sitauation. In other words, the way they live make them conscious of being an exploited and oppressed goup of people that they may be called proletarians.

Chapter I

African-Americans conditions in the South

This chapter deals with the background of the racial problem in America. It first, focuses on the relationship between Blacks and Whites in America. Second, it shows the character of Uncle Tom in African-American literature and his role with regard to the race conflicts. Third, it surveys »Jim Crow » as another system of domination, after the abolition of slavery, to keep African- Americans under bondage. Finally, it deals with the seeds of revolt and the birth of Uncle Tom's Children. In other words, this chapter examines the rise of the slightest idea of resistance against racial injustices and the coming into existence of a new generation that dares to say no to the oppressor.

African- Americans were forcefully taken from their mother land, Africa, to America and they were sold to land-owners as slaves. From that time inwards they lived as subhuman, more similar to animals and inanimate objects than to human beings. Any human right was denied to slaves. They were separated from their families, friends and countries. They were forced to lose and forget all their former ties with their identities: names, languages, cultures, countries, etc and they were taught through religion to be proud of their fate. Slave traders pretended that that it was God's plan and the price to be saved' from their innate curse due to their original sins. All this had the purpose of reinforcing African-Americans's self debasement.

Moreover, the conditions of transportation across the Atlantic Ocean were the worst that ever existed. Many slaves died from desease, hunger, thirst and suffocation during this journey to the New World. Consequently, once on the American coast, slaves were sold as beasts. Slave traders were careful not to keep slaves from the same country or religion, having the same culture or speaking the same language together, so that they could be easily shaped and controlled. They were used in the plantations and lived under the yoke of slavery. They were treated as animals as they worked without payment. Slaves were resold from master to master. Children were torn away from their parents, wives from their husband, as if they had no human feelings. Beecher Stowe argued in her introduction to Uncle Tom's Cabin that it was at the dying bed and at the grave that she learned what a poor slave mother might feel when her child was torn away from her. Whites in the South, except some like Beecher Stowe, did not care about Blacks' emotions and love. They only thought of maximum exploitation of black slaves.

Furthermore, a system of human domination was designed through slavery. As Aldon Morris says in Race in America. The system was designed to control the mind, heart and body of slaves. In order to succeed in this, only whites had the monopoly of the control and use of violence. Blacks were prohibited from participation in the formal political process. Only whites determined what was right or wrong: whites ideological hegemony. Slaves were property and had no identities. Behind all this, there was the whip which was used to beat out of slaves any ideas that were inconsistent with slavery. There might be a blind respect and obedience of Blacks toward Whites. African- Americans were taught to despise themselves. They knew they were inferior to all other human beings, then near to animals and deserved bad treatment. So they were expected to turn the other cheek to their oppressor. James Baldwin succintly captures it in The Fire Next Time:

> Negroes in this country ... are taught really to despise themselves from the moment their eyes open on the world. This world is white and they are Blacks. White people hold the power, which means that they are superior to Blacks..... and the world has innumerable ways of making this difference known and felt and feared.(30)

When Blacks transgressed the so-called laws or when there was any real or imagined disrespect of the law, the punishments were severe. W.K. Vardaman says in Before the Mayflower that the best way to control the Nigger is to whip him when he refuses to obey. Another punishment is that of not paying him more than what is necessary to buy food and clothings. Mob lynching was frequent. W.K Vardaman argues once more that the victims were roasted over the slow fires and their bodies were mutilated leisurely, cutting off their fingers and toes. This shows the cruelty and pitilessness of slave holders in the south.

Also many other false theories and assumptions had been elaborated to make African-Americans believe that they were unworthy of human freedom and dignity. Horace Cayton, quoted by Elijah M. Nyang'aya in Standpoints on African Literature, shows us what were the justifications of Jim Crow by White Americans :

> The Negro is primitive, dangerous, person who must be kept in subordination. Negroes do not have the same high sensibility as do Whites and do not mind exploitation and rejection. Negroes are passive children of nature and incapable of participating in and enjoying the higher aspects of general American culture. (377)

Nyang'aya, talking of Native Son says furthermore that the entire white community refuses « to see the Negroes as any thing more than mere beasts which are void of any intelligent thinking and action. » (383)

All those hollow statements and behaviours towards Blacks produced in America a character of Uncle Tom personality

In his thesis entitled "An Examination of the UncleTom Figure in selected Afro-American Poetry", Gervais Muja attempts to give some definitions and background of Uncle Tom. He is characterised by kindness, loyality and religious sentimentality. In spite of white cruelty, he has love and forgiveness toward them. Uncle Tom mimics white men, he also collaborates with them and obeys them unquestioningly. For him Whites are superior and Blacks inferior. He is very happy when a White man tells him "You don't act like other Negroes" or " You don't seem Negro to me". His behavior is self-destructive because he accepts his own debasement

Uncle Tom is called a stooge, a traitor. Manipulated by whites, he helps them to control Blacks and keep them in subordination. He is betraying this compatriot by reporting every slight black disobedience to whites. He is also called « Nigger top » which means "a typical stooge" or "a puppet ".

Besides, what whites called Negro leaders or politicians are also Uncle Toms. They avoid racial issues and hold the white man's point of view. Uncle Tom identifies himself with the master rather than with the other slaves. Gervais Muja argues in his thesis that if his master is sick, he says "We are sick ". He cannot run away or make any attempt of protest or revolt. He asks himself questions like these: "How would I live, sleep and how would I eat and cloth myself if the master is not there to help me?" There is a total submission and self-debasement. Typical qualities of a southern African-American were docility, irresponsibility, loyality and laziness. He was humble but likely to lie and steal. His silliness was infantile and his talk had a childish exaggeration. He was utterly dependent on his master and his attachment was childlike. Whites said that the childlike quality was very basic to his being.

Moreover, quoted from Marcus Garvey's Black Man (1938) under the title "Can the Negro Find His Place?" Wilson Jeremiah Moses writes, in Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms, what Garvey sarcastically pointed up about the paradox of Black nationalists who wanted to cling to the myth of moral superiority :

> The Black man has a kind heart and no one knows it more than the white man of the North American Continent. We withstood slavery and yet we still smile. It is because our hearts are tuned to righteousness and love ..... We can always be regarded as a peace-loving people. I feel sure if there is any trouble in any distict, it isn't the Negro. The only trouble the Negro will make is to get drunk (51)

Garvey thought that there was something degrading when drawing one's self-image from an experience of slavery in which one was forced to play submissive roles. Frederick Douglas gives the black an image of a faithful, long-suffering, honest slave. A black was thought to be ignorant, stupid, dirty, intended to remain in bondage. A myth had been devoloped arguing that black was naturally servile. As Wilson J Moses says, S.P. Fullinwider has recognised that the faithfulness of blacks tended to encourage submissive behaviour. They were cursed by God and that was their deserved punishment and the redemption of their race. Also Moses quotes Martin Delany, in Black Messiahs and Uncle Toms, when he observed that "When ever there is one white person that one rules and governs two colored persons". (51) Blacks were carefree, thus not intended to rule. African-Americans came to believe that they were unworthy. The complete complex humanity had been denied to them. White Americans wanted Blacks to be like Uncle Tom as he is described above. That is why even after the abolition of slavery they constructed a new system of domination, Jim Crow, in order to continue the exploitation of African-Americans in the South.

We would like to explain what Jim Crow is. In Before the Mayflower under the title "The Birth of Jim Crow", Lerone Bennett, Jr says that his birth is still a blur Jim Crow derives a long time from the name James Crow, an unknown soldier. Some writers say that he was a Cincinnati, Ohio slave Others say, he was a Charleston, South Carolina slave Others then say the name Crow came from old Mr. Crow the slaveowner. Still, other writers say that Crow came from the simile, " black as the Crow". By 1838, Jim Crow was wedged into the language as a synonym of Negro. It was at the same time a noun, a verb and an adjective and it meant a "Comic" way of life. By 1901, Jim Crow was a part of the marrow of America. But he was no longer a singing man. He had turned mean. The song-and-dance man had become a wall, a way of separating people from people At the cornerstone there were two taboos: interracial eating and intermarriage. To make it plane Jim Crow meant nothing but racial segregation between European -Americans and African- Americans.

Besides. Bennett argues in Before the Mayflower that after the Civil War, southern whites were worried about their social, economic and political situation. Unpaid black slave labour was not yet there and the economy was destroyed by the war. So the thrust to invent Jim Crow came from fear of the aftermath of slavery abolition, from economic competion and political needs. from frustration and obsession with the cult of white supremacy. Whites thought that so long as African- Americans were slaves, they posed no political and economic threat to the white supremacy. But when the slaves became citizens something had to be done with him. They had to be given all the rights for a citizen and this is the threat for whites who

were going to lose unpaid labour and had to be involved in the political and economic competion with African- Americans. The problem in America was not only racial but fundamentally social and economic as Richard Wright points it out in his different writings

However, during Reconstruction Black Americans experienced a significant progress in political involvement and racial integration. This period is defined by the Encyclopedia Americana as a political process by which the southern states were restored to normal relation in the Union after the United States Civil War The war was in fact between the liberation of slaves and the maintenance of slavery. Encyclopedia Americana argues that Blacks took their places in juries along with whites. Also many former slaves voted after the Civil War But the right was gradually lost as the Reconstruction period ended. Whites were rebellious to the authorities that were trying to make slavery abolished and Blacks integrated into American society. Pro-slavery whites organised secret associations that terrorized anyone white that sympathised with Blacks and African- Americans who refused to resume subservience to whites The most known terrorist group was the Ku Klux Klan. This group used violence and oppressive means to achieve Jim Crow purposes.

As Robert Felgar points it out in Richard Wright, the price of survival for African-Americans is the emasculation because Black culture punished its men for being men. A slave, in order to survive, had to stand passively by the whites, while the latter rapes his wife, sisters and daughters African- Americans felt the same necessity of trading away actions against societal injustice in return for a normal black life span. In "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" Richard had to dissemble in order to eat and live. Every Black had to conform to white expectations For instance, when Richard, the protagonist in "The Ethics of living Jim Crow", went to apply for job, he had to pronounce his "sirs" distinctly to show that his master was a "white "man Jim Crow law reminded all African-Americans that they had no right to learn even from their experience in life or at work. The business to learn was white. There was a total denial of human dignity to African- Americans. They had to take white nakedness for granted because his presence did not awake any sense of shame among whites for the Black was not regarded as human

Morris in Race in America argues that "Violence became the central weapon once again in the struggle for white domination "(14) Lynching attained the proportion that this crime ever reached in its history Jim Crow-racial segregation law had to be an effective component in the process of Blacks disfranchisement It was an arragement that set Blacks out of the rest of humanity and gave them a label of an inferior race. By the turn of the twentieth century, whites in the South had succeeded in implementing the law of racial segragation

everywhere There was the law barring interracial marriages, schools, trains, carstreets, hotels, etc to make African-Americans a group of people taken apart from American society and its aspirations

Moreover, the myth of white superiority and black inferiority was revived and deepened When the protagonist Richard dared, in "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow ", to fight against white boys and was injured, his mother did not approve of his action, she instead beat him Richard realised that whites and everything related to them were symbols of superiority and fear

> From that time on, the charm of my cinder yard was gone. The green trees, the tremmed hedges, the cropped lawns grew very meaningful, became a symbol. Even today when I think of white folk the hard, sharp outlines of white houses surrounded by trees, lawns and hedges are present somewhere in the back-ground of my Mind.Through the years they grew into an overreaching symbol of fear (5).

Here, "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" which is Black Boy, according to Robert Felgar, in miniature, reaveals an innocent, sensitive inexperienced young black man who is set against a cruel world But African- Americans were not really innocent. Richard Wright himself, even though he was accused of being naïve when he wrote Uncle Tom's Children, was not actually naïve. Robert Felgar says again in Richard Wright that, in recording the shocked amazement of racial passivity, Wright may well feign more naïveté than he really has. African- Americans were to some extent aware of their situation in America. We can trace some seeds of revolt among African-Americans though they were afraid of harsh white oppression. " The Ethics of Living Jim Crow " conclude as follows .

> How do Negroes feel about the way they have to live ? How do they discuss it when alone among themselves ? I think this question can be answered in a single sentence A friend of mine who ran an elevator once told me . "Lawd, man ! Ef it wuzn't fer them polices 'n' them ol' lynch-mobs, there wouldn't be nothin' but uproar down here". (15)

Through this, we feel a sense of seeds of revolt against the oppressor. Those seeds will inevitably give birth to Uncle Tom's Children who will dare openly to challenge the race-base political system in America.

Even though submissiveness seem to be the dominant quality of African-Americans, there has been resistance all along slavery. An axiom has been developed among the members of African-American community. We hear them say "Where there is oppression there will

be resistance" this being their motto. This resistance has been done through the orations of some famous orators such as Frederick Douglas, a former slave. Also, music has been a way of outspreading the idea of opposing domination. Through music, African -Americans urge their countrymen to refuse slavery. One of the famous music is "Before I'd Be a Slave I'd Be Buried in My Grave" For many African- Americans, liberty was indeed more important than life The black press also played an important role in the protest machinery. The press developed a culture of consciousness to oppose the oppressor and inspired social protest.

Therefore, the resistance was most of the time verbal or running away[4] But after the abolition of slavery African- Americans began to undertake concrete actions against the oppressor Lerone Bennett argues in Before the Mayflower that after the birth of Jim Crow, some of the African -Americans believed that the time for talk was over. They wanted to fight fire with fire

The thrust to fight, as Wright himself indicates in his autobiographical essay "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow", was that he could either physically exist as a Nigger or live briefly as a black man but die[5]. Also, the thrust to fight comes from the fact that during Reconstruction African- Americans have, according to the Encyclopedia Americana, already tasted the fruit of liberty and freedom. This engendered more hostility between Blacks and Whites because Blacks have discovered what being free really is.

Besides, literary and political movements were highlighted by the disillusionment brought about by World War I. African-Americans fought with many promises but nothing in their living conditions changed after the wartime.

Furthermore, after the Reconstruction period many trends concerning racial issues emerged Among those trends, the rise of the literary movement that critics call the Negro Renaissance It must cut loose from the assimilationist trend with its conscious imitation of white norms and deliberate supression of racial elements in their writings. The Negro Renaissance was, as Robert A.Bone points out in The Negro Novel in America, essentially a period of self-discovery marked by sudden growth interest in things Negro. This literary trend was characterised by verbal violence that was echoed by violent actions. In The History of Violence in America, Kenneth Lynn argues that Richard Wright is one of the American writers we can use to measure the racial animosities of whites and African-Americans, especially in Native son Wright writes Uncle Tom's Children, as Jeffery P. Parker points it out in Reference Guide to Short Fiction, in the world of violence and racial hatred that render life chaotic and meaningless. Kenneth Lynn says that there was a strong desire of literary critics to lead a revolution and that desire has been continuing and powerful. No surprise

therefore that violence is the central theme in American Literature. This Literature is more violent than others and its violence has become more deadly with the passage of time. Richard Wright's works show how African-Americans or Whites witness, especially in Uncle Tom's Children, deadly violence from the beginning up to the end. Kenneth Lynn also argues that the proof one can give to prove the necessity of Revolution were literary works of American artists with the theme of blood and pain. That is why violence was seen as motivated by African-Americans, for them it was the last resort, a reflex reaction or revenge to white oppression

Another thrust was the denial of human dignity for African- Americans. Claude Mackay, former slave and one of African- American freedom fighters, urges, in his poem "If we Must Die", that each Black man who is attacked by white rioters and lynchers should fight back and trade life for life.

All those thrusts to fight give birth to Uncle Tom's Children and increase racial hatred in America According to Josephine Ndikumana in her thesis entitled "Protest in Richard Wright's Writings mainly Uncle Tom's Children", Uncle Tom's Children were born out of the exaggeration of maltreatment They are the outcome of their society, of social injustice perpetuated by White Americans Therefore they are shocked by restrictions imposed upon them by European-Americans. It is hard for them to understand why they are prevented from using all human capacities to shape their own lives. African- Americans are poor and the poverty keeps them in unbearable conditions in which they live. It keeps them from enjoying all previleges of white society

Moreover, Uncle Tom's Children feel more hatred and anger than ever before This is due to racial discrimination and social injustice that aim at killing them. There are also racial prejudices and social inequalities African-Americans feel ashamed of their social status They are denied all human rights and the result is fear and frustration. Besides, the strong willing to maintain a group of people under domination; the false thought or ideas of race superiority ; the revolt against inhuman conditions that African-Americans live in are also other causes of the deadly hatred and anger

Uncle Tom's Children are different from Uncle Toms. Instead of being docile, they are violent and rebelious, and move around with guns. It is their right to fight for their freedom. Arthur Zilversmit points out , in The Black Experience in America, that African- Americans slaves have every right to win their freedom by violent means if necessary. Theodore Devight, an abolitionist, said that if the Civil War was justifiable, then the African- Americans must be justified in resorting to violent means to attain freedom.

In this struggle, Uncle Tom's Children encounter many problems. They have to fight against white people as well as African- Americans, their brothers and sisters. Even though Uncle Tom is dead, he does not disappear completely. He survives as sequels of a long ago psychological debasement. Gervais Muja says in his thesis that the loyal African- Americans and the betrayer existed during slavery and they have survived into the twentieth century. In Uncle Tom's Children the Uncle Toms are represented by Deacon Smith in the short story "Fire and Cloud". He spies everything that African- American do and tells it to whites. He is a black snake in the grass. He has become a black Judas. He thinks that the survival of African-Americans depends on white will. Those backward manners are repercussions of historical lessons when white people taught African- Americans to know their place in American society. A person like Deacon Smith will speak and act for his boss and avoid conflicts which might endanger his position. As mentioned above, this is due to the sequels of psychological debasement that whites imposed upon African- Americans during slavery. They are also terrorist acts upon black people's mind such as those of Ku Klux Klan. The white world, African-Americans have to withstand, is a world of oppression, debasement, social unrest, bestiality and threat. Whites have cultivated Uncle Tom's character through physical and moral pressure and false theories. African- Americans live in precarious economic conditions. All these make African-Americans impotent, reason why their survival can only be by their being submissive.

Although whites want to keep African- Americans under their yoke, Uncle Tom's Children are determined to fight for freedom and human dignity. In the course of this they develop a revolutionary ideology against Uncle Tom as Gervais Muja explains in his thesis. First all, African -Americans recognize their identity, they now have a racial pride. "Blackness" is superior to "Whiteness". They reject the idea of African American integration in the white system and practice.

Violence is a tool and antidote to counteract the white domination. African-Americans think that violent means are good for stubborn enemy whether white or black.

The leitmotives are now anger and rebellion. The white man is debased and dirtied. He is no longer the symbol of superiority and purity. Uncle Tom is this time portrayed as a repulsive thing living without any human dignity.

These are the conditions African-Americans live in and the assumptions of power their struggle for freedom is going to rest on. African-Americans have already made the foundation of the dynamism of struggle for freedom. They have moved from Uncle Tom to Uncle Tom's Children.

Uncle Tom's Children are now going to fight against their oppressors. But the struggle is going to be, at its early stage, unconscious, blind and random because it is not organised as a true mass protest movement

Notes

1 African-Americans were taught, through religious beliefs, that they had been cursed by God So, they had to accept any kind of treatment to be saved from that curse and inherit the Kingdom of God

2 White and Black eating in the same restaurant or from the same dish.

3 There is no difference between Black and African-American used in this work However, African-American is preferred and well accepted than Black especially by Blacks themeselves. African-American seems to be less racist and indicates rather the origin of that category of Americans You will also notice the use of European-White(s) instead of American White(s) or simply White(s). We consider that we are fair to both Whites and Blacks in referring to them the way it is above.

4 They refused to obey Whites' orders and avoid being punished by fleeing. This too is a way of resistance

5 African-Americans ought to do everything to submit to all caprices of Whites but it was difficult to avoid being killed Even if you didn't fight there was a possibility that you could get killed So many found better to die fighting for the cause of freedom which they considered noble

Chapter II.

The Unconscious struggle.

We agree that it is difficult, even impossible to make a Revolution overnight Therefore, there must be some basic circumstances to meet requirements to change a long-time established order in a society It is in this regard, that this chapter analyses the beginning of the process in the dynamism of the struggle for freedom as Wright depicts in Uncle Tom's Children. In literary terms, this is the exposition of the fictional background of Wright's plot in his collection of short stories. African-Americans are struggling in the world they do not understand That explains why their fighting is sporadic. They simply react to a real or imagined white injustice and oppression. The struggle is here still unconscious. Simon Myron, talking of Eight Men, argues in Ethnic Writers in America that characters in Richard Wright works are driven by fear and suppressed anger and they give way to violent impulses that are sometimes expressed in sudden reflex-like actions which they seem hardly conscious of Their actions can also be called blind or instinctive struggle, or isolated, unorganized fighting. As a consequence, these fighting do not have any positive effects on their intention to oppose the oppressor. This is what this chapter is all about through three short stories from Uncle Tom's Children "Big Boy leaves Homes", "Down by the River" and partly "Long Black Song"

In these three short stories we are going to see how Uncle Tom's Children have decided to fight against the racist system in America though the struggle is still unorganized. The central theme in Uncle Tom's Children is violence which is blind in the three first short stories. We are going to realise that the time of passivity has changed. Josephine Ndikumana in her thesis argues that the time of change has started and the descendants of Uncle Toms are to be different from their parents Uncle Tom's Children are a generation of people who will dare to take revenge against whites' inhumanity

Furthermore, Raphael Njwenguye talking of Uncle Tom's Children and Native Son writes in his thesis that the time of an African- American child-like mentality, stupidity, blind obedience, inability to understand freedom is over Now, the descendants of Uncle Tom revolt and are active resistors Richard Wright urges African -Americans to stand tall against the stereotypical shape of Uncle Tom that the white literature applies to the "good Negro" and all the implications of the meaning of Uncle Tom. He gives a new direction to the literature of protest through the harsh tone, vitality and anger.

Uncle Tom's Children were totally the opposite of Uncle Tom. They were what the people called in America "Bad Nigger". Elijah M Nyang'aya in Standpoints on African Literature puts it in the following words

> This boy would get into a film theatre without bothering to buy his ticket at the door The other Bigger always rode Jim crow tramcars without paying. He would sit in the white section and when ordered out, he would pull out a knife (375)

Uncle Tom's Children trespassed on the Jim Crow law that was designed to oppress them. In the introduction of his thesis, Njwenguye says that those children dared to climb to the highest peak of the mountain and throw light stones to the huge wall of racism. They may have fallen and broken their necks but they risked the climbing. They refuse to confine themselves to the silent suffering Uncle Tom's Children, such as Big Boy, Mann and Silas in the three first short stories of Uncle Tom's Children, respond to their oppressors with grievances. Although the American racial system was very strong and deep rooted in American society. Uncle Tom's Children had courage to challenge it They had become violent in words and actions But the question remains as to what did make the descedants of Uncle Tom be so violent? In other words, what were the real causes of the African- Americans' hatred against whites? The real causes, in few words, of racial hatred in America were anger, fear, hate, frustration, and any kind of violence There was also the white women's protection from African -American males' instinctive sexual appetite as we are to see it in "Big Boy Leaves Home". This hatred bred violence Whites used violence to oppress African- Americans and the latter responded to it with even more cruelty. Violence was considered as deliberate and senseless when perpetuated by white characters and as last resort, a reflex reaction or revenge motivated when perpetuated by African-American characters Raphael Njwenguye argues that African-Americans had to be violent because they had no alternative. It means that they had to act so because they had to survive Racism and the lack of education added to make them unable to understand any other language but violence.

The mind of Richard Wright's characters is actually his mind. For his childhood was a record of fear and hunger He had the fear of hunger, death, and of being. He is resentful to the white man and gives a picture of an African- American dominated by fear and acting accordingly in despair and terror He feels bitterness and helplessness that he expresses in detail in Black Boy African -American's violence against whites was a psychological reaction of an oppressed people. The people who was trying to get out of the trap and free himself from the bonds of discrimination

Nyang'aya has paraphrased what Wright says in White Man Listen : ".....the American Negro writer produces protest literature not because he is a Negro but because of his situation" (386-87)

Therefore Wright was convinced that the behaviour of African -Americans was due to their living conditions Put differently, he had an environmental view of crime. This explains what we call here the blind or unconscious violent struggle because it is not incited by any particular intended purpose but present circunstances African- Americans lived in permanent fear and frustration Those environmental conditions had psychological effects on their mind and made them act accordingly Nyanga'aya in Standpoints of African Literature says.

> Bigger's principal fear is self –knowledge and it is from this fear that his actions stem He hates the whites because he fears them. And his fear of the whites has its origin in the ruthless and inhuman way the whites treat the Negroes (381).

In Native Son, Bigger represents all the oppressed African- Americans. He responds to the oppression blindly, even unconsciously Sometimes, it is his fellow African -Americans who are victims of that hatred and aggression. Nyang'aya gives other examples of frustrated people from Alex la Guma's A Walk in the Night wherein the frustrated individuals find emotional relief through venting their anger on weaker victims.

An individual hates what he fears Uncle Tom's Children have fear of death, of violence and this causes unconscious violence as self-defense. Also it is through violence that African-Americans find a sense of self – realisation because they have been long ago denied human dignity Once more, Nyang'aya argues that .

> ...after killing Mary, Bigger realises himself and enjoys the sense of potency that this killing creates in him and it is with this discovered dignity that he proceeds to act He gets his sense of dignity, and therefore a feeling of dignity, when he makes the whites realise his existence as a human being... (382).

Making an allusion to Native Son and its protagonist Bigger Thomas, James Baldwin argues in Nobody Knows My Name that Richard Wright creates characters who have to kill to understand and affirm themselves. It is after having performed an act of violence towards any andividual. White or Black, strong or weak, that an oppressed African-American feels that he is a man. he has acted like a man

Psychologically speaking, the oppressed, frustrated and discriminated people, undergoing social injustice cannot react decently to his surroundings. Jean –Paul Sartre in his preface to Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth goes further to say:

> The rebel's weapon is the proof of his humanity. For in the first days of the revolt you must kill : to shoot down a European is to kill two birds with one stone, to destroy an oppressor and the man he oppresses at the same time : there remain a dead man and a free man . . . (22).

Uncle Tom's Children at the first stage of struggle for freedom consider all whites as being symbolic of oppression. Their struggle is still unorganized or blind or unconscious when we look at its results. But they are determined to no longer passively undergo the yoke of oppression and discrimination.

In addition to the explanations of the causes of the racial hatred in America, The History of Violence in America provides us two other more conventional explanations of rebellion and revolution. People rebel when they are, to start with, suddenly awakened perhaps by "agitators" or "promises" to their dismal status in the life. People are also prone to violence when "things are getting better" either because of the state of progress or they strongly resent the few remaining barriers they have to face. This is understandable when we come back to the Civil War and Reconstruction and their aftermaths.

African -Americans participated in the Civil War in exchange for many promises such as getting freed and having equal civil rights with whites, but these promises did not become a reality. During Reconstruction, African- Americans took places in juries along with whites. Besides, many former slaves voted after the Civil War but this right was gradually lost as the Reconstruction ended. Consequently, African- Americans expected many changes in their everyday life but nothing was done by their oppressors. Also, at the end of the Civil War, there were been many changes in the mind and mentality of African-Americans. They had discovered that they were men as the whites were. This shows well why after the Civil War and especially after Reconstruction African- Americans started openly to say "No" to their white oppressor.

Concerning the language and the style Wright uses in the three first short stories of Uncle Tom's Children, they fit well the Marxist work of literature. They agree with the qualities of a protest piece of writing. In other words, his language and style meet what Frederick J.Hoffman says in The Modern Novel in America under the title "Violence and Rhetoric in the 1930's". First of all, those short stories are full of fast actions to stimulate the reader in order to act as characters or to be sympathetic to them. Second, the thought is subordinated to the action. Characters are simple but ideologically determined. Wright deals with uneducated and inarticulated characters, he focuses on what they do rather than what they think or feel. The strategy is to begin with a state of doubt or fear that the subsequent

action serves to dissipate Third, we see that those short stories are nothing but documentation. The facts, for instance home, factory or farm's scenes and activities, conflicts between people, especially between Whites and African-Americans in the South American life are abundantly supplied and reiterated. Wright's style is a documentary realism. He uses violence and shock to astonish his reader with torrential scenes of cruelty, hunger, rape, murder and flight. He conveys facts as they are in the southern part of America. Concerning his characters, the hero carries the burden of the ideological conviction. In reality, the masses are the hero but their conviction is concentrated in one or a few. The tense Wright uses in writing have also its specific purpose. Frantz Fanon in The Wretched of the Earth says " The colonized man who writes for his people ought to use the past with the intention of opening the future, as an invitation to action and a basis for hope" (232). Wright writes in the past to meet this purpose: to create a sense of hope in Blacks. Imagery and symbolism have also precise aims. Characters, words, names, actions, contexts, times and places provide meaningful images and symbols and are manipulated to make the reader feel involved in the situation of an oppressed African -American

We have said that the first stage of the struggle for freedom is characterised by a blind, unconscious, isolated and unorganized fighting. This is shown by the fact that most of the scenes are set at night African -Americans do not see clearly what to do to free themselves from white domination. We are going to illustrate it through the three first short strories of Uncle Tom's Children

In "Big Boy Leaves Home" we see how flight and violence are frequent responses to the maltreatment of African -Americans by white people in America.

Robert Felgar in Richard Wright argues that it was hard for Wright to acknowledge that African- Americans had to conform to whites' expectations for them to survive Consequently, if an African -American refuses to adapt permanently, he has to leave the South or die

The title of the short story, "Big Boy Leaves Home", provides us the whole meaning of the short story. The name "Big Boy" is symbolic It tells us that Uncle Tom's Children are little boys but are also big by their actions. They are different from the adult child -like Uncle Toms. This short story is dominated by scenes of violence and fear. But the hero, Big Boy, has the courage to survive

At the beginning four boys are in ephemeral security, laughing. Their laugh predicts hard future They break the law and go to swim in a white swimming pool There it is written "NO TRESPASSING", which means no dogs and niggers are allowed to come in here.

A white woman sees four boys swimming and calls his husband. Her husband comes to rescue her It was his duty for a white man to protect white women against African-American instinctive male sexual appetite. The white man shoots two of the boys. Big Boy kills that man in self-defense as a last resort. This is the first scene of blind killings that was intended to oppose the oppressors Big Boy had not thought of killing a white man. Big Boy and Bobo tried to escape from white lynching. The flight was the only way to avoid white mob lynching. Bobo is burnt alive. Only Big Boy comes to run away to the North. Big Boy has witnessed the murder of three of his friends and while waiting to evade, he fantasizes about killing as many whites as he can before he is eventually caught, shot, hanged, maimed or lynched. Big Boy has the courage and determination to resist the racial oppressor through revenge and flight.

In "Down by the Riverside", African -Americans live in very poor conditions, worsened now by the flood. This short story is also full of characters dominated by fear, anger, anguish, frustration and violence It is about a character named Mann. The name itself is suggestive As Elijah M Nyang'aya puts it, "Mann" implies that this poor African American is not different from the white characters because they all belong to the same human species

African- Americans moved now with their guns; contrarily to Uncle Toms. Mann's wife was going to give birth and Mann had to take her to the hospital. The water flooded and he had to use a stolen boat from a white man When Mann is trying to get his wife to the hospital. the white man recognizes his boat. He threatens Mann and shoots many times. Mann defends himself and his family members and kills the white man he can hardly see because it is in darkness At the end of the story, Mann is identified as the murderer of the white man and is sentenced to death

Most of the scenes in "Down by the Riverside" in Uncle Tom's Children are set at night This symbolizes the African- Americans' unconsciousness of their situation and fate. In other words, the setting implies the African- Americans' blindness in their actions to resist the oppressor They do not yet see clearly the best way to destroy the white racist machinery. "He had a wild impulse to pull it out and shoot, blindly ; to shoot and be killed while shooting".(99) African- Americans' actions are motivated by fear and the will to survive. In the short story, Wright's intention seems to be that of bringing white men into awareness of their horrors and terrible relations with the African -Americans. However, we realise that whites are not only unwilling to set free the African- Americans but also they seem to derive pleasure out of the maltreatment of African -Americans. The white policemen cannot percieve

the suffering which Mann and his wife, Lulu, are undergoing. While Lulu is in grave danger without any medical attention, the policemen consider that as a source of great fun. "His bitch is sick Having a picanniny" (Idem, 78). Lulu dies before reaching the hospital and the policeman unsympathetically obliges Mann to go to the levee and work with other African-Americans at keeping the flood water in check. He is deaf to Mann's desparate plea of"ahm tired! Lemme go wid mah folks, please! "(Idem, 78) The fact that Mann has just lost his wife and has anguish and sadness and might need a rest does not bother the policeman This unsympathy of white men towards African- Americans has led Robert Bone, a critic, to qualify Wright's protest as the "bitter jeremiad" Another critic, Elijah.M. Nyang'aya criticizes Uncle Tom's Children to be nothing more than a "mere lamentation." What is important to note in this short story is Wright's focus which is the white's unawareness of, or refusal to see other people's suffering.

Mann proved himself as a brave man in the plight he was undergoing. He even refused to die as an animal in the slaughterhouse and tried to escape before the white policemen shot him dead This shows us how far the African- Americans are in the dynamic process of the struggle for their freedom. In the "Long Black Song", partly, we see how the African-Americans' struggle is still unorganized and how most of the time their actions are motivated by anger, fear and revenge

A white man seduces the wife of an African- American named Silas. When Silas returns home he discovers the infidelity of his wife. He takes this as an unbearable offence. The next day, two white men return to the farm One of them is whipped by Silas and the other is killed A white mob comes to Silas' farm to punish in reprisal for that crime. They surround his house and burn Silas alive inside. He refuses to be taken by the mob as a way of achieving a sense of dignity Silas' violence is motivated by anger and revenge. That is why we call it a blind or an unconscious violence in the struggle for freedom in America because Silas has had no plan to kill white people.Silas' refusal to surrender announces the refusal of African- Americans to be exploited any more by the values of racism in the South.

African- Americans are fighting unconsciously, blindly, in a way that is not organized. This does not help them to free themselves out of the trap of the oppressors. The way African-Americans are struggling for their freedom and rights is still what Richard Maxwell Brown calls in The History of Violence in America, "negative violence" in opposition to "positive violence" Negative violence has no direct connection with any social or historical constructive development Examples of negative violence are : criminal violence, lynching violence, violence of prejudice (racial, ethnic and religious violence), urban riots, political

assassination. etc These kinds of violence are not related to the popular and constructive movements wherein violence is considered as positive. Furthermore, in these three first short stories of Uncle Tom's Children, except some hints related to social problems, the confict seems to be purely racial African- Americans are especially fighting against racial discrimination and oppression expressed through hatred

African-Americans have moved from the state of undergoing passively the yoke of the oppressor to the active resistance of the racial system of oppression in America The dynamism of the struggle for freedom has started but the way they are fighting keeps them in the status quo They have to check and see what is wrong in their struggle to set free themselves They have thus, to be aware of their failure.

Chapter III

The Stage of awareness.

The concern in this chapter is the awareness of the lack of change in the fate of African- Americans in the southern part of the United States of America. The effort made by African -Americans in the struggle for freedom is till now almost null and void. The fate of Blacks in America is oppression or being killed whether you fight against the white oppressor or not.

The awareness of the status quo of the situation of African-Americans overlaps two short stories of Uncle Toms Children "Black Long Song" and "Fire and Cloud" and it is twofold The first is a kind of awakening, a realisation of the failure of their way of struggle; but African -Americans do not yet know what else to do. According to Robert Felgar in Richard Wright, this leads to the nihilism and despair we find in "Long Black Song". The second awareness is in the story "Fire and Cloud" where African- Americans realise that a person fighting alone cannot win the war for freedom reason why they decide to get together to make their voice to be heard

To begin with, in "Long Black Song" a child is crying without any apparent reason. He stops crying when it reaches an old clock and starts to beat it. The beating has been given a sexual connotation by Robert Felgar because the sound of that clock comes back in the mind of the mother of the baby after a sexual union with the young white salesman. But we can also say that the bangbang of the clock symbolises the bell one can ring to awaken the people. The bangbang tells the people, wake up, it is time to see clearly what is happening around them.

The little child announces the beginning of a new era. The era during which all African -Americans have to be aware of their fate in the South. The awareness is also announced by the farmer's wife, Sarah, one of protagonist in "Long Black Song" in Uncle Tom's Children, and the young white man. Before the young white man came, Sarah had been suffering from loneliness. When the white man arrives, Sarah is at the first sight seduced by the white technology when a graphophone produces music After, the white young man uses his physical power, which symbolises the white power upon African- Americans in general, to usurp her love There is a desire of unity from both Sarah and the young white man. The loneliness is over The sexual act itself symbolises according to Jean Chevalier and Alain Greerbrant in Dictionnaire des Symboles, the search for unity. African- Americans have to unite not only with other African- Americans but also with white Americans and other ethnic

groups to achieve their freedom and as a result enjoy peaceful days and nights. Sarah wonders why people fight and kill each other. She thinkst hat "nothing good come from men going miles accross the sea to fight. How come they wanna kill each other? How come they wanna make blood? Killing was not what men ought to do" (105). However, Sarah is conscious that African-Americans kill white in order to keep themselves from being killed

> "White men killed the black men because they could, and the black men killed the white men to keep from being killed"(Idem, 120).

Instead of killing each other, men ought to unite, get together as one so that they could live in a peaceful and harmonious world as Sarah views it. She is conscious of the lack of unity among people in America.

Her consciousness is awakened by the situation in which she is. Edmund Wilson paraphrases Karl Marx's theory, in Critical Theory since Plato saying that "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life" (632). Sarah is at this moment lonesome because Silas his husband has gone to town and has not yet come back. Also her former boy friend has gone to fight in World War I. "She sighed, fighting a feeling of loneliness. Loneliness ached in her" (Idem, 105)

Furthermore, Nyang'aya in Standpoints on African Literature argues that Wright suffered a lot during the Depression in the 1930s more than he had known before in Mississipi and "this suffering brought Wright into the full awareness of the reality of this situation." (376) Josephine Ndikumana argues in her thesis that the purpose of Wright when he wrote Uncle Tom's Children was to awaken African -Americans' consciousness to their fate.

The main protagonist in "Long Black Song", Silas, is obsessed by his dignity and the control over his destiny. He believes that he is equal to white people. He finds that his dignity and destiny are undermined by the oppressive white policy in America

> The white folks ain never gimme a chance ! They ain never give no black man a chance ! They ain nothin in yo whole life yuh kin keep from em ! They take yo lan ! they take yo freedom ! They take yo women ! N then they take yo life ! (125)

Some African- Americans are willing to be and act as whites do in economic matters. Silas has sold his cotton $ 250. This will allow him to buy more land and retain his hired man. This shows that though Silas hates whites he has the desire to emulate their economic values. He seems to have understood that it is the mode of production in material life that determines the social, political and intellectual life process in general.

However, the condition Silas lives in makes him aware of his fate He knows that whites will not allow him to climb up the social ladder Whites will not even let him live. Silas's effort to fight against white oppression and social injustice seems to be null and void

> "Yuh die ef yuh fight! Yuh die ef yuh don fight! Either way yuh die n it don mean nothin "(Idem, 125).

This is called by Felgar despair and nihilism. But we can say that Silas's choice is very clear. He knows that when you fight you die; when you do not fight you die; so it would be better for him to die in fighting, after you have killed as many white as you can.

Wright's purpose, in Silas's bitter realisation of an African -American's fate, is to awaken African -American so that they can be aware of the failure of their way of fighting for their freedom One person working in isolation cannot bring any change to the discriminatory, oppressive and unjust white world. Consequently, African-Americans have to find a new system and tactics of struggle for their rights They may, in this way, survive or die but, at the same time, make social and political conditions of their compatriots be improved. In short, the struggle of African- Americans must make white Americans feel the need for change.

The second part of the African-Americans awareness is materialised through the short story "Fire and Cloud" in which Wright shows his reader that "Freedom belongs to the strong" (Idem. 180) That strength cannot be obtained without putting together individual forces When people unite, they become invincible

The setting of "Fire and Cloud" is a Southern town at the peak of Depression African -Americans are starving. Given that they are at the bottom rungs on the economic ladder, they reap economic disaster even in the best time. They cannot also use their agrarian skills because white landowners have barred them from arable lands. In few words, social environment is rather shaped by the author into a Marxist's delight that is ready for social upheaval

Unlike the previous three short stories, "Fire and Cloud" is a pure social protest. It is in it that we are going to find the full awareness of the fate of African- Americans. The main protagonist Reverand Dan Taylor, a simple unassuming, God fearing minister entertains good relations with the white political structure.

As an African -American leader, Taylor is a man who enjoyed good relations with white community and had used it to achieve some of his goals such as stopping the lynching sanctioned by the chief of the police.

Now, Taylor is in a very difficult position He is trying to get food for his starving people without disturbing the white power structure. At the same time, he has to maintain

cordial relations with the local communists whom he knows have African- Americans' interest at heart. Three forces are competing for Taylor's loyality. He has to be loyal at the same time to African American community, white power structure and communists. African - Americans want food and concrete actions. The white power structure wants him to help to cancel the demonstration planned by the "Reds" (Communists). Communists on their side, want Taylor to lend his name to summon demonstrators and he has to join them in the demonstration

Besides , and to make it worse, Taylor has on his back a traitor, an informer, a spy, Deacon Smith Felgar has called him a black Judas. We can also call him an Uncle Tom survivor. We have said that Uncle Tom did not disappear in spite of the birth of Uncle Tom's Children Among African-Americans remain people that inform white political power about what their compatriots do Deacon Smith has informed white people that Taylor is involved in the demonstration to be held by the Reds.

Uncle Toms existed during the period of slavery and have survived into the twentieth century. They spied for the white power structure and got some privileges from it. They spoke and acted for their bosses and avoided conflicts which might have endangered their position. Gervais Muja has given some reasons for Uncle Toms' survival. The backward manners are the sequels of ancient lessons when whites taught African -Americans to know their place Those manners are repercussions of the psychological debasement that white imposed upon African- Americans during the period of slavery. Several reasons explain all that terrorist acts upon African- Americans such as those of Ku Klux Klan; white world oppression and debasement, social unrest, white bestiality and threats; precarious economic conditions ; proper cultivation of Uncle Tom's character through physical and moral pressure, false theories All these make an African- American impotent reason why they could survive only by being submissive

Even though many different people were seeking help from Reverend Taylor, the latter did not know what to do. Two communists, a white and a black have come to convince him to lend his name in order to summon African- Americans for a protest march. Taylor is reluctant to lend his name because the demonstration would be declared illegal or might provoke violent reprisals from the capitalist power structure of the city. He refuses to lend his name to what he fears will turn into a war.

As Taylor is a religious man, his attitude may be explained by James Baldwin's arguments expressed in his novel The Fire Next Time. He argues that religion debilitates the people and makes them passive victims of oppression. This leads to escape engagements and

evasions of reality What is necessary for African -Americans is to face the reality without any illusions

Whites do not want Taylor to join the "Reds" (Communists) They threaten him But Taylor refuses to block the protest march that he believes may be the last resort for his hungry people The white youth scheme to kidnap Reverend Taylor and take him to the wood where he is flogged until he loses consciousness

Taylor, in "Fire and Cloud" does not even try to resist that group of thugs. He knows that he is not able to because he is alone and this implies weakness.

> When they beat me tonight, they beat me..... There wuznt nothin Ah could do but lay there n hate n pray n cry . Ah couldnt *feel* mah people, Ah couldnt *see* mah people, Ah couldnt *hear* mah people.... All Ah could feel wuz tha whip cuttin mah blood out... (172)

It is in this condition that Taylor's consciousness is stirred. He becomes aware of his fate and that of his people He begins to feel ashame of his condition as an African American leader in America In the preface of Frantz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth, Jean-Paul Sartre paraphrases what Marx said "shame is a revolutionary sentiment" (14) It is when people feel ashame of the conditions in which they live that they start trying to get rid of that inhuman situation. For instance, Reverend Taylor feels ashame more than four times.

> "Fire seethed not only in Taylor's back, but all over, inside and out. It was the fire of shame" (168-69). "He felt shame again knowing that he should not feel it, but feeling it anyway"...(Idem, 172-73). ".....again that sense of shame spread over Taylor inside and out"... "....alone and naked, he stood ashamed...." (174-75).

Consequently, this shame stirs Taylor's sense of revolt and he becomes aware of what to do. When Taylor talks to his son, he questions the loneliness and realises the importance of the people

> "We gotta git wid the peopl, son.". .. "N theyll keep on killin us less we learn how to fight ! Son its the people we mus git wid us ! Wes empty n weak this way ! The reason we cant do nothin is cause wes so much erlone...." (Idem, 171).

African- American must learn how to fight in order to overcome social injustice in the economic capitalist structure of America.

In order to carry on the fight African-Americans have to get together.

> All the will, all the strength, all the power, all the numbahs is in the people ! Yuh can't live by yoself! (Idem, 172)

The hopeless struggle of one African- American against the racist mob must be transformed into a collective resistance to white oppression This method seems to be the only realistic

possibility if African- Americans are to be free. In the same line of thought Frantz Fanon's words, in The Wretched of the Earth are clear enough

> They discover that the success of the struggle presupposes clear objectives, a definite methodology and above all the need for the mass of the people to realise that their unorganized effort can only be a temporary dynamic .. but you won't win a national war, you' ll never overthrow the terrible enemy machine, and you won't change human beings if you forget to raise the standard of consciousness of the rank-and-file. Neither stubborn courage nor fine slogans are enough (136)

After the whipping as Felgar puts it in Richard Wright, Taylor becomes a modern-day Moses, the biblical fire that led Moses and his people in the night is the fiery-pain that Taylor feels in his back. This fire leads him to the vision of the ultimate primacy that every black must invest in the collective good of his people. What Taylor sees is a new heaven and a new earth that will be forged by the unification of the people. He is not convinced that Communism will be the panacea of the social racial conficts in America. But the African - American leader has had the sign that his race can be strong only through collective resistance to the social injustice imposed upon them. Wright, in the short story "Fire and Cloud", describes Taylor and rephrases his thoughts:

> Like a pillar of fire he went through the white neighbourhood. Some days theys gonna burn ! Some days theys gonna burn in Gawd Awmightys fire ! How come they make us suffer so? (167)

The fire that leads him becomes the flame of Apocalypse when he thinks of those who resist it. When African -Americans will get united with whites their force will be like almighty fire that will burn those who want no change in the social structure in America.

The fire also symbolises the hellish life of the African- Americans.

> Ah know whut yo life is ! Ah done felt it ! Its fire ! Its like the fire that burned me las night ! Its sufferin ! Its hell ! Ah cant bear this fire erlone !(Idem, 178)

The suffering of African-Americans can be seen especially in their inabilities to feed themselves. Their condition is compared with the fire in hell. They even wonder the right American whites have to make them live in the ever lasting fire. He becomes aware of the whole situation. He now knows what to do. He takes the mantle of leadership and gathers the African- Americans to join the poor whites.

In short, it is through the solidarity of all the poor people that a new social order can be achieved. African- Americans are now aware of what is common in the lives of the poor

whites and them Neither the African -American can get nowhere without the white nor the white without the African -American.

Wright was committed to the fight for the African- American cause. He believed that equality in America could not be achieved under the existing atmosphere That is why he joined the Communist Party in 1933 in order to fulfill his dream of freedom and justice.

There was a possibility of an alliance, as Elijah M. Nyang'aya puts it in his essay "Richard Wright's commitment", between African- Americans and other people with the similar consciousness African- Americans identified and localised the conflict. There is now the full awareness that the fight for social justice is not peculiar to the African- Americans alone.

The conflict is not yet racial but rather social. The problem is now between the haves and the have-nots People need strength to free from the existing capitalist economic structure. But "freedom belongs t the strong" and to be strong requires unity between African- Americans and whites It is this awareness that is going to lead African- Americans to political devotion in the Communist Party which is a well organized mass movement gathering different racial groups in America African- Americans are definitely committed to solve racial and socioeconomic problems of America through political means.

Chapter IV

Towards Political Conviction

When Richard Wright wrote Uncle Tom's Children, his intention was to urge African-Americans not only to fight but also to get together in an organized and powerful protest movement. According to him for protest movement to succeed in America, white people have to be incorporated in it. This belief will lead us to focus on Richard Wright's vision which is to round up African- Americans and whites into an organized mass protest- the Communist Party in order to overthrow the unjust social structure of America. Wright's vision is in this study called "a political conviction in Marxist ideology". He is convinced that African - Americans alone will never overcome white oppression without the support of the whites with the same vision. The Communist Party is the only way out.

In " Fire and Cloud", Reverend Dan Taylor had got the sign that the African-American race could only be strong through collective resistance. He then took the role and responsibilities of the leadership of true mass protest movement. However, there are some basic criteria required to make a true mass protest movement. First of all, Aldon Morris argues in Race in America, in his essay " Centuries of Black Protest", that members of an oppressed group must solve the problem of mobilisation to increase the readiness of an oppressed group to act collectively. This involves commitment to act collectively and provides an oppressed group with the loyality to protest organisations or to a group of protest leaders.

Second they must produce protest leaders and organizers. Leaders are responsible for the overall coordination of protest activities. They make strategic and tactical choices and serve as spokesmen of the movement. In Uncle Tom's Children, they are represented by Reverend Dan Taylor in "Fire and Cloud" and Johnny-Boy in "Bright and Morning Star". The organizers have the task of organizing human and material resources. They recruite people to the movement, educate them to the programmes and goals of the movement, and mobilise resources. They are what are secretaries, trainers and managers to a modern firm. Here they are represented by Hadley (white) and Green (African- American) in "Fire and Cloud" and Reva's father. Lem (white) and Sug and Johnny- Boy (African-Americans) in "Bright and Morning Star"

Third, oppressed people must develop social movement organizations to plan, mobilise, direct and execute social protest such as organizations of the youth. Fourth, they

must develop a repertoire of tactics and strategies ; for instance to be ready to sacrifice everything such as your life in order to save the movement as Sue and her two sons do give up their lives to save other party leader members and the Party itself. Finally, they must develop and disseminate an oppositional consciousness to convince people that social change is not only desirable but also possible Oppositional consciousness develops ideas of rightness of social justice and provides the conceptions of a just society African -Americans have tried to fulfill those five basic criteria to achieve a true protest movement

Taylor as Wright depicts in Uncle Tom's Children, becomes the leader and gathers African- Americans and the poor whites join them in the demonstration.

> Then the crowd began to slow, barely moving. Taylor looked ahead and wondered what was about to happen; he wondered without fear; as though whatever would or could happen could not hurt this many-limbed, many-legged, many- handed crowd that was he (179)

Thousands of people march as one to demand food. They have replaced Taylor as the celestial guidance to the Promised Land We have to note that African- Americans' actions to overthrow social injustice are, in "Fire and Cloud", nonviolent

Besides, Aldon Morris argues, in Race in America, that the great labour and civil right leader A.Philip Randolph "was convinced that massive nonviolent protest by black people was required to overthrow Jim Crow and racial inequality" (45) Richard Wright was also convinced of the success of nonviolent mass demonstration when he wrote "Fire and Cloud" But this is in contradiction with the previous three short stories in which Richard Wright urges people to be violent to free themselves. It is also contrary to the reality of the African-Americans' life in America There, violence was inevitable; and gathering African-Americans and whites together was practically impossible Moreover, the end of this story is judged by Robert Felgar when talking about African -Americans getting together with white in the request of food, as being a fairy- tale The two last pages of the story seem to be unbelievable He also adds that the ending is a "deus ex machina" because Reverend Dan Taylor appears as a godsend to relieve African -Americans. Wright, in this story describes scenes which do not match with the sociopolitical circumstances in the South.

The last story in Uncle Tom's Children is "Bright and Morning Star". The story is an indication that there is hope that new and good days are to come. There will be no classes, no haves and have-nots Like "Fire and Cloud" and unlike other pieces in the book, the central focus is Communism Jane H.Bayes says about Communism in Minority Politics and Ideologies in the United States that

> Minorities are important only to the extend that they come to see themselves as a part of the proletariat and actively engage in a class struggle that will result in the overthrowing of the bourgoiesie (6).

Protagonists in "Bright and Morning Star" also consider themselves as being the members of the proletarian. The protagonist Sue is convinced, as Robert Felgar puts it in Richard Wright that the proletariat is the only empirical response to the racial life in the deep South. The other protagonist Johnny-Boy, Sue's son, not afraid by his brother Sug's imprisonment for his work in the Communist Party, is still recruiting avidly. He puts all his hope and idealism into the party. He claims that the party has taught him to see only rich and poor (proletarian), not African- Americans and whites.

Nevertheless, in the struggle for freedom, African-Americans go through many ambushes. They have to fight against the known foes but also the unknown: the spies, informers, traitors that are both African- Americans and whites

In "Fire and Cloud" Reverend Dan Taylor has to face a black Judas, Deacon Smith, who informs whites about all what he is doing. He is kidnapped and beaten in order to force him to act against the Communists.

In "Bright and Morning Star" Communists have to face white Judasses like Booker, who feign to have join them

When Reva, coworker and sweetheart of Sue's son Johnny-Boy tells Sue that the sheriff has learnt that there is a secret meeting to be held at the home of Reva's father, Sue concludes that a white spy must have infiltrated the group. Johnny-Boy has to do whatever possible to contact other members in order to call off the meeting.

Sue, the only important woman character in Uncle Tom's Children, has been taught by her sons to trust anyone who is likely to join the communist party to make it big. However, Sue is still suspicious of whites. She refuses to tell Booker where Johnny-Boy is and what he is doing. Johnny-Boy has said to his mother " Ma, when yuh start doubtin folks in the party, then there ain no end "(191). She has only to see poor and rich; not African -Americans and white Americans. This would help to get a lot of members in the party. "Ma, Ah done tol yuh a hundred times. Ah can't see white n Ah cant see black'. ... 'Ah sees rich men and Ah sees po men" (192). Though her fervent christianity has been displaced by her son's Communism, she has retained some common sense. She maintains a distrust of white even though this is harmful to the Marxist desire to racelessly unite the proletariat.

Finally, the sheriff send a white judas, Booker, who pretends to just have joined the Communist Party. Booker uses a smooth- talking to make Sue talk. When he arrives at the

house of Sue. he tells her that her son has been captured by the sheriff and his men before he was able to tell other party members to cancel the meeting. Although she has refused to trust anybody. even Booker she knows is a new member of the party; she finally makes the appalling mistake and gives him the names. The smooth- talking of Booker causes the death of Johnny-Boy and Sue We can say that Sue is all justified when she regards most of white men as monsters

Robert Felgar makes a comment about the fact that Sue blurts out the list of activists in the party to white man she suspects He concludes that the idea is unconvincing to say the least The likelihood in 1938 or even now that an African -American would trust a white man under the banner of Marxism was and is extremely unlikely to happen in the deep South.

Richard Wright provides us with a piece of Social Realism. But he has put all his hope and faith in the Communist and Marxist ideology. That is why he betrays his own experience in the South. He also does not realise, in his plotting, some of the defficiencies in his literary effort of a Social Realist writer

Even though there is suspicion. African- Americans have to continue to fight in order to achieve their goals and this means terror, prison and death. To achieve their goals African-Americans have to be fearless and tireless. A Philip Randolph, quoted by Aldon Morris in Race in America, argued " If Negroes are to secure their goals.... they must win them and to win them they must fight, sacrifice, suffer, go to jail and, if need be, die for them" (45). The three protagonists in "Bright and Morning Star" are fearless. Sug has been put in jail but he doesn't betray his comrades Johnny-Boy has been tortured but he refuses to talk and is ready to die for the movement's survival Although Sue is old and has been frogged by the sheriff and his men and is too weak, she manages to go and kill Booker before he tells the names of the party leader members to the sheriff Sue is tireless, instead of surrender after having been beaten, she, on the contrary feels more intensity of pride and freedom.

> Hotly, something arched in her to make them feel the intensity of her pride and freedom , her heart groped to turn the bitter hours of her life into words of a kind that would make them (whites) feel that she had taken all they had done to her in stride and could still take more (196-97).

Robert Felgar argues again that Sue quickly realises her mistake and goes to the Foley's Wood when Johnny-Boy is being tortured and kills Booker with the pistol she has hidden under the winding sheet The sheriff and his men assume she has brought it to cover her soon-to-be-dead son This way Sue insures that the membership list of the cell is kept from those who would destroy the movement. As tactics and strategies, Sue and her son,

Johnny-Boy give up their lives instead of betraying others There is a very high and mighty sense of conviction and determination

Violence here by African- Americans is not yet blind or unconscious, that is negative It is rather a reasoned violence and therefore positive as Hugh Davis and Ted Robert Gurr distinguish the two types of violence in The History of Violence in America. According to them, positive violence is that connected with some of the most important events of American history, events that are considered constructive such as the Revolutionary War, the Civil War in America by which the slave eventually gained his freedom and the union of the nation. Indian Wars, vigilent violence, labour violence, agrarian uprising, police violence.... Violence here is related to the popular and constructive movement

In "Bright and Morning Star", the two central characters are murdered. But they die believing that the cause for which they have been sacrificed will one day be realised. This is the Bright and Morning Star that is leading African- Americans in their struggle for freedom. They now have the hope that the coming days will be better than the past and present days. As Robert Felgar says, there is a chance that since the list is safe, the Communist Party will be able to survive and grow

Many critics had made comments on Richard Wright's vision of Marxism. Felgar says that unlike "Fire and Cloud" in "Bright and Morning Star" the stirring deed is the action of an individual, not a group Wright is trying hard to percieve social reality as Johnny-Boy did when he said that he could not see whites and African- Americans but rich and poor. The only opposition should be poor versus rich, not African- Americans versus whites But his empirical observations peep instantly from behind his Marxist theorising.

To put it in other words, his vision is unrealistic, even impossible. For instance, the fact that Sue her son Johnny-Boy's death is caused by the smooth- talking, Sue is justified in her regarding most whites as monsters. In addition, she is also right when she thinks that Johnny-Boy will be killed because of his sweet- heart Reva, for the love for each other, under the actual circumstances, is utterly impossible.

Robert A Bone in The Negro Novel in America argues the relationship between a white and an African- American was seen as a kindness which is impossible in the Sonthern part of America and that kindness was qualified as a bitter mockery. For instance in Native Son Bigger's sickness which is African- American community's sickness was too deep to be cured by any kindness There was too much suspicion between races in America

Elijah M Nyang'aya says that the relationship between races is symbolised by blindness in Native Son Mary's communist boy friend, Jan, tries to be good to Bigger but the

latter regards these advances with suspicion and hostility. He thinks that there is more in Jan's actions than meet the eye Bigger sees all whites as being symbolic of oppression. Thus, to think of any love and unity under a Marxist banner in 1938 was and is still very unlikely. That is why Richard Wright creates a character like Sue and focuses his sympathy on her whereas his political conviction should be a raceless mass movement to overthrow the racial and social injustice in America

Nonetheless, African- Americans are still convinced that the hope, their very dream of freedom will be fulfilled by the mass struggle of all Americans under the ideology of Marx and his Communism This is the aim of Richard Wright. He would like to convince his reader that a political conviction and commitment in a raceless true mass protest organization would soon or later provide a reliable solution to the political and socio-economic problem of America

CONCLUSION

Through this study, we have seen the role played by Richard Wright as an African - American writer. Many critics have found him a virtual father of the enraged black literature. He is the forerunner in the awakening of the African- Americans in the struggle for their freedom. He influenced African- American literature in fusing racial protest and Marxism. His themes cut through with prejudice according to which African --American writers have to produce novels in praise of white and there must be no protest or lamentation, and force white people to look at the reality of African- Americans. Richard Wright had a hard and tormented childhood. He was a member of the Communist Party. In the production of protest literature Wright made a difference when he wrote Uncle Tom's Children by urging Blacks not only to fight but also to unite in an organized and powerful protest movement that might incorporate Whites.

We have observed that the character of Uncle Tom is passive, obedient and always ready to turn the other cheek to his white oppressors. After a long time of domination and oppression had passed, African- Americans succeeded to break down the myth of white superiority. They evolved from their reluctance to oppose their oppressors to the realisation of the sense of self- defence. Uncle Toms had been replaced by Uncle Tom's Children. For the latter protest actions were their central undertakings that Richard Wright portrayed through the character of Big Boy in "Big Boy Leaves Home". But there was not yet a true protest movement. Thus Uncle Tom's Children was indeed a call to African-Americans to change their way of fighting for their rights. In this text we traced a dynamic process African-Americans have to go through to achieve their freedom. The concern of this study is this evolutional process and the direction in which the author portrays it.

This study is based on the collection of five short stories under the title. Uncle Tom's Children (1940) consisting of the autobiographical part "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" and a collection of five short stories ; from "Big Boy Leaves Home" to the fifth short story "Bright and Morning Star" through "Down by the Riverside", Long Black Song" and "Fire and Cloud"

We have analysed on the one hand the dynamism: the processes, strategies and tactics in the struggle for freedom ; and on the other the literary aspects of the book : characterization, imagery and symbolism in order to get the deepest sense of them and the message they convey. Three themes which are the unconscious or random and individual

resistence, the awareness or the consciousness of the failure in their way of struggle, and the political conviction have been examined all along this study.

It seems that the exaggeration of maltreatment of African -Americans by Whites is the cause of the birth of Uncle Tom's Children. They are convinced that Whites will never let them have freedom unless they fight for it, be it random or unorganized.

In the three first short stories of Uncle Tom's Children "Big Boy Leaves Home", "Down by the Riveriside" and "Long Black Song", we see that, except some hints related to social problems, the conflict seems to be purely racial African -American are fighting against racial discrimanation and oppression. But they are fighting in a way that is not organized. Finally, they realise their fate. Even if they fight, nothing changes. The struggle for freedom has failed. This takes them to the awareness of what is wrong in their way of fighting. They are not strong enough to oppose the mighty racial system in America because they fight randomly and in isolation

In "Long Black Song" and "Fire and Cloud" the conflict seems to have changed. It is now purely social African- Americans have realised that freedom belongs to the strong Now they are going to look for the strength which is needed to overthrow the existing socio-economic and political structure in America To achieve this, African- American have to organize a raceless mass protest movement Unity among African- Americans and other Americans has become the Blacks' political conviction

"Fire and Cloud" and the last short story "Bright and Morning Star" show us that Wright's vision and political conviction which are also those of African- Americans, seem only to be realised through Marxist theories and the Communist Party. Communism being the raceless true protest movement, an organization that was going to make African- Americans' hope, their very dream. JUSTICE AND FREEDOM FOR ALL, fulfilled.

However, African- Americans were not going to gain their freedom without problems They had to face many obstacles and hindrances. They had to fight against the white oppressors but also their brothers; that is Uncle Tom survivors. On the one hand, these were spies, traitors, betrayals. Black Judasses who were still obedient to whites and told them what Blacks were doing to free themselves. On the other, African- Americans had to fight against the white Judasses in he Communist Party These feigned to have joined the party whereas they are simply spies and reveal to the white authority who are the leaders in the party and what they were planning to do to overthrow the racial and Capitalist structure in America.

Furthermore, another hindrance seems to be the way African- Americans and their cofighter whites conceive the hardship and plights they underwent. For Whites the problem

was simply social and economic But for African- Americans it is complex It seems to be first of all racial, then legal and finally socio- economic.African -American need to be recognized as full human beings. They also needs to be considered as Americans, equal to other Americans and enjoying the same rights Last but not least, they require basic social and economic means to survive first, and then aspire to the American Dream. Hence, the difference in the conception of American problems seems to allow us to think that the Unity between Whites and African- Americans is not going to last too long. In fact, Elijah. M.Nyang'aya says in his critical anthology Standpoints on African Literature, that when Wright wrote Native Son, the novel shocked the white liberals and the Communist Party members argued that it was ideologically incorrect. Later on, Wright gave up the party and its Marxist ideology. What Wright had thought to be the solution to the American problems was doomed to be ineffectual

Although the hopeless struggle of one African -American has been proved insufficient, the collective resistence to white oppresion seems to be the only realistic possibility if African- Americans want to be free However, Uncle Tom's Children raises a question Richard Wright never answered. What is really the primary cause of the social ills in America? Is it race or class? When we analyse closely the complexity of the problem, race seems to have been more powerful as a social determinant in America than class.

Now, what must be the solution to that situation? Richard Wright suggests not convincingly that Marxism can overcome racial injustice He is not certain that it is a racially mixed proletariat, communists that will emerge victorious in the American racial and sociopolitical conflicts Raphael Njwanguye in his thesis provides a seemingly wise solution to the racial and socio-political ills in America He says that neither the Marxist ideology nor the church can solve the problem of race hatred in America Man can only bring social changes about it Marxism or Christianity is not the panacea. American racial and social problems seems not to be solvable overnight What seems to be necessary and determinant is man's- White's and Black's – awareness of the problems of the society in which he lives and tries to find solutions to them in a dynamic and progressive way.

Wright and his work Uncle Tom's Children have brought an important contribution to the American society and its literature Wright's plot, style and characterization have helped African- Americans, in what is called Wright School, to produce novels that precisely fuse a pronounced racialism with a broader tradition of social protest. He has influenced the racial writings with his tone of searing anguish and the social with his environmentalism and Marxism He has also influenced African- Americans in awakening them and making them

aware of their situation He has urged them to fight and has shown them the way they have to proceed in the struggle for freedom. Furthermore, he has made his white audience perceive its responsibility for the plight of its African- American protagonist. This audience is expected to alter its attitude towards race It apprears that Communist Party white members seem to respond positively to that expectation In short, Richard Wright has to some extend helped American society and its literature.

Nevertheless, African -Americans still have more to do in order to reach the standard of other Americans with regard to justice and equity. An American Communist newspaper "Political Affairs: Journal of Communist Party", published in 1999 argues that until now African- Americans are still targets of great injustice in America. A number of figures published in the same journal provides us with evidence about the political and socio-economic conditions of African- Americans in the nation that it believed to be the most democratic all over the world. Amnesty International, in 1997 report revealed that widespread violence in America is largely aimed at African- Americans.

Even if African -Americans are minority in America, about 15 percent of the entire population, they are majority in prison. In 1998 there were 1,8 million people in prison. More than 800.000 of those were African- Americans It means that one of every fourteen African -Americans is in prison In some States up to 25 percent of Blacks are denied the right to vote because of their past or present encounters with the system of penitentiary in the United States of America Over 60 percent of the people on death row are Black men. "Political Affairs" reports that African-Americans, in 1998 (by Death Penality Information Center) were four times likely to receive a sentence of death through the crimanal justice system than white Americans

In social matters, public schools are under assaults from the ultra capitalists. The education of African- American children, born onto lonely island of poverty, is threatened by the privatization of public schools The ruling class seems to ensure the poor that they will go back to where they were earlier in the American history when learning to read was a privilege the poor could often not afford The "war on drugs" has become the war on the poor and the racially oppressed The American Dream is still deffered. Their past and present experience has made them less confident to succeed and reach the other Americans, the media depicts African- Americans as being unachievers in the American society, who can do nothing but drain a nation full of ressources In order to discriminate them from the American Dream, Blacks in America are said not to have enough intelligence to participate in certain activity

areas that can lead them to success. They are till now considered as an inferior race with regard to others.

African- Americans are still privileged target of any kind of injustice. Their struggle has now to be more dynamic than ever before. They have to design new methods, strategies and tactics of fighting that match with the present social context of America. To put it in other words, the means African- Americans must use to reach the standard of other Americans in terms of justice and fairness have to be adaptable to the time, context and situation of the American society.

We cannot pretend at any time that this study is exhaustive. Further research is still possible in a good number of issues in Uncle Tom's Children as a literary work.

All along this study we have noticed that women played a certain role in the struggle of Blacks' freedom even if they seem to be given a secondary importance as characters in Uncle Tom's Children. A study could be carried out focussing on women's responsibility towards Blacks' achievement of an acceptable living condition in particular and in the struggle for racial equality in general.

Although Richard Wright claims to be a communist, hence he seems to deny religious precepts , in his writings, precisely in his first novel Uncle Tom's Children, from "The Ethics of Living Jim Crow" which is an autobiography, till the last short story, his characters resort to God all the time they are trapped in a very difficult situation. We could analyse the novel in terms of religious beliefs, if African- Americans and other white communists really denied God in their everyday life. We could also aim our study at the importance Wright give to the religion and its impact on African- Americans' struggle to free themselves from their oppressors.

It is also said that Blacks are more humane than whites. Further studies could be done to see how according to Uncle Tom's Children, African- Americans have more humanistic values compared to those of whites. That is through the actions of Wright's black and white characters, we could determine whether or not this claim is realistic.

Richard Wright's plot has been accused by critics to have deficiencies. There are in his plot some unbelievable coincidences. For instance, the plot is marred by a character who refuses to escape whereas it was surely possible to flee from his foes. Researches could be undertaken in order to know if the nature of his plots is in relation to the growing problem of racial and class differences.

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